

The Authority to Baptize

Does one walk into the neighborhood church and pick out a man in the congregation to officiate at the baptism? Of course not, that's the minister's responsibility. Yet some believe that anyone immersed into Yahshua's Name has the authority to go out and baptize as well, whether ordained or not. Is this so?

Intense Bible study will evoke a sincere seeker of Bible truth to feel an inner compulsion to be baptized. Baptism is an obligation we eagerly fulfill. The example of the Savior shows that He Himself was baptized by John the Baptist as the ultimate example for us: *And Yahshua answering said unto him, "Suffer [it to be so] now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Then he suffered Him. And Yahshua, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of Elohim descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased,"* Matthew 3:15-17.

Though He was sinless, Yahshua required baptism as the pattern for us. We are to walk in His footsteps (1 Pet. 2:21). At His baptism Yahshua was publicly recognized by Yahweh as His beloved Son and we, too, upon being immersed into Yahshua's Name, are acknowledged as Yahweh's sons and daughters, henceforth sealed with His Name!

John's Baptism: Repentance

We have two examples in the Acts of the Apostles of them who were baptized unto John's immersion of repentance: Apollos in (Acts 18:24-28) and of twelve in Ephesus in (Acts 19:1-6).

In the first instance, we might assume that when Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos aside to expound the way of Yah more perfectly to him, that incidental to their conversation was the need to be baptized "**more perfectly.**" In the second instance, when Paul found certain disciples, he asks, "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed" (Acts 19:2)? Their negative reply proved they hadn't been baptized, "**more perfectly**" (Acts 19:2, 3).

Paul explained John's baptism was to prepare them to receive Yahshua as Sovereign and Ruler in their lives. With this explanation they decided to be baptized unto salvation in the saving Name of Yahshua. When Paul laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in different tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:4-6)

By this example we look upon all previous baptisms not done in Yahshua's saving Name, as a type of John's baptism. That is, the individual has gone as far as he or she could in their incomplete understanding. But upon understanding we must be baptized into the only Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12), the truly repentant eagerly comply. There is nothing higher than being baptized into Yahshua and taking on His saving Name. This is the betrothal of becoming the bride of Messiah.

These examples in Acts establish that baptisms were done by the early Apostles who were the ministers chosen of the Savior. The example of Phillip shows that the elders still had the responsibility to lay hands upon the candidate. There is nothing in the book of Acts warranting anyone taking upon himself this authority of baptizing in the Name of Yahshua and laying on of hands. Simon Magus in (Acts 8:18-22) even acknowledged that it was a spiritual endowment and religious qualification. This is executed by those ministers whom Yahweh had anointed.

The Proper Name

An age-old question arises as to the Name into which we are to be baptized. Most churches baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). However, none of these is a name, but titles.

Questions have been raised about Matthew 28:19, and many Bible scholars look upon this as a spurious verse, not in harmony with Scriptural practice (Acts 2:38, 10:48, 19:5). Write for our study, *Trinitarian Baptism and Matthew 28:19*.

Significantly, the short or poetic form, “Yah,” as in Father Yahweh, is incorporated within the Name of His Son YAHshua, when one is properly immersed. Moreover, in the proper administration of Baptism, the candidate is gifted with the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by the presbytery, thus fulfilling Yahshua’s pledge: *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you*, John 14:16-17.

The Apostles Peter and Paul are quite clear in their writings, that the formula for baptism is immersion into the saving Name of Yahshua, the head of the body and the Captain of our salvation: *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Yahshua Messiah for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit ... Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Yahshua the Messiah were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Messiah was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also [in the likeness] of [His] resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is impaled with [Him], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin*, Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-6.

In writing to the Corinthian Assembly, Paul further affirms we are baptized into the Name of Yahshua the Messiah. We belong to the Messiah and are joined to Him along with those who have been sealed in His Name through baptism: *Now this I say, that every one of you saiths, “I am of Paul;” and “I of Apollos;” and “I of Cephas;” and “I of Messiah.” Is Messiah divided: was Paul impaled for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank Yahweh that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name*, 1 Corinthians 1:12-15.

Neither water baptism nor laying on of hands by lay people, was usual or a customary practice in the first *ekklesia*.

Then Who Baptizes?

Should only the ordained ministers baptize? Or can anyone who has been immersed into Yahshua’s Name baptize others? What do examples of baptism tell us? The first baptism for the remission of sins recorded in the New Testament is found in Acts 2:38. Peter gave a rousing sermon to the gathered house of Israel on Pentecost, that resulted in the baptism of 3,000 by Apostles who had been instructed by the Savior (Acts 2:38-42).

In Acts, chapter 8, Phillip, a recognized deacon, was the first to proclaim the Good News to the Samaritans, who, *When they believed Phillip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of Yahweh, and the name of Yahshua Messiah, they were baptized, both men and women* Acts 8:12. Later, dispatched by the Angel of Yahweh to the south of Jerusalem, he met a man returning to Ethiopia whom he also immersed, following a short reflection on the content of Isaiah 53:7.

Nevertheless, he did not presume to lay his hands on any of them toward the intent of conferring upon them the gift of the Holy Spirit, a ministry that was reserved to elders.

The Gift of the Spirit ~ Elders Sent to Lay on Hands

Though water immersion is not an administration usually assigned to diaconal ministries, Phillip was given of the Holy Spirit, miraculous faculties and spiritual endowments to convince these Samaritans, his work was of Yahweh. Baptisms were done by the anointed elders, who also were responsible for the laying on of hands following immersion for the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Elders Peter and John were sent from Jerusalem to Samaria for this very purpose: *Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of Yahweh, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit, (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the Name of the Master Yahshua). Then laid they [their] hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit, Acts 8:14-17.*

Ten years after the ascension of the Savior, we read of the Apostle administering the gift of the Holy Spirit—though somewhat out of the usual order of water immersion preceding the conferral of the gift of the Holy Spirit—upon the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48). Important to our notice, however, is that though these had first received the gift of the Holy Spirit and that, without the medium of the administration of the elder's hands, this spiritual endowment did not preclude that they should also be water baptized in the Name of the Master: *Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of [Yahshua]. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days, Acts 10:47-48.*

Through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:17-18, 19:6; 1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6), the Holy Spirit confers spiritual gifts: *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Master. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same Elohim which works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, 1 Corinthians 12:4-7.*

In the next three verses, Paul lists these spiritual endowments, miraculous faculties, and religious qualifications, saying, *For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another [divers] kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues, 1 Corinthians 12:8-1-9.* And with the gifting, are we likewise charged with the words of Paul to Timothy, his son in the faith: *Neglect not the gift that is in you, which was given you by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, 1 Timothy 4:14.*

So, when one is baptized into the body of Messiah and given a Spiritual gift, he is expected to use that gift to edify and strengthen His members in the most holy faith (Jude 20).

Fruitbearers

We are also to bear fruits of the Spirit as Paul describes in Galatians. Notice: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law, Galatians 5:22.*

Exercising our gifts bears fruit. Those who think they can be a credible follower of Yahshua and avoid being a part of the body are making a big mistake. One cannot be a hermit and develop

character. The fruit of the Spirit is a result of interacting with the body, in which the fruit of the Spirit is nurtured and grows.

We are to manifest love. Exhibit joy. Promote peace. Prove our patience. Show gentleness. Exercise goodness. Deepen our faith. Remain meek. Be tolerant. How? Only by interacting with others. When baptized into the saving Name of Yahshua, we join with those who have accepted the only Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). We are among the company of believers who have been sealed with His Name. We look forward to standing on Mount Zion at the Marriage Supper with the Lamb, as it is written, *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty [and] four thousand, having [His Name and] His Father's Name written in their foreheads,* Revelations 14:1.

Conclusion

According to Scripture, only an ordained Elder should baptize. He is a recognized representative of the body of Messiah and can better counsel one on the solemnity of the occasion. It is also from the presbytery (elders) that the gifts of the Spirit are given by laying on of hands (1 Tim. 4:14).

Heed the counsel given by Ananias to the Apostle Paul: *And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the Name of the Master,* Acts 22:16.

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