

4. Universalism Fails to Recognize True Baptism.

Universalism has a tendency to accept the baptism of any person who has been buried in water. This means, if the person feels that they have become a child of God and have been buried in water, then their baptism is readily accepted. Universalism does NOT attempt to discern between valid and invalid baptism. In all honesty, it seems that anyone who directs souls to the Lord and administers a burial in water is acceptable to Universalism. Does the Bible teach this to be the way of the Lord's Church? Did the early Church conduct itself in this manner? Surely, all who sincerely want to be found in the truth would test their practice against the evidence found in the Bible. It is certain that the Lord will test all of our actions against His written Word, so how much more should we do the same?

Let's consider a section of the scriptures that presents the case that all baptism is not the same and has to be tested by the scriptures in order to discover its virtue. As we do this, the failure of Universalism regarding baptism will be exposed.

(Acts 19:1-5) And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, {2} He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. {3} And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. {4} Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. {5} When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Here we find a group of disciples who met with the Apostle Paul. First, we want to recognize that these men were already disciples before the Apostle Paul met them. As they spoke with the Apostle Paul, they were questioned to find out if they had received the Comforter that was poured out on the Church on the day of Pentecost. These disciples had not heard about the Comforter being given to the Church. This led to Paul questioning their baptism.

At this point it becomes necessary to refresh our memory as to what happened on the day of Pentecost. We should focus our attention on the directions given by the Apostle Peter to those who had heard the sermon Peter preached. These who heard Peter

were pricked in their hearts. When thus pricked, they questioned, “What shall we do”? In the answer to this question, we learn more about what Paul was dealing with as he met these disciples passing through the upper coasts of Ephesus.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter told these people that they should: 1) Repent and 2) Be baptized in the name of the Lord. What did Peter mention would follow them repenting and being baptized in the name of the Lord? Peter stated that when they repented and were baptized in the name of the Lord, they would receive the Comforter. Here the order of the Great Commission is found with the Comforter being exclusively limited to the body of the Church. Perhaps this is where Universalism gets so confused. Everywhere they see the Holy Spirit they see a new birth. Perhaps they make more of baptism than credit is given them. If Universalism claims receiving the Comforter is the point a person becomes a child of God, one would have to suppose that the Apostles really were NOT children of God until the day of Pentecost. This brings to light the many contradictions found in Universalism.

What really happened when Paul met these disciples as he passed through the upper coasts of Ephesus? He questioned their baptism. He did not ask, “Are you sure you are born again”? Their standing of being believers was not questioned at all. Instead, he ask them, “Unto what then were you baptized”? We find the whole relationship of these disciples to the Church hanging on this question. It is obvious that the Comforter was promised to the Church before the Lord ascended back to Heaven and that it was received by the Church on the day of Pentecost. Why then did Paul find these disciples standing on the outside of this promise looking in? The answer is found in the erroneous baptism that they had. They had not been baptized in the name of the Lord. However, once these were baptized in the name of the Lord, and the Apostle laid his hands on them, they did receive the Comforter revealing that they too had become part of the body of the Lord. Recall the teaching of the Apostle James, “The body without the Spirit is dead”. These disciples united with the living body of the Lord Jesus Christ: the true Church.