

The Ancient Pattern: The Pattern For Salvation

Introduction. Men say a lot about salvation. But they often contradict themselves or even change their positions. In the scriptures there is uniformity because there is only one gospel. We would all agree that there's one Lord and one Spirit (Ephesians 4:4-6). But that means there's also one faith (gospel) and one baptism (the method of salvation).

God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:40) — man and the devil are. So what is the pattern of salvation found in the New Testament?

I. What Jesus Taught

- A. What Jesus taught in His ministry.
 - 1. Hearing was essential (Matthew 13:9, 13-17).
 - 2. Belief was essential (John 3:16; 8:24).
 - 3. Repentance was essential (Matthew 4:17; 11:20-21; Luke 5:32).
 - 4. Confession was essential (Matthew 10:32; John 9:22; 12:42).
 - 5. Baptism was essential.
 - a) He supported John's teaching of baptism of repentance for remission of sins (Mark 1:4-5). Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:13-17), not because of sin, but to fulfill all righteousness — there is more to baptism. He even agreed that John's message was from God (Mark 11:30).
 - b) He taught that baptism was essential for entrance into the kingdom (John 3:3-5). The water is the same element used later (John 3:22-23, 26).
 - c) Water is the element and the Spirit is the word. The parallels in Ephesians 5:26 and Titus 3:5 make that clear. They had to be taught then immersed.
 - 6. Godly living was essential (Matthew 5:1-7:27).
- B. What Jesus commissioned His disciples to teach.
 - 1. Preach the gospel to those that will hear (Mark 16:15).
 - a) His death was for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28).
 - b) He died, was buried, and rose again (Luke 24:44-46).
 - 2. They must believe in Christ and His message (John 20:31).
 - 3. They must repent for forgiveness (Luke 24:47).
 - 4. They must confess (Matthew 10:32; cp. 7:21).
 - 5. They must be baptized (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:16).
 - a) Baptism alone did not save.
 - b) However, it was a part of salvation and how one becomes a disciple.
 - 6. They must faithfully observe all Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:20).

II. What The Apostles Taught

- A. The apostles were given Christ's authority (Matthew 16:19; John 20:21-23). They had all truth (John 14:26, 16:13) and people believed through their word (John 17:20-21).
- B. The apostles taught what Christ said and where Christ said.
 - 1. They were Christ's witnesses (Acts 1:8).
 - 2. They stayed in Jerusalem like Jesus commanded (Acts 2:1).

3. They received the power (Acts 2:2-4).
 4. They fulfilled the promise of Joel (Acts 2:21).
 5. They preached the gospel, the message of His death, burial and resurrection (Acts 2:22-32). They testified of being witnesses like Jesus said.
 6. This audience believed, otherwise why would they be cut to the heart and ask what to do (Acts 2:37)?
 7. They gave the conditions of pardon (Acts 2:38-39). The ones who obeyed the word were baptized — about 3,000 — but not everyone is there that day.
 8. They taught all that Jesus commanded (Acts 2:40, 42).
 9. They were instrumental in saving these people by the word (Acts 2:47).
- C. The apostles spread the message.
1. The rest of Acts is a story that builds off of the lesson Peter taught in Acts 2. It details the conversions of many individuals and groups of people. It focuses on Peter and Paul as they went out.
 2. The proclamation of preaching, belief, repentance, confession, baptism, and salvation/faithfulness/joy are all connected. While it may not record all repenting or confessing, it does record every group being taught the gospel, believing, and being baptized. This is gospel preaching (Mark 16:15-16) and preaching Jesus (Acts 8:35).
- D. The apostles wrote letters telling what saves.
1. We are justified by faith (Galatians 3:26-27).
 2. We are saved by faith in God's work (Colossians 2:12).
 3. We are saved by repentance (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
 4. We are saved by confession and obedience (Romans 6:3-6, 17; 10:8-16).
 5. We are saved by baptism (1 Peter 3:21).
 6. We are sanctified (Ephesians 5:25-27).
 7. We are renewed (Titus 3:3-5).
 - a) Not by works or deeds. Baptism is like signing a check for a free gift (Romans 6:23).
 - b) Baptism is never called a work of man. It is a work of God, a response of faith, obedience to the gospel, and calling on the name of the Lord.
- E. There is only one baptism taught by the apostles in Ephesians 4:4.
1. One candidate: Only those who have heard, believed, and repented can confess.
 2. One mode: It is immersion (the word means that) and it is in water. This is seen with the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:38-39.
 3. One purpose: For remission of sins (Acts 2:38). This is the same construction as Matthew 26:28.
 4. One result: Those who were obedient were added to the Lord's people or His church (Acts 2:47).
 5. One directive: Holy Spirit baptism was never commanded and cannot be commanded. Water baptism can be because Peter did it in Acts 10:48.

III. What The Apostles Practiced

- A. This is best illustrated in the life of Paul in Acts 9 and 22. Paul, while traveling to Damascus, is an unbeliever in Christ.

1. He comes in contact with Jesus and understands Him to be Lord (Acts 9:4).
 2. He is then told to go into the city and he would be told what to do (Acts 9:5). He obeyed.
 3. He fasted for three days — a very pious and religious act of repentance.
 4. He prayed for three days — another act of repentance.
 - a) If prayer saves, here it is!
 - b) He could have simply recited the sinner’s prayer — that’s what preachers today say.
 5. He had a miracle performed on him, but he wasn’t saved then (Acts 9:17).
 6. Paul said he was immediately baptized (not a week, month, or three months later) which washed away his sins (Acts 22:16), and that’s how he called on the Lord (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13).
- B. If Paul was saved on the road to Damascus, like many people say, then Jesus didn’t know it, Ananias didn’t know it, and Paul didn’t know it.

IV. What The Early Church Practiced

- A. The message for the early church is clearly seen in what we discussed earlier. But what did the early Christians say about salvation? What did they practice?
1. Ken Craig wrote, “The early church universally believed, taught, and practiced that baptism was when our sins are removed by faith” (*The Big Picture*).
 2. *The Epistle of Barnabas* (A.D. 70) says, “Blessed are they who, placing their trust in the cross, have gone down in the water ... We indeed descend into the water full of sins and defilement. However, we come up, bearing the fruit in our heart, having the fear of God and the trust of Jesus in our spirit.”
 3. Justin Martyr, in *Trypho*, wrote, “There is no other way [to obtain God’s blessings] than this — to become acquainted with Christ, to be washed in the fountain spoken of by Isaiah for the remission of sins” (c. A.D. 110-165).
 4. Justin Martyr, in *First Apology*, said, “And for this rite we have learned from the apostles this reason ... in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become the children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins, the name of God the father and Lord of the Universe” (c. A.D. 110-165).
 5. Tertullian (*On Baptism*) said, “Baptism itself is a corporal act by which we are plunged into the water, while the effect is spiritual, in that we are freed from our sins” (c. A.D. 140-230). He continued, “Being baptized, we are illuminated; illuminated, we become sons; being bade sons, we are made perfect; being made perfect, we are made immortal ... This word is variously called grace, and illumination, and perfection, and washing. Washing, by which we cleanse away our sins; grace by which the penalties accusing to transgressions are remitted; and illumination, by which the holy light of salvation is beheld, that is, which we see God clearly” (c. A.D. 150-215).
 6. David Bercot wrote, “In short, baptism in early Christianity was the supernatural rite of invitation by which a new believer passed from being the

old man of the flesh to being a newly reborn man of the spirit. However, please don't think their practice was some empty ritual. The early Christians didn't separate baptism from faith and repentance. Baptism wasn't some magical ritual that could regenerate a person if it wasn't accompanied by faith and repentance. They specifically taught that God was under no necessity to grant forgiveness of sins because a person went through the motions of baptism. A faithless person was not reborn through the water of baptism."

- B. Who could better understand the teachings of the apostles than the ones who either spoke with them personally or lived in the generation right after their walk on earth? Or ones over 1,500 years removed from the events?
- C. While these are not authoritative, they do give us insight into how the early church understood the teachings of Jesus and His apostles. Today we have a perverted gospel being taught long after the initial revelation.

Conclusion. Are you seeing a pattern? What Jesus taught, what the apostles taught, what the apostles practiced, and what the early church practiced all agreed.

Have you done what they did? You can reproduce it today — that's the greatness of a pattern. You can be only a Christian without all the denominational error. Will you listen to Christ as He speaks through the words of the Bible?

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