

Additional Points Regarding Baptism that Universalism Sometimes Question.

There are a couple of points that should be addressed. When Universalism is confronted with these thoughts, they normally present some questions that may cause uneasiness if not considered ahead of time.

Some things that most Universalist question about baptism:

- A. Cornelius and his household.
- B. The Samaritan believers and Philip.
- C. Why Philip could baptize the eunuch.

A. Cornelius and his household.

Most Universalist question why the household of Cornelius received the Comforter before they were baptized. It has been presented here what the scriptures teach regarding the order of receiving the Comforter. The scriptures teach that a person must: 1) Repent and 2) Be baptized in the name of the Lord before the Comforter will fellowship with a child of God. This is found time after time in the New Testament. The one exception to this example is the household of Cornelius. What is so different about the household of Cornelius that God would act differently in his situation?

Cornelius is indeed a special situation. When the 10th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles is read, you will learn that he was of the Italian band. He was therefore NOT a Jew. He was a Gentile. The significance of this is found when you consider how the Jews acted toward the Gentiles. The Lord dealt with Peter before Peter went to Cornelius because of this problem. The Lord presented to Peter that he should call no thing unclean that the Lord had cleansed. It seems clear that the Jews held that the Gentiles were unclean. This point can be found in different places in the New Testament. Recall the woman at the well in John chapter four. She alludes to this attitude of the Jews towards the Gentiles. On that occasion it was discovered that the Jews had no dealings with these outsiders. The woman at the well marveled that Jesus, being a Jew, would even converse with her. Again, in the Galatian letter, Paul points out how Peter still had a problem interacting with the Gentiles. Paul said that he withstood Peter to his face over this error.

But what does this have to do with the Cornelius? Cornelius' house was the first Gentiles brought into the Church relationship. The Church, composed of Jews, received the world wide commission, but had only went to other Jews to this point. The Church was preaching the gospel to the Jews. Then, here Peter is sent down to a household of Gentiles. Notice the statement of the brethren at Jerusalem who heard that Peter had went among the Gentiles. (Acts 11:2-3) *And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, {3} Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.* The question here becomes: would the brethren at Jerusalem have contended with Peter if Gentiles had already been brought into the Church? It is certain from the reaction of the brethren at Jerusalem that Cornelius' household was the first Gentiles brought into the Church.

Why then did the Gentiles receive the Comforter before baptism? It seems that this was an indication to Peter and to the brethren accompanying him that the Church was open to the Gentile nation too. The Apostle Paul was selected as a chosen vessel of the Lord to be sent to the Gentiles to teach that the promise of God was extended to all the world. At the household of Cornelius, we find the initialization of what the Lord said, *Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof,* (Mat 21:43). The Kingdom was to be given to the Gentile nation, as it is today. This meant that the Gentiles were to be brought into the Church relationship with the Lord just like the Jews.

B. The Samaritan believers and Philip.

Most question why the Comforter was not given to the Samaritans once Philip had preached to them and baptized them. Here again, we see the order of receiving the Comforter. The lost are to: 1) Repent, and 2) Be baptized in the name of the Lord before the comforter will fellowship with a child of God. On the occasion when Philip had baptized the Samaritans, it was noted that the Comforter had not fallen on the believing, baptized Samaritans. However, they were clearly identified as having been "baptized in the name of the Lord". Here are some crucial points to remember.

- Philip was able to baptize in the name of the Lord. This is the Philip who was ordained as recorded in chapter six of this same book. How do we know this to be true? Well, the Apostles at Jerusalem were said to have heard of the work going on at Samaria and sent Peter and John to assist. This was not the Apostle Philip due to the fact that the Apostles are said to have remained in Jerusalem when Stephen was stoned to death. This leaves the other Philip ordained as recorded in chapter six of the Acts of the Apostles to perform this work in Samaria. Later on, it seems certain that the same Philip was sent to the Eunuch to preach to him. Notice, in Acts 8:40 this Philip was found later at Caesarea. When we compare this to Acts 21:8, we learn that the Apostle Paul visited this Philip who lived at Caesarea with his daughters. He is identified as one of the Seven. This brings us back to Acts chapter six when the seven were ordained. So then, the Philip was not the Apostle Philip but he was an ordained man. This ordained man was able to administer baptism in the name of the Lord. So then, the ordinance could still be administered even though the Comforter had not fallen on these baptized persons.
- Philip couldn't pass the gifts onto those he baptized. Philip, though he had the ability to lay hands on the sick and work miracles, could NOT pass this ability on to those he contacted. He was able to do the work authorized in the great commission but he could NOT pass the gifts of the Holy Ghost onto the generation following him. It is clear in these scriptures teaching about Philip at Samaria that he was not able to pass this ability on to the next generation. In as much as the generation following the Apostles could not pass this miraculous ability on to those they met, this miraculous ability must have ceased to exist in the Church with the death of the Apostles. This also connects with the teaching in 1st Corinthians chapter 13 that teaches what would remain among the Church would be faith, hope, and charity. (If all that accompanies these three gifts were considered, it would be noted that these are mighty gifts to have in ones possession.)

C. Why Philip could baptize the eunuch.

Most question why a person without the vote of the Church could administer valid baptism like Philip did with the eunuch. Here again, the times that this took place has to be considered. Just as the brethren in the first Church were able to do miracles, speak in foreign languages never learned before, and heal the sick, there were other miraculous matters occurring in the Church. When Philip went down to meet the eunuch, he was told to go to the eunuch. Once he had completed the task of teaching the eunuch, he was taken away out of sight. This was a miraculous event. So then, the Holy Spirit was working with the Church in miraculous ways. Philip was authorized directly by the Holy Spirit to administer the ordinance of baptism to the eunuch. If someone would like to know if the true Church would accept such a baptism today, the logical answer would have to be “No”. The miraculous gifts have ceased from among the Church members. In all sincerity, the Church knew that the days of these miracles were going to cease. This is obvious when you consider that Philip could not even pass the miraculous gifts on to the Samaritans. This also applies to the occasion when Paul was baptized by Ananias. Ananias was sent directly by the authority of the Holy Spirit to baptize Paul. This all happened in the days of these outward manifestations of miracles and has long since ceased.

How then does the Bible teach for baptism to be administered? In the 13th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we find a great example in the Church at Antioch. Here we learn that the Holy Spirit called two Church members to a certain mission work. The Church then laid hands (ordained) on these two brethren and sent them to the work. Notice that the Apostle Paul was ordained by the Church at Antioch. It is interesting to discover that even the Apostle came under the authority of the Church. From this work, we see the worldwide commission being followed. This pattern is a great display of the work of the Lord being accomplished. There were NO individuals running off to do the great work of God. Rather we see the pattern of two being sent out on the mission field at a time. This brings to mind how the Lord paired the disciples He sent out on the limited commission. It also helps us to see how the Lord works the same from Heaven as He did on the Earth. Paul and Barnabas preached the Word and believers/children of

God were made. They, these brethren who were sent by the local Church to this work baptized those believers.