

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES III: INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT BAPTISMS.

Hebrews 6:1-2 NASB

[1]Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

*[2]of **instruction about washings** and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.*

Hebrews 6:1-2 NIV

[1] Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, [1] and of faith in God,

*[2] **instruction about baptisms**, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*

Introduction

This principle is truly elementary to the Faith. It is one of the very first things you learn or ought to learn as you become a believer. But it is probably the most attacked of all the elementary principles and therefore might need a more vigorous treatment than the others.

Let us begin at the beginning for this one.

Exodus 30:18-21 NASB

[18]"You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base of bronze, for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it.

[19]Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet from it;

[20]when they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, so that they will not die; or when they approach the altar to minister, by offering up in smoke a fire sacrifice to the Lord.

[21]So they shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they will not die; and it shall be a perpetual statute for them, for Aaron and his descendants throughout their generations."

This is the beginning of the history of baptisms. It is what John was carrying on during his ministry before the Lord Jesus paid the Price for our sins.

There is much to be said about the washing instituted by God in the Old Covenant and, God-willing, we shall say it. But for now it is sufficient to say that the washing and the instrument for it were very important symbols. Those symbols amounted to this: man cannot fellowship with God until he has been washed clean. In the next installment, more will be said about this.

Down the ages from this first institution of the practice of baptisms or washings, different people have used it to say the same thing. John the Baptist was not the first. His was the most popular because he was by far the most blessed of prophets. His mission was to herald the Coming of the Lord God in human flesh. And in doing so, he was to prepare the Jews for His Coming.

John's Baptism

When we keep in mind that baptism witnessed to man's desperate need for cleansing in order to fellowship with God, John's baptism becomes that much more significant. The Lord God was coming to walk among men this time rather than man seeking to go into the Tabernacle to fellowship with Him. So, it made sense for him to baptise those who listened to him as a sign that they were ready to receive the Lord God.

John 1:25-27,29-31 NASB

[25]They asked him, and said to him, "**Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?**"

[26]John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know.

[27]It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

[29]The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

[30]This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'

[31]I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water."

But this was also something very important that John said:

John 1:33 NASB

[33]I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

Matthew 3:11

[11]"As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Luke 3:16

[16]John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

These are very important things to note. The baptism or washing of water was something done to prepare man to commune with God. And it was symbolic. It is very important to note that it was a symbol. When John was asked to identify himself, one of the things he said in response was that he baptized in water. Why would he say that? It is for the same reason that we find him elaborating elsewhere that the One coming after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit. John was really saying that he was a shadow, a symbol, not the real thing which would come after him.

The Christ was the real deal, the Light which cast the shadow of John the Baptist. It was the baptism of the Christ that mattered. John's was one of respect and preparation. The Baptism of the Lord Jesus was the One that actually accomplished what the Lord wants, that is perfect fellowship and union with Man without sin getting in the way anymore.

Acts 1:4-5 NASB

[4]Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me;

[5]for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

So, in a nutshell, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has no place for water baptisms. Such baptisms (regardless what the form or method preferred) only looked forward to the Coming of the Lord Jesus to die for our sins and finally open up the Way back into fellowship with God. Now that the Lord has actually come and died for our sins, such baptisms serve only to proclaim that He has in fact not come at all. That is blasphemy. The Spirit witnesses that the Lord Jesus has come in the flesh and died for our sins and has been raised up from the dead and received back into Heaven by the Father. That makes any symbol that still looks forward to the Coming of the Christ an accuser of the Holy Spirit.

So, it is spiritually dangerous to indulge in water baptisms of any kind. Whether sprinkling or immersion, it matters not a whit. Whether it is done at a baptismal font, in a tank or at a river is of no consequence. Who did it and what age at which it was done count for nothing. This is all because water baptism has no place in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ's Baptism

The Baptism of consequence today is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit which God graciously grants to all who believe. It is through this baptism that we become part of the Church, the Body of Christ and through which we are brought into union with the Lord Jesus. Contrary to what is popular in Pentecostal circles today, this Baptism does not occur specially after one has been saved. It is the very means by which we are saved.

Romans 8:9

[9]However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Acts 15:8

[8]And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us

Acts 11:14-18

[14]and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'

[15]And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning.

[16]And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

[17]Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

[18]When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."

That is, Salvation is actually the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. When we believe, God gives us the Gift of the Holy Spirit to make us His. This is not something that takes a long time. And it is certainly not something that happens more than once. There is a lie that says that we get the Holy Spirit at Salvation and then later get baptised or filled with Him. This is not true. We get the Holy Spirit when and once we believe the Gospel, then we are commanded to continue to stay filled with Him. What that latter means is that we must be careful to continue to grow spiritually until it is the Holy Spirit Who fills our hearts, not the influence of the flesh. This is yet another thing into which, God-willing, we will delve deeper in time. For now, the important thing to know is that the Lord Jesus baptizes all who believe in Him with the Holy Spirit at the moment that they believe.

On Difficult Passages

There are some passages of Scripture like Acts 19:1-7 which may seem to make this a more difficult teaching to accept but again there are answers. Here, we will touch briefly on the answers and trust the Lord to bring us back to them in time. In Acts 19 and every other place where the Holy Spirit was not given as soon as some people believed and not until an Apostle laid hands on them, this happened because of the special period during which the Apostles ministered. It was at a time when the Lord was changing the dispensation of the Truth (that is, His Grace Means of providing the Truth to those who thirst for it) and opening the doors of His House wide open to the Gentiles. For this reason, the rules for that period were different. In fact, it was not very long before people stopped needing the mediation of the Apostles to receive the Holy Spirit.

We will stop at this point and trust the Lord for another opportunity to learn these things more in-depth.

May the Lord's Grace keep your spirit.