

2. Universalism and Scriptural Baptism.

The whole basis of this issue comes down to what the Lord Jesus Christ has taught regarding baptism rather than what any person or group of people believes about it. The Lord Jesus Christ has taught and continues to bear witness to the fact that scriptural baptism is how the Church adds children of God to its membership. The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the Church that teaches and practices this scriptural form of baptism. Churches that are part of Universalism teach something different.

Universalist churches are generally divided into two camps regarding what they teach about baptism. Both groups believe that there is no distinction between being a child of God and a member of the church. They believe that a person becomes a member of the church at the same instance they become a child of God. However, they disagree as to what part baptism serves in this. One group believes baptism is essential in order for a person to become a child of God. This group practices that baptism makes a person a child of God and a member of the Church at the same instance. The second group sees no significant relationship between baptism and soul salvation. Rather, this second group teaches that baptism is simply “an outward declaration of an inward change”. They teach baptism is simply a way that a child of God shows obedience to the Lord but really nothing more. Even a causal consideration of either of these teachings reveals they oppose what the Lord Jesus Christ taught and what He continues to bear witness to in this day.

According to the Bible, baptism is what puts a person who has been born-again into the Church. So that this will be clear, the Church will be identified using the scriptures. Once the Church is identified, verses from the Bible will be presented showing how a person enters into it.

- A. The Bible teaches that the Church the Lord organized is His body.
 - i. (Eph 1:22-23) And hath put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* the head over all *things* to the Church, {23} Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

- ii. (Col 1:24) Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church.
- B. Romans 6:3 is given in this place. The verse teaches how we enter “into” Christ. It teaches that children of God are baptized “into” Christ. Baptism is a burial. Children of God receive life within at the instance they are born again. By baptism, they take their old ways of living to the watery grave and bury them. When they come up out of this same grave, they are being raised to walk in newness of life. It is unreasonable for a person who has received eternal life to want to continue to walk in the ways of death. They want to walk in the newness of the life they received when born again. So, children of God come and unite to the Church the Lord Jesus Christ organized to walk in the new and lively ways of the Lord. However, to enter the body of Christ, they must leave their old ways behind them. To properly dispose of these old ways, they bury them in the watery grave of baptism. Having put their old ways behind them, they enter the body of Christ Jesus to walk in newness of life.
- (Rom 6:3-4) Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- C. The Bible teaches the difference between the new birth and Church membership in the letter to the Galatians. This letter clarifies the difference between Christ entering a person to make him a child of God and a child of God entering into Christ.
- i. (Gal 3:26) For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.
Explanation of this verse: Notice that people become children of God by

faith in Christ Jesus. As previously addressed, life enters the child of God when they are born again. So then, those who have been born again have Christ “inside” their own selves.

- ii. (Gal 3:27) For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Explanation of this verse: Notice here that those who have been baptized into the body of the Lord have also put the Lord Jesus Christ own “outwardly”.
 - iii. The distinction between soul salvation and the baptism taught by the Lord Jesus Christ becomes more clear when considering these verses. Soul salvation takes place inwardly. A child of God possesses soul salvation on the inside. However, the child of God can put baptism on outwardly. This they do when they enter the Lord's Church body through the watery grave.
- D. The Lord Jesus Christ taught, and still confirms, that a person must be cleansed inwardly before they can be cleansed outwardly. This means a person must be born-again before they are candidates for baptism.
- i. (Mat 23:25-26) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. (26) *Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which is* within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Explanation of these verses: It is apparent that the Lord means to draw attention to the fact that there is an inside part of man in addition to the outside part of man. Both parts of man needs to be cleansed. The Lord lets us know that the inside part must be clean before the outside even has a chance to be clean. However, if the inside part fails to be cleansed, it is apparent that the outside will never even have a chance at being clean.

- ii. The soul is the inside of every person. The soul is cleansed through saving faith as described earlier. Unless the soul of a person has been saved, there is nothing else about the person that can be clean.
- iii. The way a person lives is directly tied to their outward part. A child of God starts the path of clean living by being baptized with the baptism the Lord left His Church to administer. What the Lord taught about baptism has been described earlier. Unless a person has been born-again, baptism will do them no good. They must be clean on the inside first or nothing else even has a chance at being clean.
- iv. This teaching directly contradicts the practice of learning to live a godly life so that the soul will finally be saved. Until a soul is cleansed through soul salvation, the works of the outward man cannot be made clean.
- v. A person who possesses soul salvation has escaped eternity in hell and the lake of fire. However, a person who has been born-again should feel greatly in-debt to God and want to please Him with a clean life. To follow through with this, a child of God will want to be baptized with that baptism described in this material then go on and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism isn't required to go to heaven but it is unimaginable that a child of God would ignore it.

In conclusion, the Church is the body of the Lord. The way we enter into the body of the Lord is by baptism. The scriptures given teach this to be true. As this is taught, it becomes clear that there is an order by which this is to take place. Gal 3:26:27 is one of the places presenting this order. The order is: 1) to become a child of God by faith in Christ and 2) to enter into Christ by baptism. This order expresses the plan of God as it applies to both parts of man: both the inward and outward parts. The inward part of man is regenerated by faith in Christ. The outward man is then buried into Christ

to start walking in the good ways of God. As mankind is a two-fold being, we should all expect that God's plan would take into consideration and impact both parts.