

Baptism, From God Or Man?

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October 10, 2011

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Matt. 21:23-27

Who is the author of water baptism? Is baptism from God or man? Is baptism essential to salvation?

These are vital questions relating to salvation from sin. The Bible gives the answer!

Authority for baptism

The authority for water baptism is very important. The authority for any religious practice is very important. To question the authority of Christ is to question the authority of God, the highest of all authority.

Jesus, the Son of God, claimed His authority from God. Just before His return to His Father, Jesus declared to His disciples in Matt. 28:18, "... All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

Jesus, therefore, taught by the authority of God. What Jesus taught, God taught; what God taught, Jesus taught.

The authority of Christ always supersedes the authority of man. If the authority of man exceeds the authority of Christ, then man is above God. This would make man subject to no authority.

Dilemma for chief priests & elders.

The chief priests and elders in the temple during the time of Christ found themselves in a dilemma, trapped by their own questions as they attempted to question Christ's authority.

Matt. 21:23-27, "*And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus,*

and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.”

There are three conclusions we can obtain from this text.

- There is a difference in authority from God (heaven) and authority from men.
- Authority from God demands faith and obedience.
- Authority from men is human, not divine, and is versatile.

Paul, an apostle of Christ, makes a clear, distinctive difference in the authority of Christ and the authority of men. So great is the difference that an eternal home in heaven is in jeopardy.

Gal. 1:7-10, *“Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”*

There can be no doubt about it. The inspired apostle resolved the question about whose authority we must obey; that is, God and not man!

God through John the Baptist

God first authorized water baptism through John the Baptist.

Jesus, the Son of God, announced in Luke 16:16, *“The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.”*

“Until John,” stated by Jesus implies that God’s relationship to man and his salvation changed with the coming of John the Baptist.

Our Lord said, *“since that time the kingdom of God is preached,”* which, of course, says that the gospel of the kingdom is one thing and the law and the prophets is another thing.

John himself also declared in John 1:17, *“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”*

The *“gospel of the kingdom”* included for the first time, *“baptism for the remission of sins.”*

Mark records in Mark 1:1-5, *“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send*

my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins."

John preached the baptism of repentance "for the remission of sins" as a fundamental part of the gospel of the kingdom.

Since John's baptism was the baptism of repentance "*for the remission of sins,*" it could never have been true that they were baptized, confessing they had no sins.

They were baptized "*for the remission of sins,*" "*confessing their sins*", in order to obtain remission of their sins.

The baptism that John taught was from God, not from man. If John's baptism was from man, it could very well have been like baptism taught by some men today – be baptized because you are already saved – or, be baptized confessing you have no sins. What a difference! Baptism from God, or man?

Baptism from God

Baptism for the remission of sins did not originate from John. The Bible says in Luke 3:1-3, "*Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;*"

Water baptism for the remission of sins originated with God, not with John the Baptist. John preached what God ordered him to preach.

A conclusion must be reached from the reasoning of the chief priests and elders, as they considered their dilemma.

To reject baptism from God would be to disbelieve in God.

If rejection of John's baptism meant disbelief, then rejection of the baptism authorized by Christ to be saved means disbelief in Christ. Jesus said in Mark 16:16, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*"

Do we believe in Him? If one rejects His command to be baptized to be saved, then one finds himself in the same position as the chief priests and elders.

To reject baptism, means disbelief in God and Christ who authorized water baptism. To reject baptism is to reject God and His word: Luke 7:30, *“But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.”*

Today we may hear it said, “Preach Christ and not baptism.” But that could not be true, even of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ.

John was sent to baptize Christ, as can be read in the 3rd chapter of Matthew. The baptism of Jesus by John was to do God’s will, to fulfill God’s commandments.

Jesus traveled some 60 miles to be baptized by John. But John responded in Matt. 3:13-17, *“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

Jesus informed John that this was an exception – “suffer it now”; that it was essential to “*fulfil all righteousness*” – to obey all God’s commandments.

David declared in Psalms 119:172, *“My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.”*

The baptism of Jesus, therefore, was from God, and Jesus had to fulfill all of God’s commands himself to fulfill all righteousness. He was obligated to obey His Father by being baptized.

It was after He was baptized that a voice out of the heavens announced in Matt. 3:17, *“...This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

Jesus, Baptism, Salvation

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, authorized baptism as a condition of salvation, declaring that all authority, in heaven and on earth, had been given Him.

Jesus commanded in Matt. 28:18-20, *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in*

earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

Mark recorded these words in Mark 16:15-16, “*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*”

The command to be baptized came from God, through John the Baptist, through Jesus Christ, and through His disciples. The order follows conclusively:

- John made disciples, baptizing them “*for the remission of sins.*” (Mark 1:1-5).
- Jesus himself made disciples by having them baptized.

John 3:26, “*And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.*”

John 4:1-2, “*When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)*”

Matt. 28:19, “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*”

Mark 16:16, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*”

- One cannot be a disciple of Jesus without having been baptized.
- One cannot have his sins remitted without having been baptized.

Baptism is from God, not from man, for remission of sins

Acts 2:38, “*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*”

Many in the religious world claim the meaning is, “be baptized because your sins are remitted.” They alter the word of God

because of something they don't want to do. They don't believe the word of God, just as did the chief priests and elders concerning the baptism of John the Baptist.

They make the claim that the word "for" really means "because". Let's examine that reasoning a little more closely.

Matt. 26:26-28 says, "*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*"

If the word "for the remission of sins" really means "because your sins are remitted", then this verse would be read like this: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many because their sins are already remitted."

If their sins were already remitted, why did Jesus have to shed His blood?

If the word "for" in Acts 2:38 means "because" (baptized because your sins are already remitted) then Jesus shed His blood "because" their sins were already remitted.

Brothers and sisters, this is a false translation and meaning of the scriptures. Jesus shed His blood to remit our sins. The word in this text is correctly translated "for" the remission of sins.

The 3000 penitent believers who obtained remission of their sins, as recorded in the 2nd chapter of Acts, had not received remission of sins previous to Peter's sermon. Acts 2:37, "*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*"

Obviously, the object being "*for the remission of their sins*". They did not receive remission of their sins during Peter's sermon. They did not receive remission of their sins by just believing in the Lord and accepting Christ as their personal Saviour.

They received remission of their sins when they obeyed the inspired command given by God through Peter in Acts 2:36-41, "*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, *Save yourselves from this untoward generation.**

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Conclusion

God or man?

It is God to whom man is responsible. The apostles of Christ, who are God's authority on earth, declared in Acts 5:29, "*Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.*"

