

DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMS

By

EMMA NJ NWOSU

WATER BAPTISM

INTRODUCTION:- Water baptism is one of the basic foundational doctrines of the body of Christ. (Heb. 6:1-2)

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 and of FAITH IN GOD, INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT BAPTISMS, THE LAYING ON OF HANDS, THE RESURRECTION OF DEAD, and ETERNAL JUDGMENT.

These topics are termed elementary doctrines by the author of the book of Hebrews. It means that as people came into the church in those days, these form parts of first teachings they have to receive.

The writer of Acts of the Apostles agrees with this. In giving account of Peter's first message he states:

With many other words he warned them, and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation" Those who accepted his message were baptized and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching, and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:40-42

I want my reader to note it was after baptism that they were added to the number and began to sit at the Apostles' feet to be guided in the doctrine. I was fascinated to note that through out the records of Acts of the Apostles, there was no account where some group of believers sent message to the Apostles in Jerusalem or that Apostles sent people somewhere to guide in baptism or officiate in same. We will be talking more on this.

Many new churches are really not well grounded on this topic. Some just carry-over the practice from their former church, some borrow patterns and a pity to say some ignore it completely. I was in a church that had existed for five years but not one member has undergone baptism. There was another one I visited and the Pastor told me that he was waiting for a so-called Bishop to ordain him and give him the right to minister baptism and Holy Communion before he goes into it; even though the church had been there for three years and with more than seventy members.

This does not mean that these Pastors are false prophets but just that they do not know what to do. These look up to those they respect and

feel they know better. Even though I encourage mentor-protégé relationship, I regret to state that most young ministers do not know how to sift the teachings and doctrine they inherited from their mentors.

Let it suffice to say that any person who is not baptized into the name of Jesus and does not participate in the Holy Communion is not a Christian. It does not matter what part you play in the church.

In some evangelistic and prophetic churches, they normally start with healing, deliverance, word of knowledge and prophecy, but do not know when or how to go into issues of Christian doctrines. You see such churches after growing to a particular height scatter, and quite often, in a shameful way. The fact is that they were not able to make them Christians or members of the church. It is doctrines that make people members of a particular assembly or sect.

My prayer is that God will help the church see the handwriting on the wall and hear what the Spirit is saying to his church. They should borrow a lesson from the Roman Catholic Church and these cult groups that are spreading all over Africa from India, America and Europe. ECKANKAR, AMORC, GRAIL MESSAGE, JEHOVAH WITNESSES etc. All these spend quality time indoctrinating their members.

I pray that this book will challenge you to pay time to Christian doctrines.

I have prayed for you.

BRO EMMA

Chapter one

Why is the issue of immersion baptism so important?

The doctrine of immersion baptism is one of the major doctrines of the Christian faith. God considers it so; one of the major assignments of John the Baptist was to prepare a people for the coming messiah (Luke 1:17), and this he did by baptizing them into repentance. If you take time to study it, you will see that the first Apostles of Christ were mainly those that John had baptized. Baptism was a divine key that was to open the way to the new move of God with Man. John who was the fore-runner to Jesus Christ had this to say about baptism, ***I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.*** **John 1:31NIV.** Baptism fast forwarded the divine time-table and brought to the front that which could have remained under covers- manifestation of the Christ.

Another principal assignment of John was to baptize Jesus Christ before the commencement of his earthly ministry. Jesus did not have any sin to wash away, but had to be baptized. This further proves to us how important the matter is before God. It is also note worthy that Jesus could not commence his earthly ministry until He was baptized. Again we have to also observe that the heavens over Jesus the Son of God only opened after His baptism. Even the worst critics of Jesus Christ, never accused Him of sin, yet He never heard the voice of His father until He was Baptized. God also made a public declaration of His Sonship and divine approval only after He came out of the water of baptism.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." **Matt 3:16-17NIV**

All these should tell us that baptism is not a secondary doctrine for the church. In the Apostles' ministry, they did not see it as something that could be delayed. The three thousand that repented on the day of Pentecost were baptized immediately, the Ethiopian eunuch, a total stranger to Philip was baptized at the point he confessed Christ. The jailer's family (Acts 16:16-34) were baptized in the night, Cornelius' family and neighbors were baptized even though they were already Spirit filled (Acts 10:38-44). Saul of Tarsus, who was struck blind on his way to Damascus, was baptized immediately he received his sight.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

The word BAPTISM is gotten from a Greek word which means to immerse or deep into....So when we say water baptism we mean to deep into water. But more important is the understanding of some basic facts in this. You are dipped or immersed in water in somebody's name or a symbol of initiation and membership to a particular group. I mean to state that just because you have been dipped in the water does not mean you have done Christian baptism. The Brother-Hood of the Cross and Star baptize their members into the name of their founder, Olumba Olumba Obu; the AMORC baptize their members; Cherubim and Seraphim, Sabbath, other White-Garment churches and many other occult societies do the same. That is why it is important to pay attention to know what your minister is saying while baptizing you.

Christian baptism is to be baptized into the name of Christ Jesus.

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into his death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the father, we too may live a new life. Rom 6:3-4

and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ 1 Peter 3:21NIV

Baptism therefore means these things.

(a) **An outward show of the spiritual thing that has taken place in the life of the Christian.**

In order words it says, "You see the way this man goes into the water and is completely covered, in same way the old person that he was has died with all that it represents. You see the way he comes out of the water, in the same way he has risen with Christ from the grave. He is therefore a new person. Old things have passed away.

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. Rom 6:3-5NIV

The people of the world may not believe this but this is the way God before whom we all shall be judged, sees it.

(b) An outward declaration of membership to the body of Christ:

Many Christians of my generation may not understand what this implies, especially those from the liberated areas- that is areas with dominant Christian population. Some years back in Igbo land, Nigeria, your parents will disown you and you will lose every birth right for becoming a Christian. To accept to be baptized is a way of saying, "I do not care what it will cost me, I have decided to follow Jesus. I accept his glory and his shame". In this sense you can understand what Christ means by,

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-yes, even his own life-he can not be my disciple. Luke 14:26

To this very date some people lose their lives after baptism in some Arab nations. And Jesus says that if one is not able to declare openly for him, that one can not be his disciple.

(c) The commencement of a new life in Christ Jesus:

That is the point your Christian life actually begins. Before this time all you have been doing is faking Christianity. We will come to this later, but just understand that without baptism you have not started the Christian race. That is why nobody has the right to delay for one minute anybody who is willing to be baptized, for whatever reason.

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. Mark 16:16NIV

(d) Pledge of a good conscience before God through cleansing of the inner man through knowledge of state of peace with God.

And baptism, which is a figure [of their deliverance], does now also save you [from inward questionings and fears], not by the removing of outward body filth [bathing], but by [providing you with] the answer of a good and clear conscience (inward cleanness and peace) before God [because you are demonstrating what you believe to be yours] through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 3:21AMP

(e) To be clothed with Christ-

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. Gal 3:27 NIV

This is a mystery but truth. At baptism we are clothed with Christ as our regalia; by this we take the form of Christ in the spirit.

Chapter two

KINDS OF BAPTISM

The bible spoke about four kinds of baptisms, but the Christian concern themselves with two.

- (a) **Baptism into Moses or Jewish proselyte baptism:**
They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.
1 Cor. 10:2

Even though the above passage speaks of the wilderness journey of the Jews on their way from Egypt, Jewish leaders clinch on it and ask that their converts be baptized into Moses.

- (b) **John the Baptist's baptism:**
So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." Acts 19:3-4NIV

In Matt 3:11 and Luke 3:16, John himself declared that he came to baptize people unto repentance to prepare the way for Jesus.

- (c) **Water baptism-**This is where we are now.
- (d) **Holy Spirit Baptism-** Discussed in volume two of this series.

WHY BAPTISM?

Why is baptism an essential for every Christian?

- (a) Christ commands it- Christianity is a kingdom with Christ as the King. Every kingdom has basic laws and by-laws guiding it. Baptism is commanded by the King.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, BAPTIZING THEM.....Matt 28:19

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.... Mark 16:15-16

Jesus himself baptized his converts-

The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John. John 4:1

It is a pre-requisite for membership in Christianity. Though one pays tithe and offering and partakes in other functions, he is not a Christian until he is baptized. In fact, it is wrong to collect tithe from church comers whom we denied baptism.

(b) The lamb's book of life- It is at the point of baptism that ones name is recorded in the book of life. Some people will say, "Let me be coming and be sure I want to belong"; others say, "It does not matter, I am Spirit filled and doing the work of God". These ones have not considered that even Christ himself went to be baptized by John the Baptist. (John 3:21)

It is dangerous to be doing the work of God without first being a child of God. The bible has an example-

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' Matt 7:21-23NIV

To get baptized is to do the will of God, refusal to do so is to reject the commandment of God. Somebody may ask me, "How about those who did not have chance to be baptized before death, like the thief on the cross?"

In every rule there are exceptions. The rule is that if anyone comes to Christ, he should be baptized. Failure to do this is outright rebellion. As a travel evangelist, I used to underscore the use for water baptism. I believed that if they just confess Christ, it was okay. It was a detailed study of scripture that opened my eyes, especially the case of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. Those who did not refuse to be baptized but did not have the opportunity to do so before death will have their case decided by God Himself.

(c) Public declaration for Christ-Christ and his disciples baptized their converts at watersides, where boats were arriving, fishermen were fishing and all manner of enterprises were going on. Baptism meant that one was willing to make his confession public. It is proper to organize fellowship meetings at the waterside that will usher in praises, clapping and prayers. As people see this, it is now published that the new converts have become members with the body of Christ. One reason the bible admonishes that a believer publicly confesses their faith is (a) To destroy the spirit of timidity in the new converts and (b) to induce the world to act as a watch-dog over our member. (E.g. A-ah-ah, Sister Rita, I thought you said you are now a Christian, why are you still sitting in a

beer parlor? And you Brother Michael do Christians fight and beat their wives?

For some exceptional reasons, the minister may endorse a secret baptism. This again is an exception. Some of us in what I call liberated areas do not know that there are places people are still dying for confessing Christ as Lord.

(d) Escape from wrath and judgment:

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them; “you brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?” Matt 3:7

The above statement was made to those coming to be baptized openly; they were escaping from a deserved judgment. It also means that when one is baptized in Christ, he is cut off from judgment due to Adamic sin. He is accepting the death of Christ on his account and so, (in the words of John the Baptist) has escaped. If this is so, he has disarmed the principalities and powers, so that they do not have the legal standing to execute the judgment which most often is in form of curses.

God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Col.2:13-15

Baptism is an open declaration of the above statement. It is saying, “let heaven and earth, birds of the air, animals on the land and fishes in the water, angels and demons; bear witness today that this brother has been rescued from judgment through his faith in Christ.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the son he loves. Col. 1:13

Let no one be deceived to believe that the devil will stop attacking at this point. Remember Jesus says he does not delight in the truth (John 8:44). Even though this is the truth he will want to rebel against it. He can only be forced to respect this truth as the child of God learns to enforce it on him. That is why Jesus says they should be added to the number of believers and taught (Acts 2:41-43). There are occasions this may not be easy, the new convert is prayed for, committed into the hand of the Holy Spirit and backed up by intercession. It will be wonderful if this one can receive bible. I remember giving my personal bible at two occasions for this reason.

(d) Separation from demonic ties- I experienced this very strongly as a Pastor of a church some years back. There was this woman who was afflicted by marine spirits. She got sick at particular seasons and will appear to die, until her husband made expensive sacrifices to marine spirits. They brought her to my church on one occasion they could not meet with the demands due to lack of money. We prayed for her and she was okay. But when she came the next time, she would have died in church while we were holding a deliverance service. After that time, I asked that she should be baptized by immersion, having being baptized as a child in the Roman Catholic Church. To cut a long story short, she has been okay since that immersion baptism. I have seen that more than once. Demons respect divine laws. Ancestral ties and covenants can be broken through baptism. Those who were baptized earlier into occult should be re-baptized into Christ.

Chapter three

WHEN SHOULD ONE BE BAPTISED?

In all of scriptures I see only one qualification for baptism, and that is that if that person will believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. I have always said that Christianity began to depart from its centre very early. By the second century some people had already begun to lay special rules to qualify people for baptism. Reasons being that some denied Christ during persecution. They decided to be sure that the person they baptized will not fall away. In some churches today, you would have stayed in the church for up to one year, shown evidence of genuine repentance, being tested and found able to communicate your faith, and then you can be baptized. In some group, you are not allowed to share in the Holy Communion until after one year. Yet these brethren claim they are obeying scriptures. I have been tempted many times to think that these people have their special versions of scripture. But I have also been shocked to discover that they use the same bible I use. Some still after they discover that scriptures do not back their views, still insist this is the way they want it. They don't want armed robbers to go to heaven and kill their wonderful Jesus.

I do not think it is necessary to begin to give bible references in this matter, because you would not have gone far into the New Testament before you begin to see the qualification for baptism. In Acts chapter two, the three thousand that believed, were baptized the same day (vs. 41), Cornelius and his family were baptized the day they believed (Acts 10:47), the Jailer and his family in Acts 16, were baptized the night they heard the gospel, the Ethiopian Eunuch was baptized on the highway (Acts 8:36-38), the brethren in Ephesus in Acts 19: 1-2 were baptized the same day they heard the gospel.

So, where did brethren get this doctrine? They are doctrine of men who want to help God and Holy Spirit, they have neglected God's own righteousness and set-up their own. So, have not submitted to God's righteous. Matt 15:9, Rom.10: 2-3. If you are a pastor or Christian worker who has been following the wrong precedence, I ask you to repent and obey the Holy Spirit.

Let us not loss sight of the fact that these men are sincere in their hearts. They do not want people to give a bad name to the church, but Paul advised against laying another foundation against what has been laid. (1 Cor. 3:11). We have no option than to follow the pattern of the scriptures. In John 6, after Jesus introduced to his disciples the doctrine of eating his flesh and drinking his blood it records, **“From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.** (vs. 66). It was so much so that only the twelve were left with Him. Compare

this with John 4vs. 1. **The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John.** So those who deserted him were baptized disciples. When he was taken up to heaven about five hundred was present and in the upper room one hundred and twenty. Can you see the fluctuation? Many people do not know that the three thousand mentioned in Acts 2, were those baptized, but does not represent the total figure, because, obviously there were returnees.

Child of God, your duty is to obey the word of God. Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. I have seen pastors who went through the whole order, attended a bible college, yet later backslide and live like men who never heard the gospel. How about Judas Iscariot, Ananias and Sapphira? Were they not baptized? Child of God, if they believe, baptize them!

There are two no-go areas in this matter-

- a. Infant baptism: Bible said that those to be baptized would have heard the gospel and accepts Christ as Lord and Saviour. They are to willingly offer themselves for baptism. This is exactly what a baby can not do. Some have argued that it is possible that there were children in Cornelius' and the Jailer's houses. Acts 10:1-end, Acts 16: 30-34

It is wrong to build doctrines on assumption. I have entered families where the youngest member was eighteen years. In as much as you can not believe for somebody to be saved you can not force somebody into baptism.

- b. Forced or unwilling adult baptism: Some would say, "If you want me to pay your school fees, you must be baptized". This is wrong. This is the strong difference between Christianity and other religions of the world. Nobody is forced to become a Christian. The will must be exercised.

CAN ONE BE RE-BAPTISED?

The answer of this question is "Yes!" and "No!"

YES!-In the case of somebody who was baptized as an infant, under duress, as an unbeliever or under a wrong foundation (e.g. under an occult church, white garment, occult society etc.) all these need to be re-baptized. Some people argue that baptism is baptism, quoting-

There is one body and one spirit-just as you were called to one hope when you were called-one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
Eph. 4:4-6

Notice that the above scripture said also one Lord. Anything done to appease God, which does not submit totally to the Lordship of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, is not in agreement with scripture. Hence, is not acceptable. That is why it says,

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

Remember that I also said earlier that God created us with free will and so will not welcome any obedience that violates your free will.

No! - The answer is “no” in the case of a believer who travels to another state and does not find his fellowship or branch of his church, it will be wrong to demand that he be re-baptized. Not even for doctrinal differences is this permitted. What I mean by doctrinal differences are issues that does not violate the basic tenets of our faith e.g. wearing trousers, using necklace, worshipping with hairs open etc.

Any body who was baptized under a church or ministry that accepts the Lordship of Christ Jesus who was born of a virgin, son of God and also fully son of man, was crucified, was buried, resurrected on the third day, ascended into heaven and to return as King; but has sent us the Holy Spirit, the third person of the triune God who comforts and builds the church through the saints; such person should not be re-baptized. Whether he believes in speaking in tongues or not, whether he believes in divine healing or not. Teachings will take care of that.

Some churches are tempted to re-baptize backslide who returns to Christ. This is funny too. By implication, one should be re-baptized each time one falls into sin and repents. That means before one dies, he would have been baptized ten times. Backsliders are children of God who sinned, they are still children of God, so they do not need to be re-baptized. Remember the prodigal son; he was still a son but thought to have died. When he returned he was not required to enter his mother’s womb again.

WHO SHOULD OFFICIATE (MINISTER) BAPTISM?

An evangelist, who worked with me under the Prayer Network for Universal Revival for at least two years before he went to Bible School and continued after he took up pastorate under the Assemblies of God Church, came to me one day very sad. His story was that he took an aging lady to be baptized by his district overseer-AGC have a day, once in a while when they baptized new converts, and until after this time, the new convert was not regarded as a member and can not partake in the Lord’s table. On this particular day the district overseer refused to

baptize the woman, because according to him the evangelist came late to the water. This is despite the fact that he had followed this woman up for over a year and she had been interviewed by the sectional leader. With eyes red with anger he asked what I would do if I were in his place. To this I told him that there was no way I would have been or the least member of the church, that is because I teach even old women in my church how to baptize.

I keep stressing this regret that Christianity has deviated so much from the centre that what we have today is only but a caricature of the original thing. Denominationalism further created some irreparable damages to the system. People are more concerned to keep people under them than obey the word of God. And more often than not, begin to work against God in the name of doing the work of God.

The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples I John 4:1-2.

Jesus taught his disciples to baptize, not him. And when the early church was planted the bible said that they spent time on the Apostles doctrine. What were the Apostles doctrines? Those things he taught them. Every believer was taught how to baptize. That was why when the church was scattered abroad, we do not have the names of those who planted the church in Rome, Ephesus, Antioch and many other places. Yet, we did not read one account when somebody was sent in response to an invitation, to baptize people some where. Holy Communion was from house to house, each time the believers gathered.

I do not wish to give a hard or fast rule on this point. The important thing is let believers be baptized. Nobody, no matter how highly placed, has the right to delay the baptism of any man born of a woman as much as one second. I also opine that Christians should be taught how to baptize in case what happened in Jerusalem happens in Nigeria or any other part of the world.

Chapter four

IN WHOSE NAME SHOULD ONE BE BAPTISED?

In asking this question, I do not mean the name of Jesus against name of the occult or otherwise. It is within the context of true Christianity I mean.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Matt 28:19

All translations of the bible do not have quarrel about the above passage. There is only disagreement on the interpretation. Note that the passage used the singular NAME for the three titles; The NAME of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And as we go to the Acts of the Apostles, we see this NAME

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Acts 2:38

Because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Acts 8:16

So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Acts 10:48

On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Acts 19:5

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Rom 6:3

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. Gal. 3:27

There would have been no need for this argument if not for the problem this misunderstanding caused. Some people not discerning that Matt 28:19 said NAME and not "names" went into the error of immersing people three times into the water, Anglican church and many other orthodox and evangelical churches sprinkle people three times, signifying three immersions, we do not intend to further stress the fact that infant baptism is not Christian baptism, in the same way baptism of an unbeliever who has not exercised his will is against Christian practice. This also goes on to say that in a case where true Christian doctrine supports only a single immersion, anyone baptizing somebody three

times is on his own. And all that have gone through such a baptism, as a matter of fact, has to be re-baptized in the proper way.

Where the minister says, "In the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit", or "In the name of Jesus", to me should not gender great controversy. The two are saying one and the same thing without knowing it. The reader should try to understand that I am making efforts here, as in all my writings to avoid extremism in any direction, but tend to present what I call the central doctrine. So it is demanded of me in as much as I know some people have been following my teachings as they would follow a mentor-to present what I know and believe as total truth of scripture. So that those who would want to make research or even critique will find a sound base for such.

HOW IF THERE IS NOT ENOUGH WATER FOR IMMERSION?

This question is relevant in view of the fact that some people sprinkle people in the name of baptism. I want my readers to understand that sprinkling baptism did not necessarily start because of lack of river for baptism. This all started for the same reason I have been expressing regrets. Christianity deviated from the centre very early. It changed from being a living organism to a dead organization. It started as the gathering of believers in individual homes, market places and halls but now is recognized in architectural buildings. It started simply by prayer, reading the word of God, breaking of bread (Holy Communion) and singing of hymns. Today, it has become complex rituals, burning of incense, dressing of altars, priestly robes and collars and intimidating titles. Now when it came to the last level, it became impossible or rather against ministerial ethics- for a minister to do his duty outside a church building. By result, since it is not possible to bring the river into church auditorium, sprinkling from basin was the last resort. And like every angular deviation, as time progressed, the gap widened. To the point that those who do not know how it all began are struggling to find biblical backing for it.

The word BAPTIZE means to dip or immerse into.... So when there is not enough water some brethren have resorted to some commendable measures. They fill large troughs with water and make the new convert kneel in it and he is baptized. Some look for swimming pools. I am yet to minister in any location where a river is not within ten kilometers. The children of God should resolve in their hearts to please the Lord and in a situation where they can not do otherwise, any pattern adopted will be understood by the Lord. But it is wrong to flagrantly move against the word of God just to compliment the excesses of the flesh.

Chapter five

HOW DO I BAPTISE SOMEBODY?

There are different methods to apply but the ones I describe are methods I use. I do not mean to say it is better than other methods. The important thing is that let the new converts be baptized.

ERRONEOUS VIEWS ABOUT BAPTISM

a. Baptism can on its own wash away sins.

By the second century people had started to believe that baptism could wash away sins. Emperor Constantine who God used to usher in a time of peace for the church, after many persecutions and martyrdom which preceded his reign, bought this wrong notion from the backslidden church of his day, refused to be baptized until he was sure he was ready and close to his death. His intention is that his sins will be washed away once for all and he will go to God without any sin. Some after him were getting baptized several times, so that they will not have any sin on them.

Those who advance this view quote this passage.

And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name. Acts 22:16

And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also- not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 pt. 3:21

We would simply overlook this error, for after all, whether one believes it is the immersion in water that saves him or the confession of faith in the name and sacrifice of Jesus, the important thing is let the sinner be saved and baptized. But like what we saw earlier a slight angular deviation leads to greater errors. The diagram below will explain what I mean.

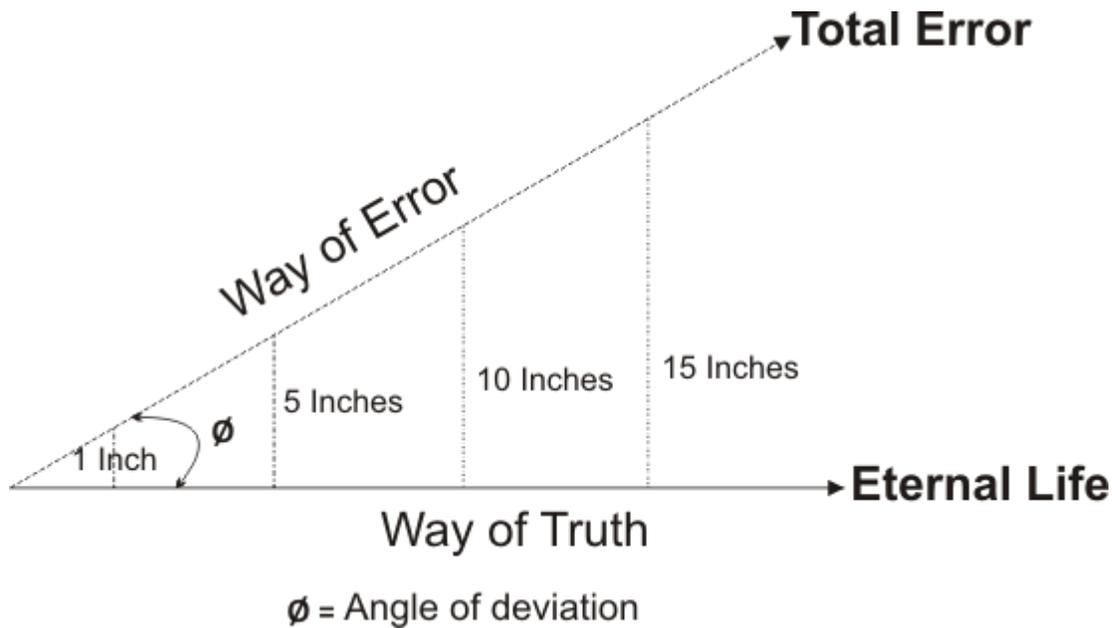


DIAGRAM SHOWING ANGULAR DEVIATION OF ERROR

You see that what started as less than one inch deviation will eventually end-up in 20 inches deviation and finally end-up in total error that can lead men into eternal condemnation in hell fire.

To return to our question, Emperor Constantine who we mentioned earlier, landed in this total error. There were many atrocities he got into and died with the presumption that his baptism washed those sins away. Church history has it that a time came when people were made to pay for their salvation and eventually their baptism. This error also contributed to the error that one can loss his salvation by one mistake, and so if that one repents after, he has to be re-baptized. Water baptism does not have anymore power to save anybody than the communion bread and wine has to give one eternal life. It can not on its own wash away sin. But because of the presence of the Holy Spirit, many people had received wonderful miracles at the point of baptism.

1. Baptism is obedience to God's word.
2. Baptism is a physical symbol reflecting the spiritual thing that has happened in your life.
3. Baptism is a public declaration for the church.
4. Baptism is outward initiation into the Christian faith.

Yet, the water on its own does not wash away either sin or guilt. That is why only those who have believed in Christ, hence have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, are due to be baptized.

b. Baptism before Holy Communion:

If people are baptized at the point of confessing Christ, this issue would have been irrelevant. Like I said earlier, one error leads to another. Just because our brother was not baptized according to bible precepts, the Pastor now struggles with allowing him partake in the Lord's Supper. Again what we call the Lord's Supper in toady's church is at variance with what it originally was, in administration and by interpretation. Yes, because now it has become for some people a special ceremony of slices of wafer biscuit and some special wine from Europe called communion wine, and we are supposed to line up sanctimoniously to receive it from a holy sinless man of God, who has the power to examine us through the microscope of his own standards, not bible standards, this question arises. In some churches you are warned not to partake if you are not a member of their denomination. Having read this book thus far, I wish to allow this question for your judgment.

On my own, when I minister Holy Communion, I give to whoever is willing to take. I make sure I explain what we are doing. I even give my little children.

c. Baptismal class before baptism:

I believe we have addressed this earlier.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations BAPTIZING them...and TEACHING them to... Matt 28:19-20

Christ in addressing the first disciples recommended the same process. Baptize them and then teach them.

d. One should take a new name at Baptism:

This has no biblical or historic backing. I do not know the origin of this view. I know that Roman Catholics and Anglicans do it and I can not for sure say why. Perhaps because they baptize infants, and so combine the naming ceremony and the baptism. But the bible is clear on naming ceremony.

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah. Luke 1:59

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus...Luke 2:21

I am not saying that one who takes a new name at baptism sinned but it has no biblical backing.

Chapter six

WHAT FOLLOWS AFTER BAPTISM?

This question is the principal reason why some sincere brethren would not baptize somebody at first confession of Christ. They see it as a waste of time. So they want to be sure the person is willing to sit down and identify with the body of Christ. I respect their concern, but still insist that we obey the bible. Which church did the Ethiopian Eunuch, Cornelius and the Macedonian Jailer join? They were people whom the brethren ministered to on the way; they were baptized and committed into God's hands via the Holy Spirit. The church is a spiritual structure coordinated by the Holy Spirit. Heaven will be full of surprises. Some people we would not have believed will make heaven will arrive there before us.

The primary product of complacency is arguments of no value. To this very date, in some parts of the world, people still rejoice to baptize one new convert without fanfare, whereas those in the liberated areas want their whole church to go and sing and clap by the waterside before they baptize a convert.

All things being equal- by this I mean there is no opposition or danger and there is body of believers' around- the bible says that the new convert is to be added to the body of believers.

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number. Acts 2:41

Baptized and added and vs. 42 says they devote themselves to the Apostles teachings to ground them. But if you are on transit and makes a convert, just pray for the person and commit him to God. If you can, hand him a bible. By this way I have given away two of my personal bibles. Then continue to remember him in prayer. Be assured that the God who saved you will keep that one safe. Some say that it was the Ethiopian Eunuch that took the gospel to Africa I believe this partly. Today, you can keep correspondence with the person through e-mail, phone and letter writing. Where possible, send gospel literatures to him. Also find out whether there are some believers in the city he comes from. Try to connect them.

And for the new convert, if you do not identify with a living church or group of bible teaching fellowship you are not likely to grow in YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF Christ. It is as you identify with them, that you can find answers to all other issues that bug the mind of new converts.

What I call the "HOWS."

How can I be born-again?

How can I preach to others?
How do I pray effectively?
How do I handle my unbelieving peers?
How do I overcome temptation?
How do I hear from God?
How do I know a true believer/minister? And so on.

If you do not identify with them, the enemy will confuse you, I also advice that you draw close to your Pastor. I have often noticed that most new converts are scared at drawing near to their Pastors. They fear he may not accept them. The truth is that your Pastor will really want to have you as friend. And then all your "HOWS" will likely be answered.

CONCLUSION

It is important to know what you as a believer in Christ Jesus stands for and represent. It is also of paramount importance that Pastors should take time to indoctrinate their members. But let it suffice to say that rather than have a member in the church that is not baptized, baptize in a haste. The battle is a war for souls of men. No person who has seen your face should ever say before the throne of grace that nobody preached to him. It is an urgent assignment, and like Elijah, we need to multiply our ministries into Jehu, Hazael and Elisha (1 Kings 19 : 15 - 17).

This is only possible if you follow the rule of the game; BAPTISE THOSE WHO BELIEVE!

Printed and published by,

*Paradise Revival Press (PRP). Literature arm of
Prayer Network for Universal Revival (PNUR).*

Door of Hope Christian Centre

Elimgbu- Eneka Road,

obio/Akpo LGA

Port- Harcourt- Nigeria

+234 8035724526, +234 8064160402

info@pnurnigeria.org www.pnurnigeria.org