**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Eight Weeks till the Resurrection - April 4, 2021

***Only Spirit-Baptism Saves - Acts 19:1-7***

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February 7th In the Year of Our Lord

(Anno Domini A.D.) 2021

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted.)

**Information That Is Good to Know**

Modern Bible readers need to know that the chapter and verse numbers have been added to the Bible over the centuries; Jewish and Christian scholars have divided the Bible by section, chapter and verse. Here is a link for further discussion.

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/stewart_don/faq/bible-special/question8-why-is-the-bible-divided-into-chapters-and-verses.cfm>

The modern Old Testament division into verses was standardized by the Ben Asher family around A.D. 900. However, the practice of dividing the Old Testament books into verses goes back centuries earlier.

Modern verse division for the New Testament was the work of Robert Stephanus (Stephens), a French printer. He divided the Greek text into verses for his Greek New Testament published in 1551.

The first entire Bible, in which these chapter and verse divisions were used, was Stephen’s edition of the Latin Vulgate (1555).

The first English Bible to have both chapter and verse divisions was the Geneva Bible (1560).

**Acts 19:1** It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth,

Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus,

and found some disciples.

2 He said to them,

"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

And they said to him,

"No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

3 And he said,

"Into what then were you baptized?"

And they said,

"Into John's baptism."

4 Paul said,

"John baptized with the baptism of repentance,

telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."

5 When they heard this,

they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them,

the Holy Spirit came on them,

and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.

7 There were in all about twelve men.

**Apollos’ Error**

Remember, in the last chapter, Apollos was taken aside by Pricilla and Aquila for instruction while they were at Ephesus. Remember, Paul met Pricilla and Aquila in Corinth, and they traveled together to Ephesus where Pricilla and Aquila remained. Then Paul went to Caesarea.

Chapter 19 brings Apollos back into the spotlight. The chapter starts by placing Apollos in Corinth but then shifts to Paul in Ephesus. The concern Paul observed in Ephesus was disciples only understanding the Baptism of John. In Acts 18:25, Apollos is identified as only being acquainted with the Baptism of John. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately (Acts 18:26).

It is obvious, from the context of these verses and their proximity to one another in the text, there was a problem with the teaching of Apollos while he was in Ephesus that Pricilla and Aquila corrected. So, let us look at Jesus’ teaching regarding baptism. We will see that there are different baptisms: for repentance, by water, of Spirit and of Fire.

**Who was** **John the Baptist?**

John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament (O.T.) Prophets. So, with that understanding, are there similar statements that John made as compared to the O. T. prophets concerning “turning” to God?

**Hosea** prophesied right before the Assyrian destruction of the Northern Kingdom Israel (721).

**Hosea 3:4** For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or *sacred* pillar and without ephod or household idols. 5 Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.

**Hosea 14:1** Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, For you have stumbled because of your iniquity. 2 Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity And receive *us* graciously, That we may present the fruit of our lips.

**Jeremiah** (627 – 560 B.C.) made this prophecy to Judah (Southern Kingdom) after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Therefore, Shiloh had been destroyed. Judah did not turn to the Lord. The Babylonian deportations started in about 600 B.C.

**Jeremiah. 26:3-6** 3 'Perhaps they will listen and everyone will turn from his evil way, that I may repent of the calamity which I am planning to do to them because of the evil of their deeds.' 4 "And you will say to them, 'Thus says the LORD, "If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My law which I have set before you, 5 to listen to the words of My servants the prophets, whom I have been sending to you again and again, but you have not listened; 6 then I will make this house like Shiloh, and this city I will make a curse to all the nations of the earth."'

From the correct understanding, John the Baptist was a continuation of the O. T. prophets who preached a message of warning. The O.T. prophets called for the people to “turn” (repent) from their sinful lives and return to God seeking forgiveness of sin. If they did not - then destruction would come upon the people. When the Northern Kingdom (Israel, 10 tribes) did not “repent”, God allowed the Assyrians to destroy their country. When the Southern kingdom of (Judah) did not “repent”, God allowed the Babylonians to destroy their country, taking the Hebrews into captivity (completed by 586 B.C.). When the 1st century Jewish leadership and their followers rejected Jesus as the Messiah, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, tearing down the Temple. The Jews revolted against the Romans in 66 A.D. The Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. Masada fell in 72 A.D. Remember, Jesus prophesied that not one stone would be left of the Temple (Matthew 24:1-3). Therefore, just like the O.T. prophets, John the Baptist warned the people, and Jesus pronounced their judgement. The Romans, like the Assyrians and Babylonians, were used by God to bring judgment upon His chosen people.

So, John the Baptist was an O.T. prophetic voice calling the people to “repent” (turn back to God) and seek forgiveness of sin (Pointing to Jesus), just like Hosea and Jeremiah and all the other O.T. prophets.

Water-baptism was a sign and symbol of a person’s profession of faith representing their heart turning to God, following His ways and confession of sins. How was God going to accomplish taking away sin if water-baptism did not? John pointed to Jesus who eventually goes to the Cross to pay the price for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). The physical act (work) of John’s water-baptism did not remove sin. Jesus completed all the work for the removal of sin on the Cross. That is why He said, “It is Finished” (John19:30). Faith (surrendered heart) to God/Jesus makes us eligible to access God’s saving grace performed at the Cross. Surrendering faith is a spiritual event (without mediation) between God and a person.

We know that works cannot forgive sins or save a person from eternal separation from God. In the New Testament, we have Ephesians 2:8 as a constant reminder that ‘by no work(s) are we saved’. Regarding the taking away sin, we see King David acknowledging the biblical truth that sin cannot be taken away by works in Psalm 51:16, *For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*

Regarding the taking away of sins in the New Testament - Hebrews 10:4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 5 Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME; [Reference to Psalm 40:6]

Therefore, a person who was water-baptized by John was showing by an action that they had heard and received John’s prophetic voice and had turned their hearts back to God and His ways, seeking God for the forgiveness of their sins and salvation. John points to Jesus (incarnated God) as the prophetic suffering Messiah of Isaiah 42, 53, who would pay the price for the world’s sins on the Cross. The act of water-baptism did not forgive them but was a sign and symbol of them returning to God. Again, (worth repeating) King David (Old Testament Prophet) witnessed in Psalm 51 that God did not require a work to gain forgiveness of sin, but a contrite heart. “*16 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. 17 a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise”.*

So, it is worth repeating, while calling people to turn (repent) to God as the only One who can forgive sin, we need to highlight the point thatJohn the Baptists’ ministry mission was to point to the Messiah. John said he would not be able recognize the Messiah (John 1:33), but that when he water-baptized the man who was the Messiah, the Spirit of God would descend and remain upon Him. We see this in the water-baptism of Jesus being signified with the event being described as a dove descending and resting on Jesus (Matthew 3:16,17). Jesus’ water-baptism was not for His benefit but to fulfill prophecy and identify for all humanity the Messiah. God as Jesus is the Holy Spirit from eternity. Jesus did not become spirit-filled at His water-baptism. Isaiah 42:1 says the Spirit had been placed with Jesus. This verse is proclaimed about 700 years before the incarnation. It is clear from the conception of Jesus, in Mary, by the Holy Spirit, that Jesus as a human - contained the Holy Spirit from conception. How can Jesus be conceived by the Holy Spirit, if He as a human did not contain the Holy Spirit? He cannot. So, the Holy Spirit, as Jesus, is a biblical fact - from His conception.

(See Matthew 1:18,20; Luke 1:35)

John the Baptist fulfilled his mission. Unfortunately for John, King Herod had him beheaded.

**Old Testament Prophets prophesied about John the Baptist**

**Isaiah 40:3** A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. (Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, John 1:23, Luke 3:4)

**Malachi 4:5** "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6 "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse." (Matthew 11:14)

**John the Baptist’s Statements About Jesus’ Baptism**

**Luke 3:16** John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and **fire.**

**Matthew 3:11** "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and **fire**.

**Mark 1:8** "I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

**Mark 1:4** John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

**John 1:26** John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know.

**John 1:33** "I did not recognize Him (Messiah/Jesus), but He (*God the Father*) who sent me to baptize in water said to me, He (Messiah/J*esus*) upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him (Messiah/ Jesus), this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.

**John’s conception and birth fulfilled O.T. Prophecy.**

**Angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias (Luke 1:13) . . .**

**Luke 1:16** "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. 17 "It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, **(Malachi 3:1, 4:5)** and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

**Jesus Identified John the Baptist from Malachi 4:5**

**Matthew 11:1** When Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities. 2 Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to Him,

"Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?"

4 Jesus answered and said to them,

"Go and report to John what you hear and see: 5 the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. 6 "And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."

7 As these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

8 "But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings' palaces!

9 "But what did you go out to see? A prophet?

Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet.

10 "This is the one about whom it is written, 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.' (Malachi 3:1)

**Malachi 3:7** "From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts. "But you say, 'How shall we return?'

11 "Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

12 "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.

13 "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

14 "And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. (Malachi 4:5)

15 "He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

**The book of Acts starts with a clarification of the difference between the baptism of John and Jesus.**

**Acts 1:4** 4 Gathering them together,

He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem,

but to wait for what the Father had promised,

"Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; (Luke 24:49)

5 for John baptized with water,

but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit

not many days from now."

6 So when they had come together,

they were asking Him, saying,

"Lord, is it at this time

You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them,

"It is not for you to know times or epochs

which the Father has fixed by His own authority;

8 but you will receive power

when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; (Luke 24:49)

and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem,

and in all Judea and Samaria,

and even to the remotest part of the earth."

**Physical Sign, or Spiritually Saving and Empowerment?**

The main difference between John and Jesus’ baptism is that John’s is a physical symbolic act of man. Jesus’s is not a physical act but a spiritual occurrence only between a person and God. Man cannot spiritually baptize anyone. Therefore, there is not any intermediary between God and a person. This is what Jesus was telling Nicodemus in John 3:1-8. Nicodemus received Jesus’ words to mean that a person had to be physically reborn. Jesus responded that a person was born of water (breaking of birth-water) but also had to be reborn of Spirit to see and enter the Kingdom of God. Man cannot control God’s Spirit for God’s Spirit blows like the wind, uncontrolled by man (John 3:7-8).

What has happened to water-baptism? Religious-fallen-man and his religious institutions have turned it into a sectarian, divisive mediating act to gain forgiveness of sin and salvation. Whole religious systems have been positioned to be the mediator between God and people. This is why God did not make water-baptism the point of salvation, because fallen man would control the act. Throughout history, water-baptism has become divisive. Some churches even charge money to be water-baptized.

Spiritual-baptism, reborn of Spirit, is the point of salvation. This is when a person’s heart is *cut*, *quickened,* *pierced* (Acts 2:37), *circumcised* (Deuteronomy 30:6). **Only a person surrendering to God’s Holy Spirit conviction can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** Fallen mankind must have a new heart to be able to follow God’s ways (Deuteronomy 30:8, Ezekiel 36). Spirit-Baptism is witnessed in water-baptism.

God speaks through His prophet Ezekiel the same process He announces in the books of John and Deuteronomy. God allows fallen mankind to ask Him to do these things. 'Thus, says the Lord GOD, "This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: (Ezek. 36:37)

To do what? In the previous verses, we read:

**Ezekiel 36:25** "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances

So, it takes a humility toward God to ask Him for a new heart and to receive His Spirit. Once this takes place a person then has the ability to follow God ways.

This is why the Apostle Paul proclaims in Romans 8:9-10 that if the Spirit of Christ is not in a person, they do not belong to Him. Those who belong to God overcome the fallen world because they have His Spirit in them.

**Romans 8: 9** However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Romans 8:9-11)

A few verses prior to these, Paul clearly states that it is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death (Romans 8:2). There is not any other way to be released from the law of sin and death but to have the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus indwell a person. Paul matures to the point where he proclaims to the Galatians, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me (Galatians 2:20).

Additional verses clearly proclaim that it is the indwelling Spirit of God that must be present in a person’s heart for them to be saved. There is not any other kind of Christian than a Spirit-filled Christian. It is a contradiction to God’s Word for a person to reject God’s indwelling Holy Spirit and make any claim to eternal salvation. This is the difference between the saved and the unsaved. This is Biblical Christianity.

**1 Corinthians 3:16** Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

**1 Corinthians 6:19** Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

**John 14:17** that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

**Romans 8:11** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

**2 Timothy 1:14** Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

**Philippians 1:19** for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

**2 Corinthians 6:16** Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

**Galatians 4:6** Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

**Galatians 5:24** Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

**1 John 4:13** By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

**The “12”**

So, what happened to these twelve people Paul came across in Ephesus who had only received part of the Truth from Apollos? They had responded to John the Baptist and witnessed by water-baptism a turning of their attention to Jesus; the one who died on the Cross for their sins. This is like someone going to a worship service and agreeing to listen and pay attention to the sermon. Their focus was shifted, and they did complete a physical task of attending, thus, witnessing their redirection by their attendance. But they had not received God’s Holy Spirit into their hearts. There is a difference in agreeing about God and surrendering to God. The demons described in James 2:19 agreed God was God but did not receive God’s Holy Spirit into their being. Thus, they were estranged from God’s saving grace. Instead, they shuddered in rebellion. Remember, there is not any fear in the love of God, and God is love (1 John 4).

**Can r**eceiving gifts of the Spirit happen at the same time as water-baptism? Yes (Acts 19:5,6).

**Can** receiving gifts of the Spirit happen before water-baptism? Yes. We see this at Cornelius’ house when Peter was preaching (Acts 10:44).

**Can** Spirit-baptism and receiving spiritual gifts be controlled by people? No.

1 Corinthians 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

John 3:5 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. 6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

**Can** we ask for spiritual gifts? Yes. Will we always get what we ask for in Jesus’ name? No.

1 John 5:14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

**Agreeing Who God is and Awareness of God is not Salvation**

Many of the disciples followed Jesus. They listened and paid attention. However, when Jesus gave them the *spiritual* message to drink His blood and eat His flesh, they walked away. God, as Jesus in the Incarnation, being omniscient, looked at those who walked away and said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him (John 6:63-64).

**God Knew Before the Foundation of the World**

**Rev. 13: 8** All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. 9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

**Rev. 17:8** "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

**Rev. 20:12** And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

**Rev. 21:27** and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

**Philippians 4:3** Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. **AMEN**