

PROFITABLY UNDERSTANDING TRAGICALLY MISUNDERSTOOD BIBLE PASSAGES

Part IX: Understanding Bible Passages Used To Teach That Water Baptism Saves

(Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21 and 1 Corinthians 15:29)

I. Introduction

A. Roman Catholics, some Protestants and various cults claim that water baptism contributes to salvation, and the Mormon religion teaches "proxy baptism," seeing 1 Corinthians 15:29 as the basis for promoting water baptism to help save the souls of deceased ancestors (Salem Kirban, Mormonism (1971), p. 46-47).

B. We thus study passages used by such holders of "baptismal regeneration" to see what they **truly** teach:

II. Understanding Bible Passages Used To Teach That Water Baptism Saves, Acts 2:38 et al.

A. First of all, in **certain** terms, Scripture does **NOT** allow for a Gospel of faith **PLUS** baptism (as follows):

1. Ephesians 2:8-9 reveals one is saved as a gift from God, "not of works lest any man should boast."

2. 1 Corinthians 1:17 has Paul claiming Christ sent him "**not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel**" so that it is by faith in the Gospel and not by water baptism that one must be saved!

B. Well, Scripture cannot be logically inconsistent if it is true, so we view what verses used by promoters of "baptismal regeneration" **must** mean that can **NOT** extol a **faith-plus-water-baptism** gospel (as follows):

1. We study Acts 2:38 to discern what it actually teaches (as follows):

a. Some hold Peter here taught repentance plus baptism remitted sins, Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 359.

b. Well, the verb "repent" is plural in Acts 2:38 NIV as is the pronoun, "your" that modifies "sins" in that verse; **however**, the **imperative**, "be baptized" is **singular** in form, "setting it off from the rest of the sentence" as a parenthetical expression, *Ibid.*

c. Thus, Peter taught in Acts 2:38 that repentance was connected to the remission of sins, and that baptism was an accompanying act that gave evidence of the repentance!

2. We study Acts 22:16 to discern what it actually teaches (as follows):

a. Some believe this verse teaches one washes away his sins by means of water baptism, *Ibid.*, p. 418.

b. Yet, a view of the tenses in the Greek text reveals such an idea errs: the verse should be translated: "having arisen, be baptized; and wash away your sins, having called on the name of the Lord." (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, fn. to Acts 22:16). Thus, "Baptism does not wash away sins." (*Ibid.*)

3. We study 1 Peter 3:21 to discern what it actually teaches (as follows):

a. Some hold that Peter here taught that water baptism saves the soul from hell.

b. However, the "baptism doth **also** now save **us**" phrase (KJV) **in its CONTEXT** likens the fate of Peter's readers to that of Noah; thus, God's impending physical judgment on Israel for rejecting Christ (cf. Luke 19:41-44) would be escaped by Peter's **Hebrew** readers (1 Pet. 1:1 and **diaspora**, a reference to the Jewish dispersion, *Ibid.*, Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 839) if they stood for Christ as Noah was saved from God's judgment of the flood by heeding God to enter the ark, 1 Pet. 3:20-21.]

4. We study 1 Corinthians 15:29 to discern what it actually teaches (as follows):

a. Some hold this verse teaches proxy baptism, i.e., baptism for the eternal benefit of a deceased party.

b. However, Paul referred to the rite as being practiced by **THIRD** parties, **NOT** by the **Church!**

c. Well, north of Corinth, a popular pagan religion promoted "washings . . . in the sea without which no one could hope to experience bliss in the hereafter (cf. Pindar *Fragment 753*)."
(*Ibid.*, p. 544)

d. Now, the Greek preposition **huper** in 1 Cor. 15:29 that is translated "for" (KJV, NIV) or "on behalf of" (ESV) in such a passages that describes a ritual that is done for a party **may** refer a ritual done **EITHER** for **another party OR** for **one's own sake**, cf. Theol. Dict. of the N. T., vol. VIII, p. 508.

e. In view of this background, if **huper** refers to baptism for one's **own** sake, Paul would then be seen to argue that **even the local pagans** who washed in the sea in hope of an afterlife exercised a better hope than did the Corinthian believers who denied the resurrection, a fact aimed to **shame** them!

f. This interpretation, unlike any other, fits "the natural reading of the Greek verse" (*Ibid.*, B.K.C., N.T.), so we believe Paul did not refer to proxy baptism in 1 Cor. 15:29; rather, He alluded to a pagan ritual practiced in a vain hope of the afterlife to expose how the Corinthian believers were **worse** than even the local pagans to deny the reality of the resurrection! He did this to shame them!

Lesson Application: *The Bible teaches salvation is by faith alone and not by faith plus water baptism!*