

BIBLE EXPLORATIONS

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...to know the love of Christ
which passeth knowledge
that ye might be filled with
all the fulness of God. Eph 3:19

Contradictions in Scripture #5

The previous articles have pointed out some examples of contradictions in Scripture and have sought to reveal the fact that they are not contradiction, but rather contrasts which God uses to teach us things He wants us to know in relation to His purposes. There is the exoteric view and the esoteric view, the view from the standpoint of God's sovereignty, the difference between state and standing, and between law and grace (or old nature and new nature). This final article in this series does in no way exhaust the subject of contradictions in Scripture, but must be included because of the importance the Apostle Paul placed upon it in his final epistle. He admonished members of the Church, the Body of Christ, to rightly divide the Word of Truth. (2 Ti 2:15)

A most basic, easy to see, contradiction concerns baptism. Hebrews 6:2 speaks of the doctrine of baptisms or washings. John the Baptist spoke of two baptisms. In Matthew 3:11,12 John says he baptized with water, but the One Whom he will introduce to the world will baptize with the Holy Ghost. Philip the evangelist baptized the Ethiopian eunuch with water. (Acts 8:27-38) The Apostle Paul baptized a few believers in water, 1 Corinthians 1:13-17, but he generally left that for his disciples to do; YET, he says definitely in Ephesians 4:5 that there is ONE baptism. Unless we rightly divide

the Word of Truth, we have a contradiction. Is there only ONE baptism, or is there more than one? Or, would Paul have us to believe the ONE baptism is with water, and that there is no baptism of the Spirit for us? Or, is he telling us it is the baptism of the Spirit, the one John said the Lord would use, and not the baptism with water?

There is no record in Scripture that the people of Israel had any dispute over the manner in which John baptized. Their dispute was in repenting and bringing forth fruits worthy of their repentance. (Matt 3:7,8) They understood the laver in the tabernacle (or Temple) was for washings by the priests. They evidently made application of this to John's teaching. So water baptism pertained to the nation of Israel.

Let's consider the seven-fold unity in Ephesians 4:4-6 to see if water baptism makes sense in that context.

There is ONE Body, (which has to be the one in 1:22,23); ONE Spirit, (2:18); ONE hope of your calling, (the hope in 1:18 together with 2:6, Col 3:1-4, Tit 2:12-14); ONE Lord, (as Head of this body, 4:15, Col 1:18); ONE faith, ('the Divinely implanted principle' Companion Bible Appendix 150, II, 1). This faith concerns the one body with Christ as Head; One Baptism; One God and Father of all Who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

When one understands that this ONE Body of believers that was chosen in Christ BEFORE the overthrow of the world, 1:4, and its members are adopted as sons by Jesus Christ Himself, with Himself as its Head, 4:15, and then to make the ONE baptism to be a water baptism, doesn't make sense.

This body has nothing to do with man-made organizations. When a believer submits to water baptism, he has joined a man-made organization. This does not assure him membership into the Body of Christ. It does reveal the fact that he does not understand the ONE baptism in relation to the ONE Body in Ephesians.

The Lord's baptism was of the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit. This baptism was made manifest at Pentecost as related in Acts 2. This was the promise of the Father the Lord spoke of in Luke 24:49. This was the "... **power from on high** ..." (Acts 1:5-8) which enabled believers to speak in tongues so every Jew and proselyte present from all parts of the then-known world could communicate with each other. This power included the spiritual gifts as recorded in Mark 16:17-18 and 1 Corinthians 12. If this is the ONE baptism Paul mentions in Ephesians 4:5, it is quite evident it is not being manifested today by members of this one Body.

These gifts of the Spirit were signs and miracles to wake up the

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Divine Summons #3

Summons to Individuals: Abraham

The Lord has summoned numerous individuals to service. When He summoned them, He spoke in many ways. He spoke audibly, in dreams, and through His messengers. He spoke by means of His inanimate creation, through miraculous signs, and by His written Word.

God's summons to individuals were clear and direct. He made certain that each heard and understood His instructions to them. He made no allowances for any to presume he was summoned to His service; no one could take on a work of God simply because he "felt" God called him. To attempt a work for God without His summons, was disastrous. The work failed. Men lost their lives.

Two sons of Aaron died when they offered strange incense to God, "... **which He commanded them not**". (Lev 10:1) And, another Israelite, Uzza, died when he reached out to steady the ark of God as it wobbled on an ox cart. Uzza acted independently of God and against God's instructions. **And God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God**". (2 Sam 6:7)

Yet today children of God may act independently of God. They may offer to Him worship in ways, "**which He commanded not**." They may fail to distinguish what God said to them from what He said to others at an earlier time. They may mix together God's instructions to them with His instructions to someone else. Why then do they not fall dead as did Uzza and the sons of Aaron?

Uzza and the sons of Aaron lived during the period of God's summons for His kingdom on earth. Such judgments were part of God's

administration then, and we note that such kingdom judgments continued in the years of the N.T. up to the end of the period covered in the book of Acts. As late as AD 57-60, saints dropped dead because they lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5), or were sickly and died because they partook of the New Covenant feast irreverently. (1 Cor 11:29-31)

Since God's summons to His Kingdom on earth is in abeyance today, so also is His kingdom judgment in abeyance. Today God's summons is sent out for a kingdom above the heavens and God deals with those called to that kingdom as mature sons (2Ti 4:18). He allows them to do wrong and suffer the consequences of their doing. He allows them to shorten or destroy their lives in sin. He permits them to retain their inheritance in heavenly places even though they fail to walk worthy and they lose the prize He has prepared for them.

Abraham lived in Ur of the Chaldees, a city infamous for its heathen and immoral religions. It was there in Shinar (Babylonia or the Chaldees) that the Lord judged the disobedience of the nations and scattered them by miraculously scrambling their language. It was immediately after that traumatic event that Abraham left the area. (Gen 11:6-9; Act 7:2,3) Did the Lord get his attention by that awesome display of His invisible power? Was it then that God revealed Himself to Abraham as the One True God, invisible and mighty?

Scripture does not satisfy our curiosity about many such things, but we do know that God does not call unbelievers to serve Him, and so we can be sure that Abraham had already acknowledged the

Almighty Creator when he was called. For, without an introduction to Himself, the Lord said unto Abraham, "**Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.**" (Gen 12:1)

A divine summons had come to Abraham and with it God made known His desire and Abraham's place in His plans. Abraham learned that his family was to be an instrument of blessing to all the nations which God had just scattered. His seed was to teach the nations about the One True God.

God's summons to Abraham required a response. Imagine the questions which filled his mind. Why should he leave Ur? He could be a blessing from there. How could God use his family when he had no children and was too old to produce them? And, even if he had a family, how could one family bless an entire earth? Perhaps Abraham considered the awesome, invisible power of God, Who in a moment had scrambled the language of nations, for he obeyed God and, "**... he went out not knowing whither he went.**" (Heb 11:8)

Afterwards, God gave a vast territory to Abraham and his seed. However, Abraham wandered as a nomad, looking for a home, not earthly, but heavenly in character. Ur of the Chaldees held no attraction for Him. He longed for a dwelling place with God.

God called Abraham His servant and His friend. (Gen 26:24; James 2:23) And, because of His faith obedience, God has prepared a place for Abraham, a heavenly city, where they will dwell together. (Heb 11:10,16) To the end of his life, Abraham endured faithful to the divine summons he received.

J. Heltzinger

Truth Or Tradition

Christian tradition may or may not be truth according to the Scriptures. It must be tested by comparison with the Scriptures to determine if it is truth.

Christian tradition, generally accepted, teaches that something entirely new and different happened in AD 29, Acts 2, which marked the beginning of the Gentile church, which they believe to be the Body of Christ (Eph 1:22,23), also the Bride of Christ. (2Co 11:2)

From Acts 2, tradition teaches that believers were filled with God, the Holy Spirit, at Pentecost. However, the use of capital letters for holy spirit is not a divine mark proving that it speaks of God; capital letters were decided by men who translated the Bible into English in 1611. The words "holy spirit" may or may not refer to God. The context and usage of the words are true guides.

Tradition teaches that the Holy Spirit (God) indwelt those believers forever after Pentecost and that this had never occurred before. However, what do the Scriptures say concerning the holy spirit? The Scriptures say:

1. Just as God had empowered men in the O.T., so it was power to do a special work. In this case, the gift of holy spirit (power) was speaking in tongues. (Ac 1:5,8; Lk 24:49)

2. It was a gift poured out upon the disciples. (Ac 2:7)

3. It was a gift given by God. It was not God Himself given to men. (Ac 10:45; 11:17)

4. This pouring out was not unheard of; it had been foretold as a blessing for Israel. (Joel 2:28-31; Isa 44:1-3)

5. God had filled workmen with His spirit for a task. (Ex 31:2-4; 36:1)

6. David spoke of having God's

spirit. (Ps 51:11,12)

7. John the Baptist was filled with the holy spirit from his mother's womb. (Lk 1:13-15)

8. Joshua had God's spirit (wisdom) in him. (Num 27:18)

After deciding that the true Christian church began at AD 29, tradition concluded that all the epistles written after Acts 2 must be for and about the church of Ephesians 1:22,23, which they say began then and continues today. In attempting to pattern their lives and ways of worship after things noted in those epistles, divisions began among believers. A few causes of division were:

1. Seeing water baptisms, the Baptists came into being. (Ac 1:5)

2. Seeing holy living needful, the Methodists proclaimed that. (Js 2:20-22)

3. Seeing supernatural gifts abound, Pentecostals stressed this. (Ac 2:4; 1 Cor 12:1-7)

4. The Jehovah's Witnesses saw 144,000 witnesses in Revelation 7:4 and claimed this role.

5. Presbyterians emphasized predestination. (Ro 8:30)

6. Seeing justification by faith without works, the Lutherans heralded that. (Ro 1:17; 5:1)

7. Seeing the Sabbath kept, Seventh Day Adventists adopted that. (Ac 18:4)

8. Messianic Jews today find their basis in Acts where Jews embraced Jesus as the Christ (Messiah) and continued to be Jewish, keeping the Law. (Ac 2:29-31; 21:23-26)

A study of the Book of Acts, and epistles of that period, will show what the risen Lord continued to do through His apostles. One can then determine whether or not God began an entirely new program in Acts 2 at Pentecost, or if there is a continuation of God's purpose for Israel. By comparing those epistles

written during Acts with those epistles written after events in Acts, one may discover that the reason for many divisions in Christendom is a failure to heed God's directive to "rightly divide" the Scripture.

Failure to divide Scripture concerning the hope of Israel (Ac 28:29) from that concerning the church which is the Body of Christ (Eph 3:1; Tit 2:13), a later revelation to the Apostle Paul, has produced groups which either mix together both hopes, or else take only part of Israel's hope. Others see the change in God's purpose at the end of Acts and embrace only the hope of the church which is the Body of Christ. (Eph 1:22,23)

To read and compare all those epistles written during Acts times with those written after, may appear a Herculean task, but the discoveries in so doing, make the task a joy and a life long venture. For your start on this search, the epistles *during* Acts and *after* Acts are listed below:

DURING ACTS

Matthew, Mark, Luke, Galatians, Hebrews, Revelation, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude, James, John Romans, 1 & 2 Peter

AFTER ACTS

Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians, Titus, 1 & 2 Timothy.

By comparing those books written during Acts with those written after Acts, we may conclude whether or not those epistles written during Acts times are for and about us today, showing patterns of living and worship for the Body of Christ. We may begin to sort out what is tradition and what is truth for us, who are members of the church which is the Body of Christ. We will have begun to heed the Scripture of 2 Timothy 2:15.

J. Heltzinger

Contradictions ...cont'd

nation of Israel to the fact that their Messiah had come, and to verify the Word of God by those who believed.

There is another baptism which gets very little attention in comparison to the two just mentioned. It is recorded in Luke 12:50. The Lord says, "**I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am straitened till it be accomplished!**" HE said these words near the end of His ministry and referred to His death. His death was a baptism.

We who have the new nature (Eph 4:24) were "**Buried with Him in baptism ...**" (Col 2:12) This was also true of believers during the Acts period. (Rom 6) During the Acts period believers had at least three baptisms: with water, the Holy Spirit for gifts, and the baptism into his death. Colossians is the companion book with Ephesians and explains the ONE baptism of Ephesians 4:5. It is the baptism into His death. It involves no ceremonies, special fonts or baptisteries, or buildings, and no holy men or ordained men to perform the rite. The Church, the Body of

Christ, has ONE baptism. Be fully persuaded in your own mind just which one that is.

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent (or things that differ), that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ." (Phil 1:9,10)

P. Schafer

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Phoenix Bible Conference (April 7-9th, 1995)

Friday (Glencroft Retirement Center, Basement of Condos, 67th Ave. between Butler and Olive, Glendale, Az.)

7:00pm Workshop

Saturday (Glencroft Retirement Center, Basement of Condos)

9:30am, 10:30am

11:45 Potluck Lunch

1:30pm, 2:30pm

7:00pm Special music time, Bernie Barringer, Colorado

Sunday (Glendale North Community Center, 14075 N. 59th Ave, Glendale, Az, 1 block north of Thunderbird Rd on 59th Ave., east side of street)

9:30am, 10:30am

Speakers: Dan Haley, Brockport, NY; Clarence Howard, Fresno, CA; Nathan Sharff, Forrest Cottrell; Philip Bagby; Barnabas Bagby.

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