

Written Exchange On Baptism

[Editor's note: In the following written exchange, the identity of the person in opposition to me is concealed. It is not relevant to the discussion.]

Dear Mr. Deaton,

I am another Baptist Minister you may wish to lambast and castigate, as this seems to be your favorite pastime.

And I'm coming to you with the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And sir, the truth is, there is no truth whatsoever in your "water" gospel.

There is not a single verse of Scripture if taken in context to support your false, deceptive theory of baptismal regeneration.

The apostle Paul; have you ever heard of him? Have you ever read him? Apparently he wasn't a member of the Church of Christ, because he wrote, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 1:17).

And the gospel he preached is clearly and eternally defined in (1 Cor. 15:1-4), of which (Rom. 6:3-5) is a symbol. How, pray tell me, can you and your minister friends get LIFE out of these verses?, when they clearly portray IDENTIFICATION and not INCORPORATION of the true child of God with his Lord in death, burial, and resurrection. Three times it is recorded "into His death," "into death," and "in the likeness of His death."

Sir, has it ever occurred to you that the ONLY way a person can ever get into Christ is by the Holy Spirit's baptism as described in (1 Cor. 12:13).

Read this verse of inspired Scripture and the next time you stand before your dear people, please confess to them that you have deceived them, and led them to believe a lie.

And by the way, your favorite text, a phrase taken out of context to support your false claim "--- baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21); contains more than this phrase--read it," --- NOT the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Please be informed--God did not call Noah and his family into the raging flood waters, but INTO the ark (a type of Christ).

And further, (John 3:3-5) always taken out of context by you Church of Christ ministers to prove your false theory of baptismal regeneration, and the only thing you prove is that you are as confused as was Nicodemus was.

There isn't a single word in these verses nor in any other that even implies that water baptism is essential to salvation!

In (Jo. 3:4) Nicodemus is confusingly responding to the imperative statement made by Jesus in (Jo. 3:3), asking, "--How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born (physically)?"

Then in (Jo. 3:5), Jesus is simply responding to, and answering Nicodemus' confused question in verse four. "Except a man be born of water (physically-- and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

And please be informed, (Jo. 3:6), a verse never mentioned by you Church of Christ Ministers, is a simple explanation, a clarification if you will, of what Jesus said to Nicodemus in (Jo. 3:5), and not a reference to water baptism at all!

A few more convincing verses of Scripture that clearly refute your false and deceptive teaching and preaching of your "water gospel" are:

Acts 4:12, spoken by the same man who penned (1 Pet. 3:21); Rom. 3:24; Gal. 1:15; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Rev. 1:5b).

"RESOLVED: THE Scriptures teach that baptism, to the penitent believer, is for (in order to obtain) the remission of sins." YOU AFFIRM, WE FIRMLY DENY! Not a word of truth in your claim!

The truth is, "Without the shedding of blood IS NO REMISSION!" (Heb. 9:22).

It is my prayer that you will begin devoting your time to something more constructive, rather than criticizing those of us who know the truth and are devoted to preaching and teaching that truth.

Sincerely,
signed
Yyyy

Dear Yyyy,

It is my hope that all is well with you and your loved ones. Thank you for taking the time to write me (8/4/99). At times it seems that few wish to discuss spiritual matters, so I am happy to hear from you. I will answer your objects point by point.

You wrote, "I am another Baptist Minister you may wish to lambast and castigate, as this seems to be your favorite pastime." I would submit to you that I do not "lambast and castigate" any person, but only false doctrine (Titus 1:13). Too, you said that I was guilty of teaching a "false, deceptive theory of baptismal regeneration." You encourage me to stand before the church and "confess to them that [I] have deceived them, and led them to believe a lie." You said that I am "as confused as was Nicodemus." Yyyy, would you describe that as "lambast and castigate"?

You wrote, "There is not a single verse of Scripture if taken in context to support your false, deceptive theory of baptismal regeneration." What context am I missing? "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). "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). "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). What precedes or follows any of these verses that would change my understanding that baptism is necessary for salvation, to have one's sins remitted or washed away? Also, with respect to Acts 2:38, did I miss the point that repentance is needed for the remission of sins?

You wrote, "The apostle Paul; have you ever heard of him? Have you ever read him? Apparently he wasn't a member of the Church of Christ, because he wrote, 'For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel' (1 Cor. 1:17)." Is that so??? Paul said, "Greet one another with a holy kiss. THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST GREET YOU" (Romans 16:16). Is there a scripture written by Paul, or any other inspired man, you can cite that says, "The Baptist churches greet you"? If so, please point me to it.

Too, Yyyy, according to your reasoning, if Paul was not a member of the church of Christ, then he sure wasn't a member of the Baptist church either, for it takes BAPTISM to make a BAPTIST! Do you admit that?

You wrote, "And the gospel he preached is clearly and eternally defined in (1 Cor. 15:1-4), of which (Rom. 6:3-5) is a symbol. How, pray tell me, can you and your minister friends get LIFE out of these verses?, when they clearly portray IDENTIFICATION and not INCORPORATION of the true child of God with his Lord in death, burial, and resurrection. Three times it is recorded 'into His death,' 'into death,' and 'in the likeness of His death.'" Yyyy, you should read more carefully. Romans 6:4 says that when one is raised up from the waters of baptism, he is raised to "walk in newness of LIFE." This accords with John 3:3-6, being "born again." Me "and my minister friends" were not the one to get LIFE out of these verses, it was the Spirit.

Romans 6:3-5, speaks of the "likeness" of baptism to Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. The parallel is that we die to sin (Christ died on the cross), are buried with Christ (He was buried in a tomb), and rise to walk in newness of life (He rose to ascend to heaven). Romans 6:3-5, does not teach, like you, that baptism is an "outward sign [symbol] of an inward grace."

Likewise, you missed this, "Do you not know that as many of us as were BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS were baptized into His death?" (Romans 6:3). It not only says one is baptized into His death, but also INTO HIM. This agrees with Galatians 3:27, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

You wrote, "Sir, has it ever occurred to you that the ONLY way a person can ever get into Christ is by the Holy Spirit's baptism as described in (1 Cor. 12:13)." Yyyy, the verse says, "FOR BY ONE SPIRIT WE WERE ALL BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY" (1 Corinthians 12:13). This verse does not refer to Holy Spirit baptism, for there are only two accounts of it in all the New Testament--Pentecost and Cornelius' household (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 10:44-45; 11:15). If, as you say, 1 Cor. 12:13 is referring to Holy Spirit baptism, then why do you practice water baptism, since there is only ONE baptism (Ephesians 4:5)? Do you advocate two baptisms? Too, am I to understand that you agree with our Pentecostal friends, that baptism in the Holy Spirit is essential? If "the ONLY way a person can ever get into Christ is by the Holy Spirit's baptism", then it is essential to salvation--salvation is in Christ (Ephesians 1:7). Yyyy, since you believe Holy Spirit baptism is what puts you into Christ, and you believe you are in Christ,

then have you spoken in a foreign language as did the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-6)?

You wrote, "Read this verse of inspired Scripture and the next time you stand before your dear people, please confess to them that you have deceived them, and led them to believe a lie." If I have led people to believe a lie, does it really matter, according to your doctrine? Do you not teach that a child of God cannot so sin as to lose his salvation? So what difference does it make whether or not I or anyone teach a lie, so long as we believe in the Christ of God?

You wrote, "And by the way, your favorite text, a phrase taken out of context to support your false claim '--- baptism doth also now save us' (1 Pet. 3:21); contains more than this phrase--read it,' --- NOT the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." What kind of argument is this? I do not deny that baptism is not for hygienic reasons. I do not deny that baptism is the answer of a good conscience, honest heart, toward God. But, you deny that "baptism doth also now save us."

You wrote, "Please be informed--God did not call Noah and his family into the raging flood waters, but INTO the ark (a type of Christ)." Yyyy, please be informed--God said, "Noah [and his family]...were saved through water" (1 Pet. 3:20). Their salvation involved both the ark and the water. The water was not the Savior, per se. The ark was not the Savior, per se. However, they were not saved without either one. God saved them, but He told Noah to work in building the ark. God told him to get into the ark. So, if the ark is a type of Christ, then do we build our own Christ? Did Noah get in by his faith alone? or did he do something in order to get in? It is your illustration, do you accept the consequences?

You wrote, "And further, (John 3:3-5) always taken out of context by you Church of Christ ministers to prove your false theory of baptismal regeneration, and the only thing you prove is that you are as confused as was Nicodemus was." Yyyy, I deny that I teach "baptismal regeneration." You may note the example of Naaman the leper in 2 Kings 5. He was told to go dip in the Jordan river seven times (2 Kgs. 5:10). At first he protested, but then went and was made clean. The waters of the Jordan did not have any cleansing effect upon the man--it was not "dipping regeneration"--but he obeyed the command given by an inspired man, that is what made him clean. Could Naaman have been healed without dipping in the Jordan 7 times? Also, when the Israelites complained and God sent fiery serpents among them, what were they told to do? You

remember, they were told to look upon the serpent of bronze which Moses was commanded to make (Numbers 21:4-9). Would you call that "serpent regeneration" or "sight regeneration"? No, you understand that the power to heal was not in the serpent itself, but in keeping the command of God. Could the children of Israel have been healed without looking upon the serpent?

In the next paragraph you wrote, "There isn't a single word in these verses [Jn. 3:3-5] nor in any other that even implies that water baptism is essential to salvation!" Yyyy, I'm not sure about how you understand things, but to this simple man the following not only imply, but demand the essentially of baptism in order to obtain the remission of sins: "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); "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); "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, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:11-12).

As for John 3:3-5, see the following.

You wrote, in the next three paragraphs, [1] "In (Jo. 3:4) Nicodemus is confusingly responding to the imperative statement made by Jesus in (Jo. 3:3), asking, '--How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born (physically?'" [2] "Then in (Jo. 3:5), Jesus is simply responding to, and answering Nicodemus' confused question in verse four. 'Except a man be born of water (physically-- and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'" [3] "And please be informed, (Jo. 3:6), a verse never mentioned by you Church of Christ Ministers, is a simple explanation, a clarification if you will, of what Jesus said to Nicodemus in (Jo. 3:5), and not a reference to water baptism at all!" Yyyy, I agree that Nicodemus was "confused," perplexed, or puzzled by the Lord's statement in v. 3. However, your explanation is not accurate. You say that these verses are teaching one must be born of water (physically) and of the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God. Why would Jesus need to teach Nicodemus a man must be PHYSICALLY BORN into this world and then born of the Spirit? In other words, if a man is not born, he never existed, and thus, need never be

concerned with being born again. Do you suppose Nicodemus believed one could be born again without ever having been born to start with? Fact is, Jesus is talking about one process of being born again. Nicodemus was thinking in physical terms, but Jesus corrects that false notion, explaining that the new birth (being born again) involved being "born of water and the Spirit" (Jn. 3:5).

In John 3:6, Jesus is again making the distinction between what Nicodemus wrongly believed (citizenship in God's kingdom came through physical descent) and what was actually the truth (citizenship in God's kingdom comes through heeding the Spirit's commands).

Next, you wrote, "A few more convincing verses of Scripture that clearly refute your false and deceptive teaching and preaching of your 'water gospel' are: Acts 4:12, spoken by the same man who penned (1 Pet. 3:21); Rom. 3:24; Gal. 1:15; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Rev. 1:5b)." Would you describe the following as a "water gospel" too? "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies WASHED WITH PURE WATER" (Hebrews 10:22). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the WASHING of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). "That He might sanctify and cleanse her [the church] with the WASHING OF WATER by the word" (Ephesians 5:26). "And such were some of you. But you were WASHED, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Next, I will address the scriptures given (Acts 4:12; Rom. 3:24; Gal. 1:15; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Rev. 1:5b). Let it be known that I accept and preach on all of these verses. Now, please notice the following.

Acts 4:12 says, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Matthew 28:19-20 says, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, BAPTIZING THEM INTO THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20, ASV). How does one effect the salvation that is "in the name of" by the authority, power of Jesus? Matthew quoted Jesus as saying it is through baptism.

Romans 3:24 says, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." If this verse is isolated by itself, and

not considered in light of the rest of Jesus' New Testament, then it teaches universal salvation. Do you believe that? Do you not also take into account other passages which teach that faith is essential to salvation, not just God's grace (Jn. 8:24)? If you do, then cannot I also point someone to the passages that teach baptism?

Galatians 1:15 says, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace." In context, something which you cherish, Paul is discussing his apostleship, not his salvation (Gal. 1:1, 11-2:21). See also Ephesians 3:7-9. Later in the Galatian letter, Paul was inspired to write, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27)--same writer same book as Gal. 1:15!

Ephesians 1:7 says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Yes, we are saved through the blood of Christ. Notice that the same writer, in the same book, says that the body of Christ, the church, is "sanctified and cleansed with the washing of the water by the word" (Eph. 5:26). Just curious, do you accept all other passages in Ephesians? Do you accept that the church is the body (Eph. 1:22-23); that there is only one body (Eph. 4:4); and one is reconciled unto God in that one body (Eph. 2:16; cf. 1 Cor. 12:13)?

Colossians 1:14 says, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14). Again, I believe we have redemption in the blood of Christ. How do we receive the cleansing effects of Jesus' blood? You say we not only need the blood, but also faith. I agree we need faith, but not faith only (Jas. 2:14-26). The same writer in the same book said, "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, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:11-12). Yyyy, just curious again, do you also accept all other verses in Colossians? Do you accept 1:13, where it says that the Colossians had been translated into the kingdom of Christ? Do you not teach that the kingdom, even today, is yet in the future? Do you accept that the church is the body of Christ (Col. 1:18, 24)?

Revelation 1:5 says, "And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." Again, I

deny not the truth of this passage--Jesus' blood is what cleanses us from our sins.

Yyyy, you next wrote, "'RESOLVED: The Scriptures teach that baptism, to the penitent believer, is for (in order to obtain) the remission of sins.' YOU AFFIRM, WE FIRMLY DENY! Not a word of truth in your claim!" Are you taking us up on the debate propositions? Are you willing to publicly debate the above along with the other proposition: "RESOLVED: The Scriptures teach that one is saved by grace through faith alone, before and without water baptism." You affirm. We deny. Do you have the confidence in your doctrine that will allow you to either orally or in a written format debate these issues?

You finally wrote, "It is my prayer that you will begin devoting your time to something more constructive, rather than criticizing those of us who know the truth and are devoted to preaching and teaching that truth." Yyyy, you say you know the truth and the Bible says that those who know the truth will be made free (Jn. 8:32). So, are you saying that the Baptists are the only ones going to heaven? Too, did you spend your time in writing me a critical letter instead of something more constructive? I do not criticize you, but your doctrine, just as Jesus and the apostles did (Matt. 23; Acts 17:22-32). You must plow the field before you plant the seed!

Again, I sincerely thank you for taking the time to write me, though it was critical and somewhat caustic. I deem time spent in honest discussion of religious issues worthwhile. I look forward to your response.

In The Interest Of Truth,

Steven F. Deaton