

## The Way of the Lord

### 39. Theological Hindrances to The LORDship of Jesus (Part 4)

In our last segment we told you how the Nicolaitan clergy system took control of Christendom. Now we want to discuss one of the most sinister and blasphemous enactments of that system of domination. We're going to focus on a specific point of God's Word which Revisionists drastically altered or eliminated. Remember, our goal for this whole series is for *you* to daily live in the love and obedient trust of the LORDship of Jesus, and fulfill His purposes for your life. So be sure you scrutinize your *own* faith walk as we show how God's purpose for *biblical baptism* has been nullified by the practice of *infant baptism*.

Infant baptism perpetuated the deception that once a baby was sprinkled, the child belonged to God. Babies who were *not* baptized were considered still tainted with original sin, and therefore excluded from heaven. Various movements among the Reformers purposed to return to the biblical practice of *believer baptism*. That meant baptizing *only* those who understood their sinful depravity and repented, putting their trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord of their life (Acts 2:36-38; Romans 6:1-4). Sadly, many of these bold believers were persecuted by *fellow Reformers* who adamantly held to the practice of infant baptism.

Roman Catholicism spread by readily adopting *pagan practices* and incorporating them into their belief system to appease newly conquered heathens. Its form of government imitated the Roman Empire. The Pope became *pontifex maximus* as the *Emperor* had been—a title known today as Roman Pontiff. The worship of the Roman pantheon of false gods translated into worshipping and praying to Mary and a myriad of saints.

The custom of *infant baptism* became a sacrament throughout Roman Catholicism to incorporate tiny children into the fold. It was a throwback to the Hebrews circumcising their sons on the eighth day as a sign of entering God's Covenant to be His people. Yet *nowhere* in Scripture does God command *followers of Christ* to circumcise their children. And *nowhere* in the biblical account do you see *children* being baptized. That's because in order to enter the New Covenant that's made possible by the shed blood of Jesus, a person had to confirm with their *own* heart and mouth the conditions of the Covenant for themselves.

There are no stand-ins or proxies for baptism! No one else can do it for you, as God makes clear in His Word: "*If you acknowledge publicly with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and trust in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be delivered. For with the heart one goes on trusting and thus continues toward righteousness, while with the mouth one keeps on making public acknowledgement and thus continues toward deliverance*" (Romans 10:9,10, CJB). In order to embrace the New Covenant the Father offers, you must recognize your *own depraved sinfulness*, and *intentionally* put your trust in the shed blood of Jesus to pay the death penalty for your sins.

Repentance for your sins is the first condition from your heavenly Father to enter His Covenant. To *repent* means purposing to *turn away* from your life pattern of sin and *turn to* God for forgiveness. No one can repent for you! (See *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*.) Convincing you that you *are* a sinner and you *need* to repent is the first work the Holy Spirit does in you: "*When the [Holy Spirit] comes, He will convict the world of guilt concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they*

do not put their trust in Me" (John 16:8,9).

The practice of infant baptism by Roman Catholics and by many Protestants as well *eliminates* an essential ministry of the Holy Spirit: to *convict people of their sin*. If they *don't recognize their sin and hate it*, they won't sense any need for Jesus to *save* them. The practice of infant baptism blasphemes the Holy Spirit by *discrediting* both His work *and* Scripture. Countless thousands who were sprinkled as infants have falsely believed they belong to God and are accepted by Him just as they are. *But* they never entered His Covenant in Christ the way HE set forth in His Word.

Let's look at two key passages that reveal *God's perspective* about baptism:

- "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3,4).

- "This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21).

Obviously an infant has no understanding of being a slave to sin or of dying to his sinful self. And pledging a good conscience toward God takes a fair degree of understanding as well.

The *Holy Spirit* inspired Peter and Paul to write about baptism. They were well aware that Jesus had said, "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). And as Jews, these men would have realized that the Spirit was pointing to *immersion*, which had been a practice of the Jews for centuries. Immersion baptism is similar to the Jewish *mikveh*. The person set his heart to *turn away* from the defilement of sin and *live uprightly* to please God. He stepped down into the *mikveh* and immersed himself. This action symbolized washing away the *old life pattern of sin* by completely immersing himself in the water and rising up cleansed in spirit.

Think of baptism like plunging a cloth into dye. The cloth takes on the *quality of the dye*. And those who are *immersed into Christ* are united with Him into a *new nature*. John's baptism for repentance (Luke 3:3) called for *turning away from sin* and *rising up* into forgiveness and newness of life. Paul builds on this immersion of repentance by identifying our "water burial" with the death of Christ—in Him we're no longer enslaved to sin.

So what happened to this clear understanding of immersion baptism as someone who's prepared to embrace our Father's stipulations for the New Covenant? *Fierce anti-Semitism* permeated Roman Catholicism and many of the Protestant Reformers as well. They determined to make a *clear split* from any practices they considered "Jewish." (See *Restoring the Early Church*, Chapter 5. The Loss of Our Hebraic Roots: Christianity's Response to the Jews.) This anti-Semitic prejudice has continued even now. Until as recently 1963, on every Good Friday Roman Catholics around the world *recited a curse* against the Jews. And many denominations discount the Older Testament as irrelevant, or refuse to see God's hand fulfilling prophecy as HE restores the Jewish people to Israel.

Much of Christian history bears witness to this tragic testimony: The more denominations disregarded the ministry of the Holy Spirit in those who love and serve Jesus as LORD, the more they blasphemed the Spirit by propagating infant baptism.

### **For Further Study**

- Book: *Restoring the Early Church*, Chapter 5. The Loss of Our Hebraic Roots: Christianity's Response to the Jews
- Hebraic Article: *The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*

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