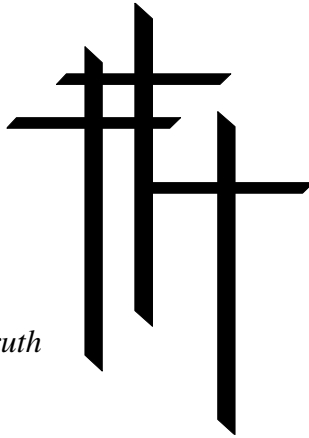


Timely Messenger

*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Speaking the Truth in Love*



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OUR INHERITANCE IN CHRIST

By John LaVier

The first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians is a most precious portion of the Word of God. In this chapter the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed in all His grace and glory, and here also we learn something of the riches that are ours in Him.

After the apostolic greeting we read in verse 3 that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. Then some of these blessings are enumerated. In Him we were chosen before the foundation of

the world; in Him we have the place of sons; in Him we are accepted of the Father; in Him we have redemption by His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Finally in verse 11 we read, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance." And what an inheritance is this! An eternity of endless, fadeless glory!

"We have obtained an inheritance." Now how did we obtain this inheritance? It was not given as a prize, or as a reward for faithful service, nor because we were deserving in the least.

It was all the free gift of God. Israel of old was given an inheritance, and that beautiful land flowing with milk and honey was a picture of our heavenly inheritance. Israel did not receive that inheritance because of any worthiness on their part. God told them that they were a disobedient and stiff-necked people, and warned them against thinking that any merit of theirs was responsible for the grant of the land. He said; "Speak not thou in thine heart, saying, For my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land ... Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go in to possess their land." (Deut. 9:4,5)

God brought Israel out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, the wilderness, and over Jordan, and gave them the inheritance. They did not deserve it, but it was all His gift. So, like Israel's land, our heavenly inheritance is His gift to us, all according to the riches of His grace. We have not deserved it, nor earned it, nor suffered for it. He deserved it, He earned it, He suf-

ferred for it, and we have it in Him. To Him be the praise and the glory.

What a position is ours, in Him. What possessions are ours, in Him. We have obtained “the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory “ (2 Tim 2:10). Wealth, riches, honor and glory will be ours throughout the oncoming ages. And yet, at very best, how little do we really know of all that is included in this most glorious inheritance. Three facts are known to us, though, but even these are beyond our power to fully comprehend. They are:

I. What Christ IS in glory, we shall be.

“When He shall appear, we shall be like Him.”

“Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.”

II. What Christ HAS in glory, we shall have.

“And if children, then

heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”

III. WHERE Christ is in glory, we shall be.

“And so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Child of God, think on these things. As the old world totters on the brink of disaster, as the darkness deepens and collapse approaches, how it should

stabilize, strengthen, cheer and encourage us to meditate upon our inheritance in Christ our Lord.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

(Ephesians 1:18)

WATER BAPTISM FOR WHOM?

By Ike T. Sidebottom

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bare: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” (Matt. 3:11)

John preached the “baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel” (Acts 13:24), but we do not find any scriptural

suggestion that John ever preached to the Gentiles. His message was “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” and his ministry was in direct fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (Matt. 3:1-3).

It is clear from the above Scriptures that John understood that Christ was to come after him to baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. The baptism of the Holy Ghost began on the day of Pentecost, but

the baptism with fire will not come until the close of the thousand-year reign of Christ, when the heavens and the earth shall be purged (2 Pet. 3:10-13).

Why Was Jesus Baptized?

The Holy Spirit was very careful to tell us just why John came baptizing with water and just why Jesus, Himself, was baptized by the hands of John in the river Jordan. He gave us this information through the testimony of John the Baptist, himself, who said, "I knew Him (Christ) not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water" (John 1:31). Thus it is clear that water baptism was necessary in connection with the manifestation of Christ to Israel. However, it does not necessarily follow that water baptism is linked with the manifestation of the Lord Jesus to "Gentiles in the flesh," which were at that time "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having

no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:11-12). Back in the days of John the Baptist, Gentiles were alienated strangers; "But now, in Christ Jesus," they are "made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13).

"The blood," by which the "far off" Gentiles are now made nigh, necessitated a second baptism for Jesus Christ. Long after He had been baptized in water, He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened (pressed) till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). The fact that this second baptism had such a terrific straitening or pressing effect upon the Saviour, suggests that it is the same baptism which He refers to in Matthew 20:22-23, where He said, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" Surely, this can be nothing other than His baptism into "death," which He experienced on the cross of Calvary, and which the present day believer experiences
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(Continued from page 3)

when he is “buried with Him by baptism into death” (Rom. 6:3-4). There is a vast difference between the water baptism which Christ entered into with John the Baptist, that He might be made manifest to Israel as their King; and the death baptism, which He entered into on the cross, that He might be the Saviour of the whole world.

Water baptism was included in the program of Christ’s earthly ministry. This is evidenced by the testimony borne in John 4:1-2, “When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus, Himself, baptized not, but His disciples), He left Judea, and departed into Galilee.” Since both John the Baptist and Jesus preached a kingdom message (Matt. 3:1-3 with Matt. 4:12-23), and since they were both sent to the people of Israel (Acts 13:24-25 with Matt. 15:24), and since they both labored to make national Israel behold and receive her King, it is no strange

thing that water baptism is practiced in connection with both of their ministries. Wherever we find a bona fide kingdom message being proclaimed, we always find the use of water.

The So-Called Great Commission

of Matthew 28:19 was given by the risen Christ to the “apostles whom he had chosen” (Acts 1:2), and to whom He had said, “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me” (Luke 22:29). I do not know why churchmen have designated this particular passage of Scripture as the “Great Commission.” It seems to me that 2 Timothy 2:1-2 would be a much more appropriate passage to single out as God’s great commission for this present dispensation of the mystery. However, the Holy Spirit has not designated any particular portion of His Word as the great commission; therefore, we consider it dangerous to follow “after the tradition of men” along this or any other doctrinal

line (Col. 2:8).

Under this commission to the “Eleven” and to “Matthias,” who later took the place of Judas and was numbered with the eleven, the risen Lord said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (age).” We call special attention to three very important things which the Lord has included in this divine commission—

- These teachers were to go to “all nations.”
- They were to teach the observance of “all things” whatsoever Christ had commanded them (the teachers) to observe.
- He promised to be with them to the “end of the world (age).”

This commission was never fully carried out by the “Twelve” to whom it was given, it has not been fully carried out by any

other company of saints since the days of the twelve apostles, and it will not be fully carried out until the “Hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel” preach it again during the period of “great tribulation” immediately preceding the “End” (Matt. 24:13-14).

“Great salvation” through this kingdom message “first began to be spoken by the Lord” and it was “confirmed” unto the Hebrew believers “by them that heard Him,” namely the “Twelve,” and God was with them “bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will” (Heb. 2:34). Just “after the Lord had spoken unto them” (the eleven) the words of the so-called “great commission,” He was “received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following” (Mark 16:19-20).

Water Baptism During Acts Period and Why

That period of time covered by the book of the Acts of the apostles (approximately 30 years immediately following Pentecost) is the period during which the kingdom message of the Lord was “confirmed” with “signs following” (Mark 16:19-20 and Heb. 2:34), according to the commission of Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:14-18.

During that period, the Holy Spirit was offering the kingdom message to Israel. The nation had rejected and crucified her King, but His prayer for them, on the day of His crucifixion, “Father, forgive them; for, they know not what they do,” was answered when the nation was given another chance to accept the Messiah under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. When they finally rejected His offer of the kingdom, they committed the “unpardonable sin” of Matthew 12:31-32, and the nation was set aside (Acts 28:25-28) until after the calling out of the

“church, which is His body.” When the church is completed, the above mentioned kingdom message will again be given to all nations, after which the kingdom of heaven will be set up.

Water baptism was preached and practiced by Spirit-filled men throughout the Acts period. The Holy Spirit said, through Peter, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). As I understand the Word, the baptism of this verse is water baptism, and it was essential to salvation. Let us remember, however, that the Spirit was here addressing the “house of Israel” and when they (members of the house of Israel) heard Peter’s message concerning the risen Christ, “they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:36-37). God was still endeavoring to make Christ “manifest to Israel” as their King, there-

fore water baptism was still in His program. While the Holy Spirit was giving the message of Acts 2:38, He was also telling Israel about “the times of refreshing” and “the restitution of all things, which God had spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19-21). The “times of refreshing” (Acts 3:19) could not be the same as “the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27), and the “restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21) could not be the same as “the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations” (Col. 1:25-26). These simple comparisons of “spiritual things with spiritual” will prove that the kingdom message of John the Baptist, and of Christ, and of the “Twelve” was continued on into the opening chapters of the book of the Acts. This is why Peter and the “eleven” preached and practiced water baptism.

Cornelius and his household were “uncircumcised” Gentiles (Acts 11:1-

3), yet God saved them, gave them the Holy Ghost, and “put no difference” between them and the Jews upon whom He poured out the Holy Ghost at Pentecost (Acts 15:7-11). These are the first of a chosen number of Gentiles who are elected to be “a people for His name,” and their call is in full agreement with “the words of the prophets,” and they are to be linked with the building again of “the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down” (Acts 15:13-18). This links Cornelius with the kingdom hope and, therefore, accounts for his water baptism of Acts 10:47-48.

Paul, the preacher, the apostle and the teacher of the Gentiles (2 Tim. 1:11) did not preach water baptism at any time, yet, during the Acts period he practiced baptism, with water (1 Cor. 1:14-16). During this period, Paul was an “able minister of the New Covenant” (2 Cor. 3:6) and, as such, he was guided by the Holy Spirit to make a difference between the Jew and the Gentile (Rom 1:16, Rom. 3:1-2, 1 Cor.

9:19-22, etc.). His Acts period ministry to the people of Israel included “none other things than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come” (Acts 26:22). This accounts for Paul’s recognition of both water baptism (1 Cor. 1:14-17) and Holy Spirit baptism (1 Cor. 12:13) during the Acts period, and for his clear cut statement, after the Acts period, that there is just “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5). As I understand the Word, this one baptism is Holy Spirit baptism and not water baptism.

John the Baptist knew only one baptism and that was water baptism. During the Acts period two baptisms are recognized: water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism. In our present church age, we have only one scriptural baptism and that is Holy Spirit baptism (1 Cor. 12:13 with Eph. 4:5). During the tribulation period at the end of the dispensation of grace, Holy Spirit baptism will continue toward Israel and the nations, as during the Acts period, and water baptism may be recognized again.

A summary of the scriptural use of water baptism in God's plan and program for Israel and the nations will clearly distinguish three different groups of "laborers together with God." These three groups are set forth in the Scriptures as follows:

- John the Baptist and the earthly ministry of Christ with His twelve apostles (Matt. 3:11 and John 4:1-2). These labored under the old (law) covenant.
- The Acts period ministry of the Holy Spirit through Peter and the eleven (Acts 2:38 and 10:46-48). These labored under the new covenant.
- The Acts period ministry of the Holy Spirit through Paul and his co-workers (1 Cor. 1:14-17 with 9:19-22), as "able ministers of the new testament" (2 Cor. 3:6).

However, we must also call your attention to a few references from Paul's Acts period epistles,

wherein he makes plain the fact that he used his voice, not his pen, to enlighten the body saints who were being called out during the Acts period.

In 1 Corinthians 2:6-7, the Apostle wrote, saying, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world (before the ages) unto our glory."

These spoken words seem to link perfectly with the mystery of Colossians 1:26 and Ephesians 3:9, along with Romans 16:25; Ephesians 1:4 and 2 Timothy 1:9. This truth helps us to understand the fact that there must have been saints of the mystery dispensation on hand and ready to be instructed when Paul began his written ministry to the church, which is the body of Christ, referred to in Ephesians 1:22-23.

Ephesians 4:5 with Colossians 2:20-23 and 3:2 eliminated water baptism

in our present dispensation because water is one of "the rudiments of the world" and also one of the "things on the earth."

Buried
with Him

in baptism,
wherein also ye
are risen with
Him through
the faith of the
operation of
God, who hath
raised Him
from the dead.

—Colossians

2:12

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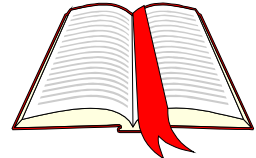
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