

Grace Bible Church
Pastor Robert R. McLaughlin
Tree Of Life
Week Ending 7-25-21

“Unity In The Body Comes Through Identification With Truth!!!”

In this week’s synopsis we will examine the following:

- Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus
- 10 + 2 gates of Nehemiah and their meaning
- Personal sacrifice is a must for spiritual growth and genuine service
- Impersonal love (PSD #7) – the perfect bond of unity
- Categories of spiritual death
- Categories of positional truth
- Baptism = identification
- 4 real baptisms & 3 ritual baptisms and their purpose
- When the perfect comes, the partial is phased out

Our fantastic “Christian Soldier Prep” series continues this week with some more amazing doctrines and applications. First off, we are going to briefly return to Nehemiah to look at life *inside* the walls and gates which Deacon Jason Kauranen graciously illuminated for us last week. He showed us how the 10 rebuilt gates of the city related to the spiritual life of the Church Age believer. Those gates interlock with the 10 PSD’s (Problem-Solving Devices) to protect the believer’s soul from the outside pressures of adversity, injustice, and antagonism, allowing the believer to remain in fellowship and inside of the PPOG for their life. Now we are going to look into life *inside* the walls.

**As always before beginning serious Bible study, please take a moment to ensure you are filled with the Holy Spirit by naming and citing any known sins to God the Father in your thoughts only, according to 1 Joh 1:9.*

In Philippians 2:1-11, Paul gives a wonderful summation of the Christian walk. The apostle Paul gives us the plan of being like Christ, which leads us into the mystery doctrine of the CA. He writes to the many churches and us in the epistles, so they will know, and we will know about how to live the Spiritual life that Christ came and die the substitutional spiritual death FOR US. You may take a moment to read the verse if you like. I will give a few key verses here:

Php 2:3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

Php 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

Phi 2:8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Now with that in mind, let's review the gates of Nehemiah. We are going to cover all 12 gates now, though only ten are mentioned in Chapter 3 for the re-building, and those are the ones we covered last week. Again, this is a quick overview. These gates were not only integral in the rebuilding of Jerusalem physically, but contained within the Scriptures in the book of Nehemiah, are spiritual messages about the PPOG and how to live your individual Spiritual life; pay close attention to the process of reconstruction set forth in the book of Nehemiah, chapter 3, as an analogous to your Spiritual life.

1. Sheep Gate
2. Fish Gate
3. Old Gate
4. Valley Gate
5. Dung Gate
6. Fountain Gate
7. Water Gate
8. Horse Gate
9. East Gate
10. Inspection Gate
11. The Gate of Ephraim
12. The Prison Gate

Now let's have a quick reminder of the analogous meanings of each gate as they relate to our spiritual walk.

1. **The Sheep Gate** represents the starting point for every Believer, SALVATION. Everything begins with the Cross and an offering of the Lamb of God, to those who believe, **Joh 1:29**
2. **The Fish Gate** – the spiritual meaning of the Fish Gate is, that after our redemption we begin to follow Jesus, teaching and instructing us to be His disciples and witnesses, 'fishers of men'. **Mat 4:19**
3. **The Old Gate** speaks to us of the old ways of truth or a strong foundation. Think of basic doctrine and divine establishment principles by which we ought to live.
4. **The Valley Gate** speaks to us of humbling ourselves (either being humbled by a situation or humbling oneself) and of testing and trials (suffering for blessing, deserved or undeserved).
5. **The Dung Gate** is where the rubbish is removed from our soul and replaced with the bible doctrine and evidence of truth.
6. **The Fountain Gate** speaks to us of the "living waters" of the Holy Spirit that cleanse our lives and empower us for our Spiritual life, which is the river of life in us.
7. **The Water Gate** is a picture of the Word of God and its effect in our life. Advance Doctrine. **Eph 5:26, Ps 119:9**
8. **The Horse Gate** speaks to us of strength and endurance during warfare, as horses were used in battle and became a symbol of war. **Rv 19:11**

9. **The East Gate** faced the rising sun, a new day, and is the Gate of Hope and Prosperity.
10. **The Inspection Gate** (aka Miphkad Gate) was evidently the place where judgment was conducted. **1Co 11:31**
11. **The Gate of Ephraim** represents double blessing or the Super-grace life of the mature believer; **Luke 6:38**.
12. **The Prison Gate** or “the gate of the Guard”, (**Neh 12:39**) represents the believer who has become a “bond servant” i.e. laying aside personal desires in order to serve the Lord, which is involved with dying grace and eternal blessing (aka “escrow” blessings for time and eternity).

In our Spiritual life, which is a super-natural way of life, we should be living (I mean an active way), with this attitude in mind. Right back to:

Php 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

Be Just Like Him, our ultimate example, Jesus Christ In His humanity was on the Cross, enduring through the power of the Spirit to finishing His work. We should be caring more for edifying others, winning souls, and growing up to Spiritual maturity. If your doing that, continue for you are great; if not you need to repair those spiritual walls and gates and strengthen that which remains.

The fact of Glorifying God in our bodies, not forsaking ourselves from gathering together and reach for the things of eternity, which is found in Unity, rather than the temporal worldly things that we see around us every day, for they will fade away with “moth and rust”
When you evaluate and start to rebuild, the strength of your life will return,

Php 4:13 I can do all things through Him who keeps pouring His strengthen into me.

HE SUPPLIES THE STRENGTH! Our Strength comes from the Lord.

However, you must be prepared to live the spiritual life because you will find when you are starting to advance, that the forces of darkness will immediately revolt against you.

The battle intensifies (the heat is turned up) both within yourself (compliments of the sin nature and arrogance complex of the soul) and outside yourself (pressure and pleasures), and that resists God's work in your life with every influence that can be used against you.

The enemy is cunning and sly but also intense and forceful ... enemy forces will stop at nothing to distract and deceive you taking you away from PPOG.

... Stand firm, for your God will fight for you.

Dt 1:30 The LORD your God who goes before you will Himself fight on your behalf,

Daily intake of Bible doctrine, filling of the Holy Spirit and Utilization of the PSD becomes the only way you will survive, because

Eph 5:16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

Paul states in 1Co 12 after talking about how each one of us has gifts that the Holy Spirit distributes for use, in verse 12

1Co 12:12-13 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

And this was part of Friday's lesson that Samantha brought forward...The baptism of the Holy Spirit at the point of Believe in Him, Your Salvation and not of water.

1Co 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many.

We are called out as Royal Family Members, to live our lives for others with eternity in view!

Each of us has our own things that need fixing to live out that Spiritual life, and when we do ...THEN we can help others. God has laid out the blue-print, through His son Jesus Christ, and gives us all the same power, by means of the Holy Spirit, to do so, and it is up to you and your volition of how you are going to advance. Do you want to become a bondservant of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you?? Do you want to glorify God? ; because that is what you were born for. We must become more and more ready and willing to lay down our lives – not just being prepared for death, but setting aside our personal interests and sacrificing our time – so that we can make PMA of Bible doctrine priority #1 in our lives and make ourselves available to be used by the Lord.

1Co 7:22 For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise, he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.

God is looking for devotion and commitment, not casual, nod-to-God, "lay" believers. No one can lose their salvation, no matter what, nor will God revoke basic logistical grace, but if we want to receive God's greatest and best, "exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we can think or ask", if we want to be invisible heroes who bless our family, town, local assembly, and nation by association, if we want to glorify God to the MAXIMUM by conveyance of our escrow blessings for time and eternity, we have to make a choice – and we must make it over and over and over. So it isn't hard to see why only the minority of believers completely fulfill the PPOG in their lifetimes.

Look at the Apostle Paul's life – The chief of all sinners, persecuting the Lord, then became a bondservant to Him, writing 1/3 of the NT, giving us the mystery doctrine for our CA dispensation. God was able to change him, Saul to Paul, we should be encouraged and have hope, as in confidence in what is promised, not only for ourselves, but every person out in this world whether a believer or unbeliever. This requires strong work ethic and discipline as well as personal sacrifice in staying the course.

So, with all that, I am going to continue in our study of Nehemiah seeing that the people, even though they may not have like each other, came together in Unity. It takes unconditional virtue love, which is what Our Lord has taught us, and a focus on why we are doing the things we do – that is motivation.

Let me ask you that question, What motivates you??

What motivated you to get up today, get yourself in the car and get here, on time? The answer is HIM, we do it all for HIM, to want to learn more about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and further that personal relationship with Him were we cry out “ABBA FATHER (sweet, sweet daddy)” in **Rom 8:15**.

Here is another question, Do you esteem Him?

When we gather together to praise and worship Him, fellowship with one another and you fostering of that personal relationship; are you By means of devotion, respecting Him as Creator, God, Saviour, Messiah, Lord, ect.?

Mal 3:16 **Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.**

Is your name going to be written in that book? How many times, will it be recorded? And was it done with a joyous heart? Or just going through the motions checking off the box? Just some questions to ponder as we all must judge (in the sense of appraisal or examining our spiritual walk) ourselves, we must identify the gates that are in need of repair and rebuild. We should be growing up to Spiritual maturity, taking on the mind of Christ, edifying others and winning souls through the Gospel message for His sake. If you are doing those very things to the best of your ability with all your heart and strength, great job continue in your progress.

Now we can picture the unity in the re-building of the walls and gates, when the people all began to work willing, by their volitional decision. Just like we have to make that decision in our daily lives to live that Spiritual life, especially when we do it with members of the human race with OSNs. You may find it hard to agree with everything that others, believers or unbelievers, do when you have task at hand or you may not like the person next to you, but it takes the mind set of a TEAM.

Teams have many types of players but one objective- WIN, an eye on the prize you could say. You cannot be a team player and be selfish. As the saying goes, “there is no ‘I’ in TEAM.” We must place “principles before personalities” and put the mission first. This is a part of humility and demonstrates why it is absolutely indispensable in the Christian life. Humility, personal love (based on the merit of the *object*) for God the Father (motivational virtue), and impersonal (based on the virtue of the *subject*) love for all mankind are also absolutely necessary in order to solve the problems of personality and attraction/repulsion and build unity.

Also, unity in the body of Christ comes from unity of faith and doctrine and submission to right authority/chain of command. A local assembly, a friendship, a marriage, all are greatly fortified by the unity that comes from willful and happy submission to the absolute authority of the word of

God. As we read earlier in **Php 2:2**, we need to be of the “same mind, which is Christ”. When we put Christ and His word first, then we can have unity within the body of Christ because our goal is one and the same.

Ps 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!

Joh 17: 22-23 The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

Impersonal love for mankind, aka “love as Christ loved”, which is dependent on personal love for God the Father (PSD # 6 & 7 btw), is the ultimate PSD for overcoming the problems of personality and cooperation among believers, as we see here in Col 3:

Col 3:12-15 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is *the perfect bond of unity*. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Unity demands that the believer operate according to virtue love (**Dt 6:5; Mt 22:37,38; Mk 12:28 -30**).

Samantha shared with us on Friday, that she personally is addicted to Bible doctrine, what a great way to look at the calling we have on our lives. We all should come to the point that due to the faithfulness of our beloved Pastor, giving us so much understanding of that bible doctrine, that we have the ability to sit down and listen, learn the principles that matter in this life, so we can leave a legacy for the next generation sharing BD, so it can be pass on to others.

Col 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Royal Family - stay in the PPOG by Daily intake of Bible doctrine, make it the # 1 priority in your life; being filled with the Holy Spirit for Utilization of the PSD, which becomes the only way you will survive in this cosmic system of distractions and deception.

Now, with that, we move on to continuing our study of the doctrine of substitutionary spiritual death (SSD) which our Lord uniquely endured while on the cross, keep these gates in mind. The Christian way of life, aka our walk with the Lord, is a process. We are gradually conformed to the image of Christ as we increase our awareness and understanding of who and what God is, what God did, does, and will do *for us*, and what He would have us do while we are here, as well as the big HOW.

We know that we cannot “imitate Christ” just by a sheer act of will or by “trying”. Our human power can NEVER enable us to attain to the example of perfection, and the enabling power of God the HS does not magically transform us while we sit in church chewing gum. We are well taught

here enough to know this. We are transformed by the renewing of our *thinking* (**Rom 12:2**); which means replacing human viewpoint (HVP) with divine viewpoint (DVP). The more we think like God, the more we are *able* to act in line with God's plan. This is how we go from born again infants who can't yet handle solid food (**1Co 3:2**), to mature adults who are able to digest solid food, withstand the "flaming darts" (**Eph 6:16**), and fulfill **Php 2:1-11**. The gates represent our growth from spiritual infants into adult believer-soldiers who are equipped "for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (**Eph 4:12**).

This is all made possible through our Lord's substitutionary spiritual death! It is not possible to over-study this doctrine, so do not let yourself become familiar and start to develop a callous toward it. A callous is like scar tissue and it will turn into bitterness and negative volition! Like Peter said:

2Pe 1:12 **Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.**

Let's talk about positional truth. Positional truth means doctrine relating to our position *IN CHRIST*, as we exist in our new nature in union with Jesus Christ. Our body, our weakness, and our slavery to the old sin nature represent our *condition*; God sees us in our *position*, not our condition (**Col 1:22**).

Here are a few definitions for you of positional truth because we always need to understand and be reminded of our positional truth. The first positional truth is called "current positional truth"

- 1. Current positional truth is identification with Christ as He is currently seated at the right hand of God the Father in His resurrection, ascension, and session.**
- 2. Positional Truth means the Church-age believer in Christ is positionally superior to all angels, including the chief fallen angel, Satan because of their union with Christ, HEB 1:4,13-14, 2:9-11.**

It is in our position in Christ that God sees us, and it is how we are to view ourselves; we are not to dwell on our condition! Positional truth is equivalent to positional sanctification in which God the Father is completely satisfied with the work of Christ on the cross. It is composed of retroactive positional truth (which we will see next) and current positional truth.

Positional truth is our guaranteed relationship with Christ in the Church-age, and it is the key to understanding the Church-age and the royal family. It is the basis for distinguishing between Christianity and religion, and it is the truth concerning the born-again believer who has been entered into union with Christ by means of the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation and this is going to be very important to note and keep in mind during this study.

- 3. Retroactive Positional Truth which means to be identified with Christ in His death and burial.**

This position divorces the believer from sin and evil as well as the power of the old sin nature because he is crucified and buried with Christ, **Rom 6:4,6**.

Not only is the believer identified with Christ in death and burial, but also in resurrection, ascension, and session [current positional truth] as God replaces the old position [retroactive] with the new position [current], **Eph 2:6**.

Let's remember our two categories of spiritual death:

1. Real spiritual death, which is separation from God in a state of sin which applies to all mankind with the exception of TLJC.

2. Substitutionary spiritual death, which is separation from God in a state of perfection and impeccability. This applies only to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's revisit Nicodemus and John chapter 3 again briefly. So much in that chapter which is pertinent here and enriching to the soul.

Joh 3:4-6 Nicodemus *said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

So, to prove to Nicodemus that He was not talking about physical birth but spiritual birth, Jesus used a frame of reference which would be meaningful to a Jewish religious leader. What did He use? He used water.

This is going to be the focus of our subject for the rest of this synopsis. Not just water, but specifically, we're gonna be talking about baptism... And I'm going to ask you to pay special attention because this subject may even cause some discord in your lives and the church today, this is a subject that is not well-understood or well-taught in the religious realm. But we are a doctrinal church and we are well-taught thanks to our amazing Pastor Robert McLaughlin and his deacons and family, and of course God the HS who works through all of them!

We always teach on "after salvation, what?" because this is the most important question to answer and the most important doctrines to understand for a new believer. Unfortunately because of superficial and nutritionally deficient teachings and even many distorted teachings, baptism is a stumbling block for many believers today, as much as circumcision was in the early church.

In fact many many times the new believer will ask about being baptized with water – and it's usually because they are excited and they think that's how you show your excitement to God – they think that the water identifies them with God, but that's not the truth. We show our excitement by doing what we are doing right now - by identifying and learning Who He is and What His word is all about – the mind of Christ. We ought to know these things well enough that we can explain them to others around us who do not, so that of all things to not be confused about, they must not be confused about the means of Salvation by FACA – Faith Alone in Christ Alone.

Now back in **JOH 3:5**; in response to Nicodemus' serious question, "should I go back into my mother's womb?" we're going to start to look at the subject of water. Notice the first time He said "you cannot see the kingdom of God", but this time He says "you have to be born of water and the Spirit", and then you can enter into the kingdom of God. This is vital to understand because a lot of times once people learn to associate two things together they get stuck on it. This is one example: water = baptism and baptism = water. However, this is wrong. Baptism is from the Greek word "baptizo" and it doesn't mean "dipped in water", it means "identification with something or someone". Water isn't part of it at all. There are 7 baptisms in the Bible which we will look at. The baptism of the Spirit is one – NO WATER. So what does the water mean here if not baptism? Let's first look at "identification" in the Bible.

Two categories of identification in Scripture are:

1. An actual identification is called a real baptism.
2. A representative identification is called a ritual baptism; which uses water.

Water baptism was a ritual used as a form of representative identification. So when the Lord Jesus Christ says "you have to be born of water" He wasn't saying that you have to be dipped in a river or a tank! This is why we don't baptize with water - because there is only one - How many? ONE baptism that is valid in the Church Age: the baptism of God the Holy Spirit.

Act 1:5 For John truly baptized with water, but you will be baptized (identified with) the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

Let's examine some other baptisms, to have a frame of reference.

#1 REAL BAPTISM:

1Co 10:1-12, the apostle Paul presents the baptism of Moses.

When God parted the Red Sea, the Israelites were identified with Moses. There was water involved but who got wet? The Israelites? No, the Egyptians! Were they being baptized? No, they were being killed! The Israelites were *identified* with Moses here, water had nothing to do with it. This is sometimes known as a "dry baptism".

1Co 10:1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers (the Israelites) were all under the cloud, (they followed that cloud by the day time – we just saw that this past year with the theophany study) and all passed through the sea (as in between the parted waters); and all were baptized into Moses (not into water – but into Moses) in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.

Moses is saying "I'm going to believe God, I'm going to follow the cloud, and so I identify myself with the cloud – TLJC – and you are identified with me in the same way and in Christ."

So again, Nicodemus was thinking in the natural realm with human viewpoint, however, he is going to see something very interesting, another usage of the word "water" throughout scripture (remember what was said earlier about being stuck in one association?), which is as a metaphor

for the word of God, that is going to challenge him like never before. We have to hear the gospel before we can believe the gospel, so what if the “water” is the gospel?

1Pe 1:23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

Joh 4:13-14 Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

Joh 7:37 Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

Rev 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

We have studied the typology of the Cross as well (and Pastor has a fantastic book on the subject available for free through this website) and we remember that when Moses struck the rock (Jesus Christ) at Mt Horeb with the rod (the cross) and what came out? Water – salvation came to the Israelites through the water of life (remember also that water comes out of the side of the Lord when the Roman soldier pierces His side?).

Ex 17:6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

You and I became saved when we believed the gospel – we believed the Word that was being taught – and that’s when we identified ourselves with the Word, and God the Holy Spirit made it understandable to you. Nicodemus did not know this but the Holy Spirit is going to teach him just that...

#2 REAL BAPTISM:

The baptism of the cross which is found in **Mk 10:38-39**

Mk 10:38 But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”

What was the baptism? – what was the identification that our Lord had? – it was identification of our sins – becoming a sin offering for us.

Mk 10:39 And they said to Him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you shall drink; (you’re going to pick up your own cross) and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.

But He is going to talk about the principle of identification: our Lord is actually saying that no one else could go to the cross and identify with man's sin except Himself. We are going to have our

cross - but it won't be the same as His cross, His identification with sin... This refers to the judicial imputation of personal sins to Jesus Christ on the cross when Jesus Christ was identified with our personal sins and judged for them, so that Christ became our Savior.

This brings us the 3rd baptism which again: the third real baptism which has nothing to do with water is

#3. REAL BAPTISM:

The baptism of the Holy Spirit which occurs at the moment of salvation (for who?) for Church-Age believers only:

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Only Church-age believers could do that? Why? Because Christ had not yet died for the sins of the world. Christ had not yet fulfilled the payment for sin. Notice again - there is no water involved in this baptism. This baptism is the means of forming the royal family of God and of breaking the back of the old sin nature as the ruler of human life.

We are identified with Christ in His death (when He died we died in our flesh) and burial (we were buried with our OSN – positionally) and (His) resurrection (we've been raised from the dead positionally right now and someday experientially as well, per **Eph 4:5; ACT 1:5**). This baptism is when the Holy Spirit enters us into union with Christ at the right hand of the Father, making us positionally higher than angels.

Then there is the final and fourth baptism, and you DO NOT want to be involved with this baptism!

#4. REAL BAPTISM:

The baptism of fire which is taught in **Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16, Rev 20:14-15**.

First of all – what does the baptism of fire relate to?

It relates to the Tribulational unbeliever who is identified with the defeat of Satan and is defeated with him – because of negative volition. Their (op)positional truth is condemnation! This baptism – also obviously waterless – happens when all the unbelievers are removed from the earth along with the KOD before the start of the Millennium. The baptism of fire is a literal real baptism – it takes place when the unbeliever is identified with fire and the judgment of God.

Now, on the other hand there are also three Ritual Baptisms.

We have 7 baptisms in the bible – 4 of them are Real and dry, and 3 of them are Ritual and wet. The first of these “ritual baptisms” that are no longer for today was

#1. RITUAL BAPTISM:

The baptism of John which is found in **Mat 3:1-10; Joh 1:25-33**.

We are speaking of a man called – John the Baptist and most of know he was the cousin to our Lord Jesus Christ. John lived in the dispensation called the “Ritual Age of Israel”. They were also under the “Ritual Plan of God”, where they were learning about the *coming* Messiah through ritual, as opposed to the “Predesigned Plan of God” in which we learn about the *dead, buried, resurrected and ascended* Messiah through the completed canon of scripture and the gift of Pastor-Teacher for the equipping of the saints and the building up of the body.

In **Mt 3:1-6**, the water is in view – this is a “wet baptism” - the water represented the kingdom of God. There had to be a ceremony - never used before - to identify a person with the kingdom, because the King was present. Putting a person in the water (simply) showed that he/she was identified with that kingdom and the King forever. Remember also that for Jews, because of the Pharisees, believing in Jesus Christ was a revolutionary act. This was a Jewish person saying “I publicly declare that the kingdom of God is at hand.” Also it was encouragement and means of relating God and doctrine to the fact that the kingdom was being offered as the first advent – when Christ came for the first time.

#2 RITUAL BAPTISM:

The baptism of Jesus Christ which was unique. This is when John recognized Jesus Christ's impeccability and refused to baptize Him in Matt 3.

Jesus told him the water represented something new, i.e., the Father's plan and will for His public ministry to go to the cross and receive the personal sins of mankind and be judged. So, at the beginning of His earthly ministry, Christ identified Himself with the Father's will. In the water, Jesus was saying He would go to the cross, and identify with the sins of the entire world, **Mt 3:13-17**.

As He came out of the water, Jesus recognized that when He completed the plan of the Father by being judged for our sins and then dying physically, He would be resurrected, followed by His ascension and session. Coming up out of the water was a picture of His resurrection. going into the water was a picture of our Lord's death. It was a baptism with water, but one that represented analogies.

And then finally – there was

#3. RITUAL BAPTISM:

The Christian water baptism which was the ritual testimony of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. As we just noted, John the Baptist was living under the Ritual Age/Ritual Plan. This continued until the completion of the canon in 96 AD. So for the early church, there was still a need for these teaching aids, but they would soon be outmoded, kind of like the temporary spiritual gifts, e.g. tongues and prophecy and apostleship. They served a purpose and then were phased out:

1Co 13:8-11 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be

done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

**This is a great time to point out the necessity of dispensational teaching – rightly dividing the word of truth! If you fail to understand that God’s plan has one main objective but to get there many smaller objectives must be fulfilled (thanks to our stupidity and meddling and fouling everything up), then you see that the Bible seems to contradict itself. But when you understand that there are times, epochs, aeons, aka dispensations, and you know which passages refer to which dispensations, all of those apparent contradictions are resolved beautifully.

So, from the beginning of the Church Age until the completion of the Canon, water baptism was necessary to teach the principle of the baptism of the Holy Spirit at salvation. But once the Canon was completed, this ritual was no longer necessary and no longer had usefulness, since the explanation for the baptism of the Spirit is now in writing. *Remember: when the perfect comes, the partial will be put away.* The purpose of Jesus Christ on the cross, His resurrection, ascension and session, and the beginning of a new Church Age had to be portrayed with ritual until the Canon was completed.

The only ritual that is mandated or has any reality in the Church Age dispensation is the Lord’s Supper.

The temporary practice of water baptism existed for other people. God knows who is born again and who is not! He doesn’t need us to do anything but the non-meritorious act of expressing positive faith in His offer of Salvation in thought only. But doing things for other people always causes trouble within the church and destroys unity. This is another reason why the apostle Paul tells the Corinthians he stopped using water baptism because it was a means of dividing believers, 1Co 1, and it still is today.

Dispensational teaching is rejected by almost all denominational and/or religious churches if not all, and so there is much confusion. The devil loves, promotes, and exploits this to cause endless divisions within the body. There are many casualties of this area of spiritual warfare!

A lot of the things found in the book of Acts were just for the early church before the Bible was completed. For example, if someone touched the handkerchief of Paul, they could be healed...that’s not going to happen today! This was only given for the purpose to call attention to the message. Same goes for casting out demons – another practice that is not legitimate in the Church Age! But certain religious groups have falsely named themselves apostles and engage in much chicanery – signs and lying wonders! That’s all I will say about that!

We are truly blessed in this dispensation to have the greatest tools and resources for interpreting and teaching the word of God, just another of the many fabulous grace provisions and the fantastic privilege we have as Church Age believers! Thanks and praise and glory be to God who has granted us everything pertaining to life and eusebeia, through the true knowledge of Him who called us according to His own glory and excellence (**2Pe 1:3**).

See you next time Royal Family!

