

Rom. 14:19
"So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another."

John 8:32
"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

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AN INQUIRY INTO BAPTISM

by Jefferson David Tant Jr.

Editor's note: We continue the presentation of a series of articles designed to inform on this topic by consulting all the appropriate sources of knowledge on the subject. JCS.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE ENCYCLOPAEDIAS

Baptism: ..."when in the ceremony the candidate for baptism is submerged under the water, he is thereby buried with Christ and dies with Him; i.e., this submersion in water is, for the Apostle, not merely a symbol of purification, not only a symbol of being buried, but a real act of wonderful effect. The candidate for baptism experiences actually and genuinely the death of Jesus in his own body, and is likewise actually laid in the grave, as Jesus lay in the grave...When he emerges again from the water, the resurrection of Christ becomes his." (**"Baptism."** ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA)

Baptistery:"the round church of Santa Costanza, in Rome, built probably as a tomb for the daughter of Constantine, was also used in early times as a baptistery. Following this tradition, baptisteries throughout the early Church were separate buildings, circular or polygonal in plan, up to the 9th or 10th century. When the change from immersion to sprinkling as the method of baptism rendered large baptisteries unnecessary, the baptistery became a mere chapel within a church." (**"Baptistery."** ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA)

Baptism--that is dipping, immersion, from the Greek word *baptizo*." (**"Baptism"** ENCYCLOPAEDIA AMERICANA)

"The first law for sprinkling was obtained in the following manner: Pope Stephen II, being driven from Rome by Adolphus, King of Lombards, in 753, fled to Pepin, who a short time before had usurped the crown of France.

While he remained there the monks of Cressy, in Brittany, consulted him whether in case of necessity, baptism poured on the head of an infant would be lawful. Stephen replied that it would, yet pouring and sprinkling was not allowed except in cases of necessity.

It was not until the year 1311 that the legislature, in a council held at Ravenna, declared immersion or sprinkling to be indifferent. In Scotland, however, sprinkling was never practiced in ordinary cases until after the Reformation—about the middle of the 16th century. From Scotland it made its way into England in the reign of Elizabeth I, but was not authorized in the Established Church." (**"Baptism."** EDINBURGH ENCYCLOPAEDIA)

COMMENT: The encyclopedias note the original practice of immersion. Please keep in mind that the ordinance authorizing the change was granted by the Pope of Rome, not Jesus Christ.

A little known (yet documented) fact of history is that the Church of England (1534), the Presbyterian (c.1540), and the Congregational (soon after) churches all practiced immersion for about 100 years, or until the Westminster assembly in 1643. At that time, a number of bishops, seeing how much more convenient sprinkling was, came before Parliament

insisting that "the devil of immersion ought to be legislated out of the realm it is so troublesome."
"The Westminster assembly convened July 1, 1643. Very naturally the question was brought before this august body of divines, 'Shall we continue the practice of immersion or shall we adopt sprinkling instead?'
When it came to a vote, twenty-four voted to continue the ancient and apostolic practice, and twenty-four voted in favor of sprinkling. Dr. Lightfoot was chairman, and it was his duty to give the deciding vote. He cast his vote in favor of sprinkling." (EDINBURGH ENCYCLOPAEDIA, Vol. 3, p 236.)

In 1644, Parliament acted upon this, repealing the laws enjoining immersion, enacting in their place laws enjoining sprinkling. Those who were not sprinkled were to be treated as outlaws.

CONVERSION OF THE CORINTHIANS

The city of Corinth served its population of 700,000 with superstition, immorality, and idolatry. It was the seat of government for the province of Achaia. The lasciviousness of the city was deified in worship to Venus and Aphrodite. Religious harlots provided a steady source of income, as they plied their trade. Corinth was a wealthy, luxurious city, filled with Jewish peddlers, foreign traders, sailors, soldiers, and athletes. It was not a compliment if someone said: "You are acting just like a Corinthian."

What would you do to convince such a culture that baptism by immersion in water is essential to salvation? This was Paul's task when he came to the city in 52/53 A.D. He came with the gospel, but what did He find? The story is not all negative; soon after arriving Paul found two people, a husband and wife, Aquila and Priscilla, who had recently traveled from Rome to Corinth. Being tentmakers, Paul and Aquila joined forces in working with their hands. Importantly, they worked for the Lord. Paul started in the synagogue with his preaching (Acts 18:4). This was his pulpit.

Paul had separated from his companions in Berea, traveling on to Athens. Silas and Timothy and Paul reunited in Corinth (Acts 17: 13-15). It is rightly said that there is "strength in numbers." Paul was encouraged to continue his preaching. Opposition arose from the Jews, as they blasphemed against Paul

and the words he spoke. The Jews would not accept Jesus as the Messiah. The lesson is clear. While God wants all men to be saved, He will not force anyone to come to Him. Paul had no choice but to leave these Jews to their own spiritual destruction; he turned to the Gentiles (Acts 18:6).

Paul preached that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 18:5). True gospel preaching always honors Christ. Paul's desire was to preach only Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2.) Preaching about Christ emphasizes the basic principles of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Preaching has no significance apart from who Jesus is. Preaching must include the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. The commands of the gospel, namely, hear, believe, repent, and be baptized, have no power apart from Christ. Obedience to the Lord is more than just being able to memorize a few verses about baptism. True conversion involves all that Christ is and all that He did for us. What were the results of Paul's preaching? Acts 18:8 says: "*And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized.*" Later, when Paul wrote to this church he spoke of the great change in the lives and hearts of many in the city (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). The Lord told Paul to continue his work without fear, as there were many people in Corinth that would listen with a view toward salvation (Acts 18:9-10). Paul continued for eighteen months in blessed and favorable circumstances.

This is an exciting story. If we were given the job of going to this corrupt city would we have preached as Paul did? Would we say: "No one is interested, the people are too mean, and the obstacles are too many"? Or, would we say: "The city is full of sinners who need the gospel"? Does God have "*much people in this city?*" Is it our responsibility to find them?

Randy Harshbarger

What Makes Christianity Unique?

Mark McCrary

Of all the world's religions, what makes Christianity unique? Why should it be considered above all others?

Like most religions that revolve around a concept of a singular God, Christianity emphasizes the holiness of God. But Christianity's take is somewhat different than many others; it is not simply that He is a good God, but His holiness means He is a perfect God - there is no sin in Him. Because He is holy, if we are to have a relationship with Him, we must be holy as well ("*... but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'*"). God is so perfect, in fact, He cannot tolerate the presence of sin. **Isaiah 59:2** tells us, "*But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.*" Such holiness demands that God be just. Unlike the teachings of some religions, He can't look at our lives and, if there is more good than bad, wave away that bad as if it didn't happen. It did; and His holiness can't ignore it. There must be a price paid for those wrongs ("*And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission,*" **Hebrews 9:22**).

But, **Romans 3:26** tells us something beautiful: because God is holy, He must be just; to be less than just would make Him less than holy. But—importantly—He is also the justifier (**Rom. 3:26**, "*... To demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*").

What makes Christianity unique, ultimately, is Jesus Christ—God coming down in the form of man to pay the price for our sins (**Hebrews 9:22**) and reconcile us to the Holy God. "*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation,*" **Rom. 5:6-11**.

Christianity presents a God who is so holy He cannot tolerate sin. Yet, for some reason He paid the price for our sins through His Son Jesus Christ. Why would He do such a thing? Because "*God so loved the world that*

He gave His only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (**John 3:16**). That's what makes Christianity unique.

~via Growing In Godliness; Louisville, Ky .

WE GO...

"We Go..." "We go to the church of Christ over at _____," the lady said. I was going through her neighborhood, passing out advertisements to a recent meeting, when I happened upon her house. She was cordial and took the ad, but about the only words she could muster were, "We go..." Yet, as far as I know she is not a member at the congregation she mentioned. Nor had I ever seen her in attendance any of the several times I had attended a gospel meeting there.

Her words struck me in a strange way. Had she convinced herself that attending the services of a 'church of Christ' every once-in-a-while was acceptable to the Lord? The New Testament puts it this way: "*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching*" (**Hebrews 10:24-25**).

If you are a child of God such words ought to make a deep impression on your heart. As brethren and fellow partakers of the love of Christ we should do all we can to "*consider one another*", doing all we possibly can to help each other to heaven. Such involves meeting with one another on a regular basis. It is inconsiderate for any Christian to forsake the assembling of the church of which they are a part. There are some things that would keep a Christian from attending, things which would not constitute 'forsaking' (e.g., physical illness). But when a child of God allows relationships, entertainment, sporting events, etc., to take precedence over regularly scheduled assemblies of the saints, he has chosen to "*forsake the assembling of ourselves together*".

It is inconsiderate, but even more so, it is unlawful. The text says, "*not forsaking—*" That's a negative command, a 'thou shalt not.' And it pertains to me and you.
~via Central Shelby Church of Christ; Shelbyville, Kentucky.

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

HOURS OF WORSHIP

- Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study
- Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship
- Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship
- Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

OUR ADDRESS IS:

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Bible Classes: Sunday Morning
Prayer - Ron Peck

Wednesday Evening - **Minor Prophets - Jim Stauffer**

Sunday Sermon: **What About Social Drinking?**



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

- ▶ **Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17
- ▶ **Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6
- ▶ **Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30
- ▶ **Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10
- ▶ **Be Baptized** for remission of sins - Acts 2:38
- ▶ **Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10