

Informal Discussion On Baptism

Steven F. Deaton, Christian - Adrian Neal, Missionary Baptist

BAPTIST BAPTISM: A Form Of Godliness

In last week's article we discussed the action of baptism and acknowledged that the Bible declares it to be a burial--submersion or immersion (Rom. 6:3-4). We are happy that some of our religious neighbors accept this Bible truth, namely the Baptists, but are sad that they deny its purpose as revealed in the scriptures--salvation. Notice the following passages.

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38).

"There is also an antitype which now saves us--baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21).

"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism..." (Col. 2:11-12).

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Our Baptist friends rightly proclaim baptism is immersion, but wrongly declare that it is an outward sign of an inward grace. They say it is BECAUSE one's sins are remitted, not UNTO the remission of sins. Again, this contradicts the inspired word of God. It reminds us of the Spirit's words in 2 Timothy 3:5, "having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!"

No, the power of salvation is not in the water itself, but it is in Christ, and the only way the Bible teaches that one may get into Christ is through baptism. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). "Or do you not know that as many of us as were

baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). Will you accept the Bible's teaching on baptism?

Steven F. Deaton

[The following email letter was received by me (sfd) after the above article ran in our local paper.]

[July 3, 1999]

Plain and simple, Mr. Deaton, to teach baptismal salvation is to teach heresy. Mark 16:16 plainly teaches that unbelief is what condemns a person. (.he that believeth not shall be damned.) You teach that "he that is baptized not shall be damned." This is not in the Bible.

If repentance and belief in Christ does not save a person, then Jesus was the most deceptive preacher who ever lived! He preached that belief=everlasting life!

Is the gospel "the power of God unto salvation?" (Romans 1:16) Sure it is.

Did the apostle Paul know the plan of salvation? Sure he did.

And Paul stated "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." Why? Because Paul knew that the gospel had the power to save. Not baptism.

Any person who has been genuinely saved knows what/who saved them! They are either trusting in Christ for salvation or trusting in works (baptism). As you are now thinking of James chapter 2, consider that there is a way to be justified before God, and ways to be justified before men. Abraham's belief in God led to "imputed righteousness." That is something you can't see, being born again of the Spirit. But works are things that you can see. Therefore, before men, he was justified by works.

I Peter 3:21 speaks of a "figure." The flood (water) didn't save Noah, his

being in the ark (Christ) did.

In Acts 2:38, verbs must agree with their subjects. "Repent" is in the second person, plural, active voice. "Be baptized" is third person, singular, passive voice. Did not Christ say, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish?" Did he really mean, "except ye be baptized, ye shall all perish?"

You quoted Romans 6:3,4, but you omitted verse 5 which speaks of being "planted together in the LIKENESS of his death.."

What you teach is that Christ's blood is not sufficient to save, but that a person has to have a Church of Christ preacher around to help save. This is an affront to my SAVIOR, Jesus Christ. Isn't it a shame that the thousands & thousands of soldiers who wrote in their letters home before they died that they had asked for forgiveness & trusted Christ, had to die and go to hell because they could not find a Church of Christ preacher to baptize them?

Do you not feel any shame for misrepresenting Christ? I pray for you, friend, and welcome a response. My e-mail is

Adrian Neal

July 11, 1999

Dear Mr. Neal,

I apologize for the delay in replying, but do thank you for taking the time to write me, even though it was to charge me with "heresy." I have taken no personal offense in your comments, and trust you will take none in mine. I will attempt to address your arguments in the order given.

First, when you say, "to teach baptismal salvation is to teach heresy," what difference does it make to you? As long as I believe in Jesus, I will go to heaven, according to you. Also, as long as I teach others to believe in Jesus and trust in Him for their salvation, what difference does it make if I teach that baptism is that which appropriates the blessings of His blood, instead of faith only?

You said, "Mark 16:16 plainly teaches that unbelief is what condemns a

person. (.he that believeth not shall be damned.) You teach that 'he that is baptized not shall be damned.' This is not in the Bible." The following sentences are parallel to Mk. 16:16. "He who eats and digests will live, but he who does not eat will die." "He who jumps off a cliff and falls will die, but he who does not jump will live." "He who swings the club and hits the ball will reach the green, he who does not swing the club will remain stationary." Do you believe it is necessary to add "...and does not digest," "...and does not fall," "...and does not hit the ball" in order to comprehend the full meaning of the sentences?

No, the phrase "he that is baptized not shall be damned" is not in the Bible, neither is the term "Trinity," but it does express a Bible doctrine. I am sure you teach on morals and condemn modern dancing. However, do you find the phrase "he who goes to the bars and dances is a sinner?" Do you teach on the vice of gambling? If so, where do you find the phrase, "he who gambles has the wrath of God abiding on him?" Surely, you teach on things that are principles of the New Testament, but not specifically spelled out. Thus, I submit, that even though the phrase "he that is baptized not shall be damned" is not in the Bible, the principle is. When Annanias told Saul to "arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins" it implied that if he was not baptized he would remain in his sins--damned. It is in the Bible.

In your first paragraph you mentioned that "unbelief is what condemns a person" then in the second paragraph "If repentance and belief in Christ does not save a person..." and then again that Jesus "preached that belief=everlasting life." Which is it, Mr. Neal? MUST a person believe only or MUST he also repent? You cannot have it both ways. Does a man's salvation depend upon his action of turning away from sin and faith, or upon faith only?

Further, if "belief=everlasting life," then, according to your teaching, the demons are saved (Mk. 1:24). Too, according to you, the cowardly Jews are saved (Jn. 12:42-43). Yet, this contradicts other Bible passages. Jesus said that those who were not willing to confess Him, would not gain entrance into heaven (Lk. 12:8-9). The Holy Spirit revealed that the "cowardly...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

Truth be told, Jesus preached that a man MUST hear His words (Matt. 7:24-25); believe in Him (Jn. 3:16); repent of his sins (Lk. 13:3); be baptized (Mk. 16:16); and live according to his will (Jn. 15:5-6) in order to go to heaven.

Next, you wrote, "Paul stated 'Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.' Why? Because Paul knew that the gospel had the power to save. Not baptism." Paul was not discussing the place of baptism in the scheme of redemption. Paul was discussing his primary mission. You would say that you received "a call to preach." Right? Yet, you preach on baptism. I moved to Lufkin to preach, but I also baptize people. Paul's statement addresses the act of baptizing others, not being baptized (for whatever reason). Do you teach that baptism has no place in the gospel? Do you refuse to baptize people because you have been "called to preach, not to baptize?"

Too, Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 1:17 is parallel to Jn. 12:44, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me." Is Jesus saying that those who believe in Him do not believe in Him? Does that make sense? Rather, it is understood in this way "He who believes in Me, believes not [ONLY] in Me but [ALSO] in Him who sent Me." The same is true of 1 Cor. 1:17. "For Christ did not send me to baptize [ONLY], but [ALSO] to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect."

Further, you wrote, "Any person who has been genuinely saved knows what/who saved them! They are either trusting in Christ for salvation or trusting in works (baptism)." Does a person who believes perform any kind of work? The Bible says he does (Jn. 6:28-29). Does the Bible ever refer to baptism as a work? Please answer this question for me: If baptism is a work, is it a work of God or man? Also, of faith, repentance, and baptism, which one(s) require action upon the part of an individual and which one(s) requires an individual to be acted upon? Can another person believe me? Can another person repent me? Can another person baptize me? Is repentance a work?

Next, you said, "As you are now thinking of James chapter 2, consider that there is a way to be justified before God, and ways to be justified before men. Abraham's belief in God led to 'imputed righteousness.' That is something you can't see, being born again of the Spirit. But works are things that you can see. Therefore, before men, he was justified by works." First, the context bears out that Abraham was justified before GOD--it was HE who accounted it to Abraham for righteousness, not man! Second, who was there to witness Abraham's works? Third, no where does it say that there is a distinction in a man's works (before God and before man). Besides, would it make a difference to you if the "WORK" of a man was before God as opposed to being before men? In other words,

according to you, one cannot "work" and be saved whether it is before God or man. I am curious, what do you make of Philippians 2:12?

You said, "I Peter 3:21 speaks of a 'figure.' The flood (water) didn't save Noah, his being in the ark (Christ) did." Was Noah saved without the water? One verse earlier the Bible says, "...when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, EIGHT SOULS, WERE SAVED THROUGH WATER" (1 Pet. 3:20). What put Noah in the ark? Did the coming flood of water cause him to enter the ark? Did he get in of his own power, having been warned of God, or did God mystically and mysteriously put him in? What is your answer? First Peter 3:21 still says, "baptism doth also now save us." Do you deny it? If God saved Noah through water and the ark, can He save us in a similar way (Heb. 11:7)?

You wrote, "In Acts 2:38, verbs must agree with their subjects. 'Repent' is in the second person, plural, active voice. 'Be baptized' is third person, singular, passive voice. Did not Christ say, 'except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish?' Did he really mean, 'except ye be baptized, ye shall all perish?'" Again, I ask you to take note of the following parallel sentences: "Enroll ye, and be taught every one of you in the name of the state board of education for the reception of a diploma and ye shall receive the gift of education;" "Enlist ye, and be inducted every one of you in the name of the military for the reception of a uniform and ye shall receive the gift of the nation." Do you have any trouble understanding those? I believe you can see it, but will continue to deny it.

Mr. Neal, you said, "You quoted Romans 6:3,4, but you omitted verse 5 which speaks of being 'planted together in the LIKENESS of his death..'" I'm not sure I understand your point here. All I can simply say is that verse 3 still says that one gets into Christ through baptism (cf. Gal. 3:27). Nothing else in the New Testament is referred to as doing that. Besides, if, as you teach, a man is made alive in Christ Jesus at the point of faith, then why bury a live man? The similarity in baptism and Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection is that a man dies to sin, is buried with Christ in baptism, and raised to walk in the newness of life (born again in baptism).

You also said, "What you teach is that Christ's blood is not sufficient to save, but that a person has to have a Church of Christ preacher around to help save." Never in my life have I taught a word of this and it is dishonest to say otherwise. I, too, believe that Jesus' blood is what saves a person and is sufficient for the job (Matt. 26:28; Eph. 1:7).

However, I do not believe that a person need only believe in Jesus in order to appropriate the blessing of His shed blood. The Bible clearly teaches that there is more than just belief, or just repentance and belief involved in the remission of one's sins (Col. 2:11-12; 2 Pet. 1:3-11; Heb. 5:9; Rom. 6:17). Too, what do you make of Romans 10:14-17? How does one hear about salvation by the blood of Christ without a preacher? Does this mean the blood of Christ is insufficient because a preacher is needed (Titus 1:3)?

Again, you said "What you teach is that Christ's blood is not sufficient to save, but that a person has to have a Church of Christ preacher around to help save. This is an affront to my SAVIOR, Jesus Christ. Isn't it a shame that the thousands & thousands of soldiers who wrote in their letters home before they died that they had asked for forgiveness & trusted Christ, had to die and go to hell because they could not find a Church of Christ preacher to baptize them?" Could I not also say that you do not believe that Jesus' blood is sufficient? You add belief on the part of man! You teach that man can save himself by his work of belief! Isn't it a shame that the millions and millions of soldiers who never wrote in their letters home before they died that they had asked for forgiveness and trusted Christ, had to die and go to hell because they could not find a Baptist preacher to tell them they were already saved by the all sufficient blood of Christ? Maybe you like this one better--Isn't it a shame that the millions and millions of soldiers who wrote in their letters home before they died that they had asked for forgiveness and trusted Christ, had to die and go to hell because they could not find a Baptist preacher to tell them they needed to repent of their sins?

Question, was Jesus' blood shed because man's sins were already remitted, or in order to remit his sins?

Finally, if baptism is not in order to have your sins remitted, then please take me through the passages on baptism and explain what its purpose is.

Mr. Neal, "Do you not feel any shame for misrepresenting Christ? I pray for you, friend, and welcome a response."

Sincerely,

Steven F. Deaton

From: Adrian Neal

Subject: Response to a response

Date: Sun, 11 Jul 1999

Mr. Deaton,

Thanks for your response. We will probably have to agree to disagree on these issues. I'm sure that we both feel strong in our convictions on God's Word.

I have met you once before at the David Bonner/Hoyt Chastain debate. I handled Hoyt Chastain's transparencies for him. I also called you one Saturday & we discussed the Bible for an hour or so. I am very aware of Church of Christ teachings as you are aware of Baptist teachings.

My preference in discussing the Bible is one-on-one discussion as opposed to computer communication. (I type too slowly !)

I am not sure that anything would be gained by a private, one to one Bible discussion, since we differ on so many things & use scripture to validate our beliefs, but I would certainly be willing to meet you to do so.

Have a good day.
Adrian Neal

July 12, 1999

Mr. Neal,

I remembered who you are and was glad to hear from you again. I must say, though, I am disappointed in you. I thought better of you, that you would reply point by point to my arguments. In fact, it is the least I expected after you wrote to chastise me for my article. It would seem that common courtesy would compel you to give a more thorough response. If, as you say, I teach heresy, it is your duty, and my request, that you rebuke me so I may be sound in the faith (Titus 1:13).

You said you prefer to have one-on-one studies as you type slow...I prefer written studies as I think slow! (ha, ha) Seriously, I agree that a one-on-one study would be of little profit. You believe that each of our minds are made up, and that may or may not be so, but there are many others whose minds are not made up. Therefore, it would seem to me that a public discussion of the points of disagreement would be beneficial, either written or oral (cf. Acts 15). We could let the audience weigh the arguments and make up their own mind. Truth has nothing to hide or fear. Remember, "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).

In The Interest of Truth,

Steven F. Deaton

The following was received by me (sfd) after reviewing Mr. Neal's material in the local newspaper (without naming him).]

-----Original Message-----

From: Adrian Neal

Date: Saturday, July 24, 1999

Steven Deaton,

I suddenly feel a need to sharpen my typing skills. Even though this may be time-consuming and time wasted, I will improve my typing in response

to stale, putrid arguments of the worst kind.

First, let me address your article of 7/10. Surely, you realize that demons and humans are two different created beings. To parallel an argument with regards to belief and salvation that "even the demons were saved" (Mark 1:24) is ludicrous. The plan of salvation is for mankind, not demons. So much for that meaningless statement.

You made the statement with regards to Mark 16:16 that "it is unnecessary to say, But he who does not believe AND IS NOT BAPTIZED will be condemned." Mr. Deaton, do you really think that you know the plan of salvation better than Jesus Christ?

You dont even believe Mark 16:16. The first part of the verse says, "He that believeth and is baptized SHALL BE SAVED" So do you now embrace eternal security of the believer? Or was Jesus simply lying in this verse? Your answer must be yes to one of these two questions. But you will not answer yes to the truth. You will remain grounded in false doctrine and continue teaching false doctrine because the truth is not the object of your study or debate.

Could Jesus have just said, "He that believeth shall be saved" and been in harmony with the multitude of scriptures regarding belief and salvation? Yes. Likewise, I could either say, "He who eats shall live" or "He who eats and digests shall live." This Campbellite illustration is not even applicable because eating & digesting is a linkable process whereas salvation is an unseen gift of God and baptism is a visible church ordinance. Why not stick with the scriptures if this is the best illustration you can come up with?

You also stated that a contradiction was made concerning belief and repentance. This reveals what little you know about these subjects. Can you honestly repent of your sins without believing in Jesus Christ? Can you truly believe (place your full confidence) in Jesus without repenting of your sins?

In I Corinthians 1:17, a clear distinction is made between baptism and the gospel. It says, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" Paul also wrote that he was not ashamed of the GOSPEL, for it was THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION (Romans 1:16). Did he really mean to say that baptism was the power of God unto salvation? Perhaps you know more about salvation than the apostle Paul as well?

You will claim that you do not teach baptismal salvation, but you know that you do! Without your churches (?) water, you cant be saved! Admit that you teach this. You have the blood of Christ in the water.

In your article of 7/17, thank you for admitting that there is more than one mediator between man and God. Church of Christ preachers are a necessity to get into heaven, according to you! Whether it is the candidate that "is working" or the baptizer that "is working", there is work being done for salvation, according to you. If it is not the one being baptized who is working, then are you not positioning yourself as a mediator alongside Jesus Christ?

You mentioned Philippians 2:12 ("working out your own salvation") but have you read Philippians 2:13? It says, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Ephesians 2:8 states that salvation is a "gift of God." It also says "not of works lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9). I pity you standing before God, claiming that you have done your best to "work out" your salvation.

Before leaving the subject of works, is there any possible way that a die hard Campbellite can explain away Romans 4:3-5?

Romans 4:3 "Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

As far as baptism, please read carefully what one of the worlds best Hebrew/Greek scholars, Spiros Zodhiates, has to say about your few scriptures that you use to teach baptismal salvation.

Mark 16:16 The word believeth is "pisteusas," an aorist participle referring to one who has believed at some point in the past. Also, "baptitheis," translated "is baptized," is an aorist participle but in the passive voice. This form refers to an ACT OF OUTWARD OBEDIENCE, in this case baptism.

The Lord adds "but he that believeth not shall be damned." It should be noted that this negative statement does not include a reference to baptism, MAKING IT CLEAR that what saves a person is living faith in

Jesus Christ. This is made clear in Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith" The word saved is translated from the Greek *sesomenoi*, which is a perfect passive participle. It means that this salvation took place at some point in the past and is continuing on in the present, being accomplished by Jesus Christ Himself. If baptism were necessary for salvation, Eph.2:8 and many other verses should have been translated "ye are saved through faith and baptism." BAPTISM IS A DISTINCT ACT OF OBEDIENCE APART FROM SALVATION. This is clarified by the order in which the words "believe" and "baptize" occur in the text (Matt. 28:19, Acts 2:38).

Acts 2:38 The main verb in this verse is "metanoesate", meaning "repent." This refers to the initial repentance of a sinner unto salvation. The verb translated "be baptized" is in the indirect passive imperative of "baptizo" which means that it does not have the same force as the direct command of "repent." The preposition "for" in the phrase "for the remission of sins" in Greek is "eis," "unto." Literally, it means "for the purpose of IDENTIFYING you with the remission of sins."

Repentance is something that concerns an individual and God, while baptism is intended to BE A TESTIMONY TO OTHER PEOPLE. That is why "baptistheto," "to be baptized," is in the passive voice indicating that one does not baptize himself, but he is baptized by another usually in the presence of others.

I Peter 3:21 The expression "baptism doth also now save" should be understood in light of verse twenty: "eight souls were saved by water." Noah, and his family, being in the ark, were able to pass safely "through" the waters ("dia"). In the same way, the term "baptism" should be understood as the visible representation of deliverance through Christ, just as the ark represented deliverance from the waters of the flood. When a person accepts Christ, he is saved; WHEN THE BELIEVER IS BAPTIZED, HE IS IDENTIFIED WITH THE ONE WHO HAS DELIVERED HIM, JESUS CHRIST."

Note: Acts 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized (baptizo), and wash away (apolouo) thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Two different Greek words conclusively prove to the learned that these two items, baptism and the washing away of sins, are not related. "Apolouo" refers to the cleansing of sin connected with salvation. A person has their sins washed away by embracing Christ as Savior, and

then they are baptized.

Stephen, do you still claim to know more about salvation than Jesus Christ? Than the apostle Paul? Than the most learned Hebrew/Greek scholar in the world?

I have nothing against you personally, Steven. But it saddens me to see someone with such an argumentative spirit when faced with such obvious Bible truths. I do not question your salvation nor of anyone who affiliates with the churches of Christ. However, I know and am convinced that if anyone simply puts their faith in the water and not in the Savior, Jesus Christ, they are destined for hell.

I cannot answer for all Baptists, but most of us see baptism as an important church ordinance that should not be taken lightly nor put off. We see it as identifying us with our trust in Jesus death, burial, and resurrection. I pray that the people to whom you preach have truly repented of their sins and placed their full confidence in Jesus Christ as their Savior. At stake, are the souls of men, women, boys and girls.

I ask you, are your attacks on Baptist people an attempt to please God or man? I wonder at the motive of yours and other church of Christs peoples tendency to argue and slander others beliefs. I challenge you to put in your newspaper article what most church of Christ people think: that all Baptists & most other Christian denominations are going to hell because they are not affiliated with you. Will you admit that publicly?

May the Lord bless and keep all of you who read this.
Adrian Neal

August 6, 1999

Dear Mr. Neal,

Hope all is well with you and your loved ones. Sorry for the delay in responding. We had a meeting last week and I have not been able to finish a reply to you until now. Thanks for your patience.

I see that our friend Michael Reese has forwarded you some of the material that I have sent out to others. I appreciate him for doing this and am glad that you felt confident enough to respond in a similar forum.

Now, are you confident enough to have a public, oral discussion of the issue(s) over which we disagree? Are you confident enough to have a written discussion to be printed in the local paper? Are you set for a defense of the gospel and ready to give an answer? Will you fulfill your duty to expose my error, as you suppose (Rom. 16:17-18; Eph. 5:11)?

I thought you had enough "typing skills" to write all along, but expected a better attitude about the discussion and toward me--"I suddenly feel a need to sharpen my typing skills. Even though this may be time-consuming and time wasted, I will improve my typing in response to stale, putrid arguments of the worst kind." However, Mr. Neal, I have learned not to be overly disappointed, because men are fallible. Anyway, I will address your points one by one.

Mr. Neal, you said, "First, let me address your article of 7/10. Surely, you realize that demons and humans are two different created beings. To parallel an argument with regards to belief and salvation that 'even the demons were saved' (Mark 1:24) is ludicrous. The plan of salvation is for mankind, not demons. So much for that meaningless statement." The Holy Spirit is the one who made the argument that "workless" demons were lost, though they had faith (Jas. 2:19-20). Do you know more about the plan of salvation than James and the Holy Spirit? Is that still "ludicrous" and "meaningless" to you? Also, why did you not also address John 12:42-43. Will you give me an answer on that? Explain to me whether or not those men who believed, yet were afraid to confess Christ, were saved. Were they?

You next wrote, "You made the statement with regards to Mark 16:16 that 'it is unnecessary to say, But he who does not believe AND IS NOT BAPTIZED will be condemned.' Mr. Deaton, do you really think that you know the plan of salvation better than Jesus Christ?" No. I have never claimed such. My argument is still unanswered. Do you have one besides a curt dismissal?

You also said, "You dont even believe Mark 16:16. The first part of the verse says, 'He that believeth and is baptized SHALL BE SAVED' So do you now embrace eternal security of the believer? Or was Jesus simply lying in this verse? Your answer must be yes to one of these two questions. But you will not answer yes to the truth. You will remain grounded in false doctrine and continue teaching false doctrine because the truth is not the object of your study or debate." Mr. Neal, thanks for the respect (?). Do you accept the consequence of your doctrine when applied to the latter part of Mk. 16:16? If, as you say, one is ETERNALLY saved in the first part,

then one is ETERNALLY lost in the second part, "...but he who does not believe will be condemned." If it is impossible for the believer to be lost, is it impossible for the unbeliever to be saved? According to your doctrine it must be so. If the unbeliever may become a believer, "was," to use your phrase, "Jesus simply lying in this verse?"

Mr. Neal, I would like you to explain what you mean by "truth is not the object of your study or debate." Why do you say that? Do you know what is in my heart? Are you on par with Jesus (Acts 1:24; Jn. 2:25)?

You said, "Could Jesus have just said, 'He that believeth shall be saved' and been in harmony with the multitude of scriptures regarding belief and salvation? Yes. Likewise, I could either say, 'He who eats shall live' or 'He who eats and digests shall live.' This Campbellite illustration is not even applicable because eating & digesting is a linkable process whereas salvation is an unseen gift of God and baptism is a visible church ordinance. Why not stick with the scriptures if this is the best illustration you can come up with?" Mr. Neal, what Jesus "could...have said" is not the point of our discussion. The POINT is what Jesus DID say, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16)--that is what He said. Also, when Jesus stated this great eternal truth, He WAS, AND IS, "in harmony with a multitude of scriptures regarding [baptism] and salvation" (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Col. 2:11-12; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:21).

As for a "linkable process," is there a process to salvation? Is the love and grace of God, the cross and the blood of Christ, and salvation a "linkable process"? Are they linked and do they relate to God's process of saving man? Is hearing and believing a "linkable process"? Please give me an answer.

Mr. Neal, what passage in the Bible was it that says baptism is a "church ordinance"? Were you a Catholic at one time?

You said, "You also stated that a contradiction was made concerning belief and repentance. This reveals what little you know about these subjects. Can you honestly repent of your sins without believing in Jesus Christ? Can you truly believe (place your full confidence) in Jesus without repenting of your sins?" Again, this goes back to John 12:42-43. Will you answer it now? Do you deny that these Jews believed in Christ? Was their faith real faith or a fake faith that fooled the Holy Spirit into saying that they believed, when in fact they did not? These men DID believe in Jesus, but they DID NOT repent of their sins. Yes, one can believe, but not

repent. Also, king Agrippa believed, but was not willing to repent of His sins (Acts 26:22-32). Those on the day of Pentecost believed, but then had to be told to repent (Acts 2:36-38). "Do you know more about the plan of salvation than [the Holy Spirit]?"

You wrote, "In I Corinthians 1:17, a clear distinction is made between baptism and the gospel. It says, 'For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel' Paul also wrote that he was not ashamed of the GOSPEL, for it was THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION (Romans 1:16). Did he really mean to say that baptism was the power of God unto salvation? Perhaps you know more about salvation than the apostle Paul as well?" You have failed to answer my argument. First Corinthians 1:17, is not discussing the purpose of baptism, but the act of baptizing others. Are you now claiming that salvation is in the gospel? If so, does this contradict your position that faith alone is required for salvation? Is it now faith plus the gospel? or faith plus repentance plus the gospel? Is there more than one thing that the Bible attributes to saving a man?

Further, if, as you claim, Paul was not sent to baptize people, then he certainly was not sent to make Baptists! For, as you well know, it takes baptism to make a Baptist. Tell me, Mr. Neal, is the Baptist church something other than that for which Paul labored?

Next, you said, "You will claim that you do not teach baptismal salvation, but you know that you do! Without your churches (?) water, you cant be saved! Admit that you teach this. You have the blood of Christ in the water." I teach that salvation is in Christ, and the way the Bible says that one gets into Christ is through baptism (Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:3-4). If you know of any other passage in all the Bible that teaches how one gets into Christ, then please tell me. Mr. Neal, if we have salvation in the water, then you have the Baptist church in the water. If not, why not? Is that what you teach? Do you command people to get down into the water where the Baptist church is? Do you have water membership?

You wrote, "In your article of 7/17, thank you for admitting that there is more than one mediator between man and God. Church of Christ preachers are a necessity to get into heaven, according to you! Whether it is the candidate that 'is working' or the baptizer that 'is working', there is work being done for salvation, according to you. If it is not the one being baptized who is working, then are you not positioning yourself as a mediator alongside Jesus Christ?" Would you also argue that a Baptist preacher is a mediator between God and man, along side Jesus Christ? The Bible teaches that preachers need to be sent in order for people to believe and be saved (Rom. 10:9-17). According to your reasoning, would

that not also make a Baptist preacher necessary to salvation? When a Baptist preacher preaches, in order for others to have faith and be saved, is there work being done (cf. 2 Tim. 4:5)? "Whether it is the candidate that 'is working' or the [Baptist preacher] that 'is working', there is work being done for salvation, according to you." If you are willing to admit that a Baptist preacher does no work in his preaching, then I might concede the point to you. :)

You wrote, "You mentioned Philippians 2:12 ('working out your own salvation') but have you read Philippians 2:13? It says, 'For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' Ephesians 2:8 states that salvation is a 'gift of God.' It also says 'not of works lest any man should boast' (Ephesians 2:9). I pity you standing before God, claiming that you have done your best to 'work out' your salvation." Is food a gift from God (Matt. 6:11)? Was Jericho a gift from God (Josh. 6:2)? Must a man do something in order to receive the gift of food (Eph. 4:28)? Did Israel have to do something in order to receive the gift of Jericho (Josh. 6:3-5)?

Rightly understood, Phil. 2:12 is parallel to Eph. 2:10. When one becomes a Christian, through baptism (Acts 19:1-5; 16:15, 33), he is God's workmanship, created for good works. That is, one is to continue to do God's will, progressing, maturing, in the faith. God work's out one's salvation, but how? "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, THE WORD OF GOD, WHICH ALSO EFFECTIVELY WORKS IN YOU WHO BELIEVE" (1 Thes. 2:13). God does not work in a direct, miraculous way upon the sinner, but through His word.

You said, "Before leaving the subject of works, is there any possible way that a die hard Campbellite can explain away Romans 4:3-5?" This may shock you, Mr. Neal, but I have never known a "die-hard Campbellite," though I hear there are some in the "Christian church" (Disciples of Christ). So, I do not know what a "die-hard Campbellite" would say about Romans 4:3-5, but I do know what a Christian would say. Abraham did not work perfectly, but he did work, for the Bible says so (Jas. 2:21-24). Christians believe that the faith which saved Abraham had "steps" to "walk in," but Baptists do not so believe. I accept v. 12, along with vv. 3-5.

You wrote, "As far as baptism, please read carefully what one of the worlds best Hebrew/Greek scholars, Spiros Zodhiates, has to say about

your few scriptures that you use to teach baptismal salvation." I have never heard of this "world's best Hebrew/Greek scholar." The scriptures are not mine, they are the Holy Spirit's.

Much of what your "world's best scholar" says is his opinion, not his scholarship. For instance, "The Lord adds 'but he that believeth not shall be damned.' It should be noted that this negative statement does not include a reference to baptism, MAKING IT CLEAR that what saves a person is living faith in Jesus Christ." That is commentary, not definition.

Your scholar wrote, "Acts 2:38 The main verb in this verse is 'metanoesate', meaning 'repent.' This refers to the initial repentance of a sinner unto salvation. The verb translated 'be baptized' is in the indirect passive imperative of 'baptizo' which means that it does not have the same force as the direct command of 'repent.' The preposition 'for' in the phrase 'for the remission of sins' in Greek is 'eis,' 'unto.' Literally, it means "for the purpose of IDENTIFYING you with the remission of sins." The Bible says, "Repent, and let every one of you BE BAPTIZED in the name of Jesus Christ FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). "For this is MY BLOOD of the new covenant, which IS SHED FOR MANY FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS" (Matt. 26:28). Would you also say that Jesus blood was shed to merely IDENTIFY one with the remission of sins?

Your scholar wrote, "1 Peter 3:21 The expression 'baptism doth also now save' should be understood in light of verse twenty: 'eight souls were saved by water.' Noah, and his family, being in the ark, were able to pass safely 'through' the waters ('dia'). In the same way, the term 'baptism' should be understood as the visible representation of deliverance through Christ, just as the ark represented deliverance from the waters of the flood. When a person accepts Christ, he is saved; WHEN THE BELIEVER IS BAPTIZED, HE IS IDENTIFIED WITH THE ONE WHO HAS DELIVERED HIM, JESUS CHRIST." The Bible says that Noah built the ark to the SAVING of his house, not to "just...represent deliverance from the waters of the flood" (Heb. 11:7). The Bible says "baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21). No matter what you say, that will never change. It is funny how you will take John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," and say, "Since this verse says that one is saved by belief, then all one need do is believe and be saved!" Yet, you look at 1 Peter 3:21, and deny that baptism also (along with belief, repentance, and confession of Christ) saves us. Astounding!

Next, concerning Acts 22:16, your scholar wrote, "Two different Greek words conclusively prove to the learned that these two items, baptism and the washing away of sins, are not related. 'Apolouo' refers to the cleansing of sin connected with salvation. A person has their sins washed away by embracing Christ as Savior, and then they are baptized." First, as for "the learned", the Bible says, "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1 Cor. 1:26). Second, compare, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16), with "A person has their sins washed away by embracing Christ as Savior, and then they are baptized." Which is what the Spirit said, Mr. Neal? Can you not see the stark contrast?

You wrote, "Stephen, do you still claim to know more about salvation than Jesus Christ? Than the apostle Paul? Than the most learned Hebrew/Greek scholar in the world?" Mr. Neal, I never have claimed to know more about salvation than Jesus Christ or the apostle Paul. However, I speak as a fool, I certainly know more than your "world's best Hebrew/Greek scholar," as evidenced by the above paragraph.

You wrote, "I have nothing against you personally, Steven. But it saddens me to see someone with such an argumentative spirit when faced with such obvious Bible truths." If there is nothing personal on your part, then why refer to my arguments as "stale," "putrid," and "of the worst kind"? Why say that I have no interest in the truth? Also, Mr. Neal, do you seriously want me to believe that I HAVE an argumentative spirit, and you presumably don't? Reread your letters to me.

You said, "I do not question your salvation nor of anyone who affiliates with the churches of Christ. However, I know and am convinced that if anyone simply puts their faith in the water and not in the Savior, Jesus Christ, they are destined for hell." Mr. Neal, please don't try to pacify or flatter me now. You said at the beginning, "You will claim that you do not teach baptismal salvation, but you know that you do! Without your churches (?) water, you cant be saved! Admit that you teach this. You have the blood of Christ in the water." Now you say that one who believes this is "destined for hell", but you do not question our salvation? Which is it? Are we headed for hell or not? Are you condemning us to hell? Tell me.

You said, "I cannot answer for all Baptists, but most of us see baptism as an important church ordinance that should not be taken lightly nor put off. We see it as identifying us with our trust in Jesus death, burial, and

resurrection." Is that so? If it is not to be put off, then why do most Baptists wait a week or two or three for a baptismal ceremony? You see it as identifying you with your trust in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. The Bible sees it as what puts you into His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4). Again, you contradict "such obvious Bible truths."

You said, "I ask you, are your attacks on Baptist people an attempt to please God or man? I wonder at the motive of yours and other church of Christ's peoples tendency to argue and slander others beliefs. I challenge you to put in your newspaper article what most church of Christ people think: that all Baptists & most other Christian denominations are going to hell because they are not affiliated with you. Will you admit that publicly?" First, name one Baptist person, let alone people, I have attacked. I have exposed the error of your doctrine, not attacked any person (Eph. 5:11). Second, my goal is to please God, your opinion to the contrary notwithstanding (Gal. 1:10). Third, do you also wonder at Jesus' motive (Matt. 23)? Paul's (Acts 17:22-32; Gal.; Phil. 3:1-3; etc.)? John's (3 Jn. 9-11)? Were they guilty of "slander"? Were they guilty of being "argumentative"? What about Acts 15? Were the apostles and elders, Barnabas and others guilty of "slander"? You think I have slandered your beliefs, but you have not slandered mine? Fourth, as for what churches are going to hell, the Lord Jesus Christ answers that, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted" (Matt. 15:13). Was the Methodist church, Pentecostal church, Presbyterian church, Seventh Day Adventist church, Episcopal church, Lutheran church, planted by God? If so, then why does God support contradictory doctrines and practices (cf. 1 Cor. 14:33)? Do you read of any of the previous in the Bible? Is any one of them the church that Jesus established (Matt. 16:18)? Do you read of the Baptist church in the Bible? Did Jesus establish it? You need to answer these questions, Mr. Neal.

Mr. Neal, will you publicly defend your doctrine? Do you have the confidence and do you think our abilities are somewhat equal? Oh, on the last part, I know your answer, "stale, putrid arguments of the worst kind." Anyway, you should be glad and anxious to destroy my "stale, putrid arguments of the worst kind" to show men what a fraud I am, as you suppose. If you won't, why not? You surely believe in debating, as you set up a debate between Hoyt Chastain and David Bonner. Are you willing? I am open to debate you either in written or oral form. Let me hear from you.

In The Interest Of Truth,

Steven F. Deaton