

Notes on church teaching and baptism.

Firstly, Scripture must be the sole basis of anything we believe, and I certainly put no emphasis on the traditions or teachings of the "Church", whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, as that is where most of our problems come from. For instance the Catholic church teaches that all priests and Popes should be celibate and yet the man they claim was the first Pope was most certainly a married man, (see Mark ch.1v30 or 1Corinthians9v5).

Again both Catholic and Protestant churches teach that the "dead" are actually alive in either heaven, hell or purgatory when in fact the bible teaches no such thing, (see Job14v12, Psalm 115v17 or Ecclesiastes9v5). Therefore I put no emphasise on "church teaching" which runs contrary in many subjects to the plain teachings of scripture.

Regarding baptism I do not believe it has any relevance in this dispensation in which we now live, and as regards infant baptism, it is far away from scriptural teaching. Some refer to Mark10v14 where Jesus says, "*Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God*", but where does say that he baptised the children whom He took in His arms and blessed, or what sort of a God would punish infants who die unbaptized, who don't know their right hand from their left?

As to the Philippian jailor's household in Acts16 being baptized, read the passage carefully Paul preached the word to them, and verse 34 is clear concerning the jailor and his house, "*he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with ALL his house*". Those in the house must have been old enough to believe, not infants who could not understand the preaching. The same applies to 1 Corinthians 1v16 where the "household of Stephanas" is mentioned. Note however how little importance Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, places on baptism. He is showing that apart from 2 individuals and 1 household who had believed he can remember baptising no one else. Isn't that strange considering how many people Paul had reached and saw converted? He summarises the whole affair in v.17 "*For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the Gospel*". This statement flies in the face of the so called "great commission" of Matthew 28 and shows that Paul's ministry to the Gentiles did not put any emphasis on this water ritual. There is no doubt that the baptism practised by the Apostles was "*John's baptism*" had special significance during that period as it associated those baptised with the rejected Messiah and was at that time necessary for salvation (Mark16v16), but was never used in connection with infants.

The dispensation where this was practised ended at Acts ch,28 around 30 years after Christ's death and was an outward testimony of true repentance and acceptance of who Christ was, and we never find it mentioned in any of Paul's later Epistles.

The "*one baptism*" of which Paul writes in Ephesians ch.4 is a spiritual baptism reckoning ourselves to have died, been buried and raised again with Christ to walk in newness of life. That being the case there cannot be two baptisms when Paul states clearly in this later prison letter there is only "ONE" baptism. Remember when Paul writes in 1 Corinthians ch.10 of Israel's baptism unto Moses in the sea and in the cloud it was a totally waterless baptism, did they not cross the Red Sea dry shod? Yet spiritually they were identified with Moses in a non-water "baptism".

To sum up, Scripture is our only infallible guide to truth. Baptism is never taught in scripture as being necessary for children. Baptism today is neither needed nor taught in Paul's later Epistles for believers to practice. Many things practised by the early believers are not practised today (see Acts 2v44-45 and Acts 4v34-37), nor are the amazing miracles performed by them reproduced. These things belong to a former dispensation and we have moved on to the "*dispensation of the grace of God*", revealed to Paul and recorded in his later epistles, (see Ephesians and Colossians). As Colossians 1 clearly states "*We are complete in Him*". We do not and should not be practising these things today.

We must learn to "*rightly divide the word of truth*".