

The Vincennes Voice

“...The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight...” (Matt. 3:3)

A teaching bulletin produced and provided by FIRST CITY CHURCH OF CHRIST

Volume 3 ♦ Issue 47 ♦ November 20, 2022

EFFECTIVE BAPTISM

Larry R. Ping II

It is a battle which will forever be fought in the Lord's Church. The desire to have more members and more in attendance, at the expense of the truth and what is right. I have been there, and you most likely have as well. This issue manifests itself in many ways. This short article will address one of those.

Local congregations often are faced with an individual wishing to identify with them (Acts 9:26-27). While the local elders, or brethren, are not private investigators, they still have the responsibility to keep the church pure. One question which routinely needs to be posed is if the proposed individual is a Christian as pictured in the New Testament. Has the individual been taught and followed the Lord's plan of salvation? Have they been baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38)? Were they aware the Lord would add them to the one, true church (Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4; Eph. 1:22-23)? Were they made mindful of their new responsibilities as a Christian? We are often in such a hurry to baptize someone, we skip over needful and necessary instruction. Do not get me wrong! I have baptized a lot of folks in my lifetime, and I hope to baptize many more, as it is necessary for salvation (Mk.

16:16). However, each individual must be knowledgeable concerning what they are doing, and why.

It has become an increasing issue to accept folks as members who have been baptized previously, but it is clear it was not for the right reasons or under the right teaching. Those who write articles such as this, and teach the Bible truths concerning this issue are often ridiculed and are accused of “questioning” another's baptism. Let us be clear: Not teaching the truth, or compromising the truth on this issue is, without doubt, putting souls in eternal jeopardy. And to do so in the name of love, or to simply boost numbers and attendance, must be stopped.

This issue basically boils down to one question. What must an individual know *prior* to being baptized? What must one be taught before they *become* a candidate for baptism? And while we are here at this juncture, it must be pointed out one cannot retroactively travel back in time in their mind and make their previous baptism effective. For instance, an individual who was baptized 50 years ago in the Baptist denomination (who by the way does not teach the necessity of baptism) cannot now say their baptism was for the remission of sin and that that baptism added them to the one, true Lord's church. It simply does not work in such ways, and to teach and intimate such will put souls in

severe eternal peril.

The Bible, of course, offers the answer to our question. It can be found in Acts 8:12 which says, “*But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*” Here, we have a divine record of what was taught to individuals prior to their being baptized. Consider.

1) PHILIP TAUGHT THE PEOPLE OF SAMARIA ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

In this place, as in most places in the New Testament, the “*kingdom*” is a reference to the “*church*” (Matt. 16:18-19). Therefore, I know Philip said some things about the Lord's church. I cannot say exactly what he said, but he said something. Hence, when I am teaching someone about the Lord's plan of salvation, I, too, must say something about the Lord's church. Folks must be aware upon the event of their baptism, the Lord will add them to His church (Acts 2:47). Folks also must be aware the Bible teaches there is only “*one body*” (Eph. 4:4), which is the “*church*” (Eph. 1:22-23). To not teach this to a prospective convert is to withhold information not only which must be taught, but to which they have every right. Some may say, but Acts 8:12 is the only place which

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teaches this. This is not present in any other conversion in the book of Acts. May I point out only one conversion in the book of Acts catalogues a confession (Acts 8:37)? Shall we stop teaching about the need for confession simply because it is only in one conversion account? Of course not. Just the same, we should not stop teaching about the kingdom, or the church either. Did they make a confession in Acts 2? Absolutely! Did the Corinthians repent, although we are told they were *"hearing believed, and were baptized"* (Acts 18:8)? Absolutely! Part of accurate Bible teaching and application is to understand if something occurred during one conversion, it happened in every conversion, though not explicitly stated.

2) PHILIP TAUGHT THE PEOPLE OF SAMARIA ABOUT THE NAME OF JESUS. That is, Jesus has all authority, and individuals wishing to be saved must respond to it. Jesus affirmed, *"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"* (Matt. 28:18). He has it all, leaving us none. This is precisely why Paul penned, *"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him"* (Col. 3:17; Acts 4:7). Perhaps Philip quoted the Lord who said, *"He*

that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

3) PHILIP TAUGHT THE PEOPLE OF SAMARIA ABOUT BAPTISM. This is clear since *"both men and women"* were baptized in Samaria (Acts 8:12). The Bible supplies us with abundant information about the necessity of baptism. It saves (Mk. 16:16; I Pet.3:21). It remits sin (Acts 2:38). It washes away sin (Acts 22:16). It puts one into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27) in whom can be found all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). It is a burial (Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:1-6). It is not, as some erroneously teach, an "outward sign of an inward grace."

4) THERE ARE SOME WHO NEED TO BE BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. This author has never been an enthusiast regarding the term "rebaptism." To suggest someone is being "rebaptized" is to suggest they are doing something again which they have already done, which they are not.

Once again, the Bible helps us see this need. When Paul arrived in Ephesus, he encountered about 12 men who had only *"John's baptism"* administered unto them. Recall, John's baptism was a burial in

water (Jn. 3:23) and was for the remission of sin as well (Mk. 1:4). According to some teachers today, these men would be just fine. But the text says, *"Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus"* (Acts 19:4-5). Notice, they were not "rebaptized." Rather, they were baptized *"in the name of the Lord."*

One cannot have been baptized for the remission of sin if they were baptized by someone who did not teach baptism was for the remission of sin. Neither can one claim their previous baptism added them to the one, true church when they were never taught about such. A tell-tale sign one has not been taught right before baptism is one who has never attended the services of the Lord's people. Why? Because they were not taught prior to their baptism.

We need to be teaching folks the truth on this subject and exercise patience with those we teach along these lines.

May we always respect God, His Word, and His commands!

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MEETING TIMES (EST)

SUNDAY

Bible Study – 10:00 am

Worship – 11:00 am & 3:00 pm

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study – 7:00 pm