

In The Name Of Jesus Christ

by

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“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.” (Acts 2:38).

There seems to be a movement in the church attempting to bring the scriptural ceremony of baptism into disfavor and substituting another in its place.

This has been advocated by a small tract entitled, “Bible Break Publications and Tracts”, dated Jan. 5, 2000.

Under most circumstances, my practice is to ignore all such that advocate a radical departure from the scriptures. However, the writer indicates, “We hope to hear from you...” as the church. Also, “...the church (the writer’s congregation) has written letters to many of the churches of Christ through this nation about the problem...”

Further, “...we have caused a great stir among gospel preachers...” I can certainly believe this to be true!! This has probably resulted in an avalanche of letters. Permit me to add to that avalanche!

The Assumption

According to the tract, the writer has come to the conclusion that to be baptized “*in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit*” is not the baptism administered at Pentecost by Peter and the other apostles.

It is further asserted that we must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (only) to be properly baptized.

I have heard these statements before, but not from one purporting to be a “Gospel preacher”. This is basically the same as advanced by those who teach that there is only “one person in the Godhead, namely Jesus Christ” and that “all must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ only”.

There is, of course, no more scriptural truth in one than there is in the other. Both are in error!!

To quote from the tract mentioned, “we learned some years back that a statement like ‘in the name of’ means ‘by the authority of’ was only put there by man to justify their rejection of the name

of Jesus Christ and justify the words of Matt. 28:19 as a baptism that would forgive sins and add souls to the church.”

This presumes that the statement quoted is not true. I will assert, and prove by the scriptures, that “in the name of” does of a truth mean “by the authority of”. This is a proper biblical principle and is used in several places by the apostolic writers.

This statement further assumes that we who teach baptism as per Matt. 28:19-20 (The Great Commission) have rejected the “name of Christ”.

Far to the contrary, we shall point out that this is the proper baptismal ceremony and was authorized by Christ, himself.

How, then, could baptism in such manner constitute “rejection of the name of Jesus Christ”? This sort of logic escapes me!

The Great Commission

The center of the controversy is what we term “The Great Commission” wherein Christ, knowing that He had completed his purpose on earth and soon must go to His Father in heaven, commissioned his apostles to do something entirely new.

Christ had previously given the apostles limited commissions (to Israel only), but now commanded them to “...*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.*” (Mark 16:15-16).

In Matt. 28:18-20, we find a furtherance of this same commission with somewhat different wording. “...*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 alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*”

At this point, it would be well to note the correlation of both Matthew and Mark with regard to the commission.

Matthew. “*Go...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 alway, even unto the end of the world.*”

Mark. *“Go ye into all the world ... He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...”*

We must realize that Jesus was issuing a new commission to the apostles. It was for *“all the world”*, and they were commanded to baptize all whom they taught. Notice the ceremony ordained by Jesus: *“in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”*

Notice, also, that they were commanded to teach *“...them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”*

Christ had just commanded in the name of *“Father...Son...Holy Ghost.”* It follows that we are to do the same. To reason differently is to say that the apostle failed to fulfill this command of Christ. Is this the contention of our tract writer?

The only alternative to this conclusion is to contend that Matt. 28:19-20 does not belong in the scriptures! I hope the writer will not take this position! Nevertheless, Matt. 28:19-20 will remain to haunt him.

The Writer’s Problem

I searched diligently through the tract and was unable to find the answer to the following problem created by the assumptions of the writer.

If baptism as per Matt. 28:19 was not to forgive sins or put one into the church, what was the purpose of this baptism? What dispensation did Jesus have in mind when He commanded it? And what was the duration of this dispensation?

Let me ask the question differently. Was the baptism of Matt. 28:19 the baptism of John the Baptist? If not, was it the baptism of Jesus? And if neither, by what and whose authority were the apostles to perform this baptism?

Time Element — Critical

There is an element of time at this point that is critical to the tract-writer’s theory. Please take note:

The problem lies in the very commands enjoined by our Lord on the apostles at the Great Commission.

- “Go...”
- “...teach all nations” or “...preach the gospel to every creature...”

The difficulty enters when one observes the sequence of events between the crucifixion/resurrection/ascension and Pentecost and the church’s institution. Note the sequence:

The crucifixion took place on Passover-eve, 50 days before Pentecost (Mark 15:42).

Christ showed himself to His apostles alive, and taught them for 40 subsequent days (Acts 1:1-9).

This apparently continued to the very ascension (Acts 1:9-10).

This left 10 days immediately following the crucifixion to fill in. We do not have a day-by-day accounting of the first 10 days following the crucifixion, but we are told several things that did take place. Possibly part of the 10 days not fully accounted for took place following the ascension and prior to Pentecost. It was during this time that the apostles returned to Jerusalem (Acts 1:12) from Galilee (Matt. 28:10). It was at this time that the replacement of Judas was made (Acts 1:20-26).

The record is clear that of the 50 days between Passover and Pentecost, we have a fairly good accounting of the activities of both Jesus and his apostles. These activities consisted of Jesus’ teaching the apostles business relating to the kingdom of god (Acts 1:3).

It is obvious to anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of mathematics that there was simply no time at all for the apostles to obey the commands of “*go teach all nations, baptizing them...*” within this time frame. When, then, did the apostles fulfill the commands of the Lord? Is it possible that the tract-writer knows something not revealed by the scriptures?

It is safe to assert with confidence that the apostles did no teaching during these 50 days; they were being taught by Jesus.

The next difficulty for the writer occurs at this point. Why would Jesus commission the apostles to do all this (“*go...teach...baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*”), knowing that after 50 days they would be given a new commission to baptize in another manner and for a different purpose; knowing also that He had given them a commission which was impossible to fulfill?

It is with the utmost incredulity that one observes the impossible situations created by this ghastly assumption. But there are more.

Some Questions

In viewing the all-over arguments presented by the writer of this tract, several questions occurred to me for which I could find no answer. I will present them here in hopes the writer will answer them for us. Reference is made to the baptism of Matt. 28:19-20.

- If this baptism was not to forgive sins or put one into the church, what was the purpose of this baptism?
- What was the dispensation under which this baptism was performed?
- What was the duration of this “dispensation”?
- Was this the baptism of John the Baptist?
- Was this the baptism of Jesus?
- If not that of John or Jesus, by whose authority was this baptism commanded?

These questions deserve to be answered. I call on the writer to answer them.

For myself, I can see no solution to the writer’s problem. To all intents and purposes, he has nullified the “Great Commission” of Matt. 28:19-20, making the words of Jesus of no importance despite the fact that this is where Jesus first spoke of salvation to “*all nations*”.

We refer to this commission as “great” for one very important reason. IT WAS THE FIRST AND ONLY COMMISSION THAT WAS INTENDED FOR THE ENTIRE WORLD, THAT WOULD INCLUDE EVERY CREATURE, AND BE EFFECTIVE UNTIL “*the end of the world*”.

IT IS THE COMMISSION UNDER WHICH WE FUNCTION TODAY. WHAT OTHER AUTHORITY CAN WE CLAIM THAT EMBODIES THE WORDS OF JESUS? (Col. 3:16).

The Great Commission (Matt. 28:19) is the centerpiece of the Gospel. Christ’s entire personal ministry culminated in this commission.

The apostles drew their authority directly from this occasion, as we shall see.

Spoken By The Lord

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience

received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Heb. 2:1-4).

One can search the New Testament and find only one occurrence during the ministry of Christ where he spoke of salvation to “*all nations*” coupled together with conditions with which to be complied. This is recorded in Matt. 28:19-20.

It is to this commission that the writer of Hebrews refers when he wrote, “...*first began to be spoken by the Lord.*”

The Holy Spirit’s Role

Jesus said (John 15:26, speaking of the promised Holy Ghost), “...*he shall testify of me.*” What would the Holy Ghost testify of Jesus with regard to baptism and salvation? Would it not be the words of Matt. 28:19-20?

Jesus further said of the Holy Ghost’s mission in John 14:26, “*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and BRING ALL THINGS TO YOUR REMEMBRANCE, WHATSOEVER I have said unto you.*”

Did not Jesus say the words of Matt. 28:19-20 to the apostles? We are constrained to believe that the Holy Ghost reminded the apostles of these words when He taught them “*all things.*” (John 14:26).

The Holy Ghost was sent IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST. It was His mission to cause the apostles to remember the very words.

Which brings us to the question that logically follows. If The Great Commission was given by Jesus but not to function under in the kingdom (following Pentecost), when and where did He alter his commission?

The answer is obvious; Jesus never altered the “Great Commission.” It is in full effect today, and has been since that first Pentecost. It is the commission under which we are to function today.

The Name of Jesus Christ

When Peter commanded the multitude on Pentecost to be baptized “*in the name of Jesus Christ*”, was he instructing them to do something other than what Jesus had commissioned the apostles to require and do (Matt. 28:19-20)?

It is hard to believe that anyone could advocate this, BUT THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT THE WRITER IS INSISTING!!

It is interesting to note what the New Testament reveals with respect to “*the name of Jesus Christ*.” Let us list a few.

Miracles In This Name

A man over forty years old was healed at the entrance of the temple (Acts 3:6). This was done “*in the name of Jesus Christ*.” This narrative continues through Acts 4:22. “*In the name of Jesus Christ*” is mentioned several times in the narrative.

- “*...In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.*” (Acts 3:6).
- “*...through faith in his name hath made this man strong,...*” (Acts 3:16).
- “*...by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, ...doth this man stand here before you whole.*” (Acts 4:10).
- (The ruler and priests) “*...commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.*” (Acts 4:18).

All of the occurrences on that occasion were done “*in the name of Jesus*.”

Please note Acts 4:7, “*And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?*”

It is significant that all these things stem from one statement by Jesus at the occasion of the “Great Commission”, recorded at Mark 16:18, “*...they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*”

All this speaks of authority. To heal “*in the name of Jesus*” is to heal BY HIS AUTHORITY.

Likewise, to baptize “*in the name of Jesus*” is to baptize BY HIS AUTHORITY. Why?

Because Jesus commanded the apostles to baptize. Where? In Matt. 28:19-20. This was the commission under which they were working on Pentecost.

All subsequent references to “*in the name of Jesus*” derive from this same authority. “*IN THE NAME OF JESUS*” MEANS, SIMPLY, BY THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS, inasmuch as it was Jesus who authorized the apostles to baptize in the first place (Matt. 28:19-20).

We, therefore, conclude that when we were baptized “*in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*”, we were baptized correctly according to Jesus’ instructions. Furthermore, when we administer baptism in this same manner, we are correct.

The Authority Of Jesus

All things done by the apostles with reference to preaching the gospel, baptizing, further admonition on Christian living, healing the sick and lame, etc., were done by the authority of Jesus.

Immediately prior to the issuance of the “Great Commission”, Christ claimed “*all power*” (authority) in heaven and earth. Six different translations render “power” as “authority”.

Jesus issued the “Great Commission” on the strength of His claim of “*all authority*” (Matt. 28:18). It is, therefore, no wonder that the baptism required of the apostles was that of verses 19 and 20, “*in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*”

Thus we see that when Peter enjoined baptism “*in the name of Jesus Christ*” he was acting under the “Great Commission” of Matt. 28:19.

THERE IS ONLY ONE BAPTISM (Eph. 4:4). The baptism of the “Great Commission” (Matt. 28:19) and that of Pentecost (Acts 2:38) are one and the same. There is no difference.

Much more could be written, but time and space will not permit. This is an important subject. I hope that the writer of the tract under consideration will take the opportunity to answer the above. We look forward to the answer.

Yours in Christ,
John D. Logan

