

Sunday, August 2, 2015—I Corinthians 1:17: Christ Sent Me Not to Baptize

Introduction

- Last Sunday in our study together we covered verses 11 through 16 of I Corinthians 1. Before moving on with our exposition of the text it is important to review a few key points from last week.
- Verse 11—after leaving Corinth Paul received a report from members of the house of Chloe that there were contentions among the believers in Corinth.
- Verse 12—verse 12 provides insight into the nature of the “contentions” that were occurring in Corinth. The Corinthians had developed a system of man-exalting factions that were threatening to divide the assembly.
 - Every one of the saints in Corinth were saying, “I am of _____.”
- Verse 13—Paul points out the utter folly of their thinking and conduct by asking them a series of questions. The obvious answer to all these questions is no.
 - Christ is not divided.
 - Paul was not crucified for the Corinthians.
 - They were not baptized in the name of Paul.
- Verses 14-16—contextually Paul’s main point in verses 14 through 16 is in line with the three rhetorical questions he asked in verse 13. Note verse 15, “Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.” The very fact that Paul cannot recall if he baptized anyone else besides Crisps, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas proves that Paul was not seeking to create his own faction by baptizing in his own name.
- This in turn strengthens the nature Paul’s over all rebuke of the Corinthians in the context for functioning with a factionist and contentions spirit.
- In I Corinthians 1:14-16, Paul mentions that he baptized two individuals, i.e., Crispus and Gaius as well as the household of Stephanas. Beyond that Paul says “I know not whether I baptized any other.”
 - Acts 18:8—while this verse reports that “many” baptism occurred in Corinth while Paul was there the text does not identify Paul as the one performing all of them.
- Verse 17, helps explain why Paul conducted himself in this manner with respect to water baptism in Corinth.

I Corinthians 1:17

- **For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.**
- The reason Paul can't remember whether or not he baptized anyone else besides Crispus, Gaius, and the household of the Stephanas is because Christ didn't send him to baptize.
- Notice that Paul is concerned with here with what Christ sent him to do. This harkens back to verse 1 and the fact that Paul was called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God. As an apostle of Christ, Paul was concerned with doing those things Christ sent him to do.
- Acts 26:15-18—Paul was sent forth by the ascended glorified Christ.
- Galatians 1:11-12—Paul received his gospel by the direct revelation of Jesus Christ from heavens glory. Note the connection with I Cor. 1:17, Christ sent Paul to preach the gospel not to baptize.
- This means that water baptism was not part of the gospel that Christ sent Paul to preach. This could not be said of the 12 Apostles the Lord chose during his earthly ministry for water baptism was absolutely part of the gospel they were sent to preach.

Water Baptism and the Gospel of the Kingdom

- Mark 1:14-15—water baptism was part and parcel of the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom.
 - Mark 1:4-5—“. . . preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”
- John 1:25—the leaders of Israel did not question John's practice of water baptism but by what authority he was baptizing.
 - Hebrews 9:10
 - Leviticus 15:1-33, 16:4, 17:14-15
 - Mark 7:4-5— here we see that the religious leaders of Israel had become enamored by this practice of washing and had added a bunch of manmade ordinances and traditions on top of those required by the law.
- Matthew 3:1-6— consider the following aspects of John's message.
 - John is calling Israel to repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand, i.e., near.

- John was the forerunner of the Messiah, i.e., the one preparing the way of the Lord.
 - John was baptizing people with water in the Jordan River.
 - John’s baptism was required for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4-5).
 - John’s message was called the Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14-15).
- Luke 7:29-31—water baptism was a necessary part of the gospel of the kingdom. These verses are not teaching water baptism as an outward sign of an inward commitment. Rather, they are clearly teaching baptism with water as a requirement for salvation under the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom.
 - Notice in Luke 7:31 that Jesus tells his hearers that the present generation within Israel was the problem.
 - Matthew 3:7-11—notice that John calls the religious leadership of Israel a “generation of vipers” who were trusting in the fact that they were the physical descendents of Abraham for their salvation.
 - Acts 2:40—Peter warns his hearers at Pentecost that they needed to saved themselves from this untoward generation. How would they do this? Acts 2:38, “repent and be baptized for the remission of sins.”
 - John’s Baptism (water baptism) was drawing a line in the sand within Israel in order to separate the believers from the untoward generation or apostle nation that was living in rebellion against God.

Jesus Sent the 12 to Baptize

- Matthew 4:17, 23—Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom (which included water baptism).
 - John 4:1
- Matthew 10:5-8—Jesus commissioned the 12 and sent them to preach the gospel of the kingdom (which included water baptism).
- Matthew 28:19—where the 12 sent to baptize? Yes, water baptism was part of Israel’s program and was therefore part what they were commissioned to do.
- Mark 16:15-16

- Acts 2:38—water baptism was required for Israel because God was in the process of forming them into a kingdom and priest and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6) and in order for them to be what God called them to be; they needed to be washed with water and anointed with oil to fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law. Thereby making them the kingdom of priest that God formed them to be (Ex. 29:1-4).

Paul's One Baptism

- Romans 11:13—Christ did not send Paul the apostle of the Gentiles to continue Israel's program and commission among the Gentiles. Rather, Paul was sent forth with a different message and purpose.
- Romans 11:11-12—during the period of Israel diminishing recorded in the book of Acts Paul did baptize on a limited basis as part of God's purpose to provoke Israel to jealousy and cause them to understand that a great dispensational change had already occurred in God's dealings with his favored nation. Namely that she had fallen from her favored time past status in order that salvation could be sent to the gentiles via the ministry of the Apostle Paul.
- I Corinthians 1:17—so Paul was not sent to baptize whereas the 12 were. Two different commissions for two different dispensations.
- I Corinthians 12:12-13—the baptism that matters today has nothing to do with water and relates to God the Holy Spirit placing you into the church the body of Christ.
- Colossians 2:11-12—our baptism today is not made with hands. Rather it is a spiritual procedure performed by God the Holy Spirit the moment we trust Christ and believe the gospel we are identified with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4).
- Ephesians 4:4-6—there is only one baptism that matters today in the dispensation of grace.

Conclusion

- Never at any time in the outworking of God's plan was water baptism an outward sign of an inward commitment. Simply stated, water baptism is Jewish practice that the body of Christ is not instructed to be following during the current dispensation of grace.