

Baptism In Colossians 2:11-13

- 1) **Introduction:** This passage is often used by various Christian groups to establish the rite of water baptism. What we find in going through this study is that baptism in this context refers to something far greater and eternal than a water ceremony. In fact to make baptism refer to a water ceremony in this context takes away one of the most basic truths fundamental to a Christian's understanding; namely the identification of the believer with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In trying to determine the precise meaning of baptism in this passage, we must look at the structure of the passage, the general context and the words used in the context.
- 2) The **Structure** of the Passage From Col. 2:8 - 2:23 using the figure **CORRESPONDENCE - Extended Alternation** (see Bull. F of S p.363). **Definition of CORRESPONDENCE:** The first of the series corresponds with the first of the other; and likewise the second of the former corresponds with the second in the latter.

A1. (v.8-9) **INTRODUCTION:** "Beware" of the tradition of men and the rudiments of the world for they are not after Christ for in Christ dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

B1. (v.10-12) **WE ARE COMPLETE IN CHRIST WITH RESPECT TO SALVATION:** "And you" are complete in him with respect to identification with Christ in his death burial and resurrection... God raised Christ from the dead.

C1. (v.13-15) **WE ARE COMPLETE IN CHRIST WITH RESPECT TO ORDINANCES:** "And you" hath he co-quickened with Christ having forgiven us all trespasses and blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us ... nailing it to the cross.

C2. (v.16-18) **THE BODY IS COMPLETE IN CHRIST WITH RESPECT TO ORDINANCES:** "Therefore let no man govern" or judge you with respect to ordinances which are a shadow of things to come **BUT** the **body** is of Christ (see 1:18 "and he is the head of the body, the church" and 1:24 "of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake which is the church)

B2. (v.19) **THE BODY IS COMPLETE IN CHRIST WITH RESPECT TO SANCTIFICATION:** "Hold the head" from which **ALL** the **body** by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

A2. (v.20-23) **CONCLUSION:** "Wherefore" observance and subjection to ordinances has no **BASIS** for the body, if we've died with Christ from the rudiments of the world.

- a. The main subject of this structure can be stated accurately in the conclusion (member A2 v.20-23) that ordinances have no basis for the body whether of man, (v.8, 22) of angels, (v.18) or of God (v.16, 17).
- b. In v.8 Paul is sounding an alarm to beware of those who turn you from doing what he has previously said in v.6 and 7 namely; as one has received Christ he should walk in him, rooted and built up and established in the faith, as ye have been taught (the body of truth believed) in thanksgiving. This addresses their maturity in Christ which according to verse 6 refers to their holy walk and verse 7 their doctrinal stability and maturity. Compare this with comments made on Eph. 4:1-3. Notice in verse 7 that the definite article is used before faith as is also the case in 1:23 which reads "If ye continue in the faith grounded and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel". This most definitely refers to the body of truth believed and relates to the distinct truth Paul was commissioned to teach. We can see this clearly in 1:25 where Paul says "Whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God which was given to me to fulfil the word of God; the mystery". In this structure I believe it was Gods intent to strengthen those areas of the life and doctrine that would prevent men from spoiling us through whatever means. We could therefore say that v.8 - 23 is an expansion of verse 6 and 7.
- c. Members B1 and C1 deal with our completeness in Christ as individuals and this forms the basis of our completeness in Christ as his body in members C2 and B2.
- d. Member B1 deals with our union with Christ in his death burial and resurrection. This union is first and foremost a representative union because as our representative what he did on the cross he did for us, and when God sees us in Christ he sees Christ's work for Christ was our representative. There is a vital union produced when the Spirit baptizes us into Jesus Christ thereby destroying the old nature giving us a new nature and hence life and union with Christ. Representative union forms the basis of vital union.

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e. Member B2 deals with our completeness as the complete (all the body) body of Christ in which the Spirit as the unifying element between the body members is referred to as "joints and bands" and is the means through which the head ministers to his body.

3) **Our Completeness in Christ.** Verse 10 - 15 (Members B1 and C1)

a) Paul is demonstrating in this passage the truth of v.10 relative to his subject namely, we are complete in Christ (v.10) and that nothing should spoil us and cause us to go after anything else except Christ. The discussion in v.11 to 15 is under the heading of v.10. We are complete in Christ and describe in part those things that are representative of that truth. Notice how the personal pronoun is used from verses 9 - 13 pointing grammatically back to "Christ" in verse 8 b and to verse 9 as the "head".

- Verse 8** For in "**him**" dwells all the fulness...
- Verse 10** For ye are complete in "**him**"...
- Verse 11** In "**whom**" also ye are circumcised...
- Verse 12** Buried with "**him**" in baptism...
In "**whom**" also ye are risen with him...
- Verse 13** hath He quickened together with "**him**"...

b) Paul from verse 10 - 15 deals with our completeness in Christ from two perspectives.

1st we are complete in Christ because of who he is, the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form.

2nd we are complete in Christ because of what he has done for us, as our representative and substitute.

- i) **1st** We our complete in Christ because of **who he is**. (V.9 and 10). The conjunction "and" (kai in the Gk) connects v.9 with v. 10 showing that our completeness in Christ is related to his deity. It's by virtue of the inherent dignity of his divine person that he was a fit representative and substitute sacrifice for his people. Our completeness in Christ is directly related to his fullness in the Godhead.
- ii) **2nd** We our complete in Christ because of **what he has done**. (v. 10- 15). Paul's progressive argument in this section demonstrates the reality and truth of our completeness in Christ with respect to our salvation and our deliverance from ordinances. Paul is discussing that we (v. 10 "and you") are complete in Christ and baptism is part of that which makes us complete in Christ. Initial **QUESTION**: What could Paul's point be if baptism in water is referred to? Whatever we say about baptism here it is the reality and not just a mere symbol of our completeness in Christ for v.11 is linked grammatically back to v.10 and v.12 is linked to v. 11 and hence to v.10 by subject matter. **POINT**: Nothing material and therefore nothing **WE** do can be that which makes us complete in Christ. **PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION**: The baptism in this context does not refer to water baptism for that would make something we do descriptive of why we are complete in Christ. Paul is not using symbolic or figurative language, which would justify saying that baptism, is a symbol of the reality in Christ, for in this context it is the reality. What does water baptism ceremonially celebrate as a symbol in this passage? Lets now look at the four spiritual realities, circumcision, burial, raising and quickening which shows our completeness in Christ with respect to salvation and ordinances.

Verse 11

- 1) **Circumcision.** The Greek word for circumcision is "peristera" and is generally used for the act of cutting off the foreskin of an 8 day old male in accordance with Gods circumcision covenant with Abraham. Christ's circumcision is recorded in Luke 1:39 and cannot possibly be the reference here spoken of, as we shall plainly see, for his was made with hands.
- a) The antecedent of "whom" = him, the head of verse 10, which points back to Christ in v.8. It's in Christ that we are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands. If we take the first part of the sentence and the last part of the sentence we shall see the same truth, namely, that when Christ was circumcised, we were circumcised in him.

	Item	Explanation of Items
----->	In whom also ye are circumcised	The subjects of the circumcision
----->	with the circumcision made without hands	The character of the circumcision - immaterial

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Author	Explanation	
	-----> in putting off the body of the flesh	The intended result and extent of the circumcision
	-----> in (en not dia) the circumcision of Christ	The Author of our circumcision.

- b) This circumcision is the reason that the body of the flesh was put off. The circumcision of Christ that we share in is a reference to his crucifixion death. In 1:21 and 22 Paul says that we have been reconciled in the body of his flesh through (dia) death. Circumcision therefore = his death and provides a rich image of our union with Christ and the putting off of the old man (see Rom. 6:6).

Verse 12

- 1) **Co-burial.** The word for buried with him is "sunthapto" and is made up of "sun" meaning co-extensive union and association, and the Greek word "thapto" meaning to bury or entomb. The meaning is clear. When Christ was buried because of his circumcision death and the putting off of the body of the flesh through death we were viewed in the mind and purpose of God as actually being buried with Christ.
- 2) **"Baptism"** is the Greek word "baptisma" with the "ma" ending which indicates the result of the action expressed in the verb. For the act of baptism we would use the word "baptizo", and for the result of the act we would use the word "baptisma". Paul says we were buried with him in baptism; this is the result of being baptized into his circumcision death. This is very similar to Rom. 6:4 where we have:
 - a) **v.3** Baptized (baptizo) into his death -> refers to the act of baptism
 - b) **v.4** Co-buried with him in baptism (baptisma) unto death -> refers to the result of the act of baptism into his death namely; that we have been buried with Christ. Baptisma is then viewed as the undertaker taking the body at the point of death to be buried.
 - c) This is no more a reference to our personal baptism than it is to our personal burial. It's a reference to Christ's death baptism and his burial by which we share by virtue of the operation of God.

Notice

Luke 12:50 *But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straightened till it be accomplished.*

Matt. 20:22,23 *Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand or on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my father.* Note: None of the apostles sit on their thrones until Christ sits on his. Christ and the apostles will not sit on their thrones until after their death baptisms. Therefore Christ is not sitting on his throne (David's throne) that his apostles will share in.

- d) Please see my comments on baptism in Rom. 6. The figure ellipsis is used in this verse and should read with the ellipsis supplied "buried with him in (his) baptism". There is more justification for this than in separating baptism from the other 4 realities.
- It's Christ's **circumcision** - in which we share
 - It's Christ's **burial** - in which we share
 - It's Christ's **raising** - in which we share
 - It's Christ's **quickenning** - in which we share

Why Not Say In Keeping With the Other Four Spiritual Realities
(And Baptism Being Descriptive Of Our Completeness in Christ),

That

It's Christ's Baptism in which we share, AND is not a reference to a water ritual
which was never intended to symbolize IN ANY way, this precious truth.

Christ Personally

Christ was circumcised at 8 days old

Christ was baptism with water by John

Christ as Representative For His People

Christ was circumcised (cut off) at death without hands.

Christ was baptized unto death by the operation of God.

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Co-quickened -> "he shall" refers back to v.12 "God" and is therefore **NON-MATERIAL**

Co-buried in baptism -> must be non-material therefore **Baptism DOES NOT EQUAL water.**

Comments and Questions

- 1) Why assign water to baptism to this context? If water baptism is such an important ceremony why doesn't Paul include it as a command at least once in his epistles? Paul always states this baptism as a fact already accomplished and never commands it because the reality of it is spiritual, not material. Water baptism was never intended to symbolize this precious truth.
- 2) Where does scripture ever assign the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ as a symbol for the rite of water baptism? You might say Rom. 6 and Col. 2 as your answer, but both passages link baptism to Christ's death and burial and not to his resurrection and quickening. There is no reference linking baptism with Christ's resurrection in the N.T. You might say that the phrase "baptized into Jesus Christ" indicates immersion by water symbolizing his death burial and resurrection. Where does it say that?
- 3) The Greek word for buried literally means co-buried or co-entombed and shows, that when he was buried we were buried with him. The word for baptism is "baptisma" with the ma ending and refers to the result of the action of the verb. Therefore the result of the act of baptism is that we were co-buried with Christ. How is this reference to water baptism by immersion?