IS WATER BAPTISM FOR US TODAY? A Short Resume

WATER BAPTISM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

The word "baptism" is not found in our English translations of the Old Testament, for our word "baptism" comes from a **Greek** word, and the Old Testament was written in **Hebrew** (the Greek word does occur in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the O. T.). However, in Hebrews 9:10, we are told that the Old Testament Tabernacle "stood only in meats and drinks, and divers **washings**, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation." The word translated "washings" is the Greek word "baptismo" or "baptisms." In Hebrews 6:2 a list of doctrines well known in the Old Testament is mentioned, and among them is the doctrine of "baptisms."

There were many washings under the Law. For instance the priests went through ceremonial washings before entering into their priesthood. This is one reason why Christ -- the One who would become (after His ascension -- Heb. 8:4) our High Priest -- submitted to a washing at the hands of John the Baptist. He was fulfilling the ceremonial righteousness of the Old Testament typology. The Jews who knew their Scriptures were well acquainted with baptisms.

In Numbers chapter nineteen the offering of the red heifer is clearly typical of the death of Christ viewed in light of His rejection by Israel's leaders, and His murder at their hands "outside the gate" (Acts 7:52; Heb. 13:12). Even though the sacrifice of the heifer was to provide ceremonial cleansing for the unclean, everyone who had anything to do with that sacrifice <u>became unclean</u>, and had to have a washing with water before they were cleansed (Num. 19:7, 8). So those who rejected Christ, and allowed Him to be taken outside the city to be crucified, were held accountable for His death. Peter rightly demanded that they repent and be baptized (ceremonially washed in water) before their sins could be forgiven (before they could be "clean").

It is evident that baptism was nothing new to the Jews of Christ's day for, when John came baptizing with water, they did not question the baptism itself, but only his reason for it and authority to administer it. He was asked, "Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?" (John 1:25). This establishes that baptisms were a part of the ceremonial law -- which had to do with Israel.

THE BAPTISM OF JOHN.

The baptism of John was a preparation for another baptism that was not a ritual, but a spiritual reality. His was a baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard John's message they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus by John (Acts 19:4, 5). Some of these later came to Paul's attention and he asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" When they replied in the negative, Paul laid his hands on them and the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 19:1 - 6). Upon this baptism by the Spirit these Jewish believers

obtained the reality which had only been pictured by the water baptism of John.

John himself warned those who came to him that his baptism was merely with water, but that Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit took place on the day of Pentecost when Christ, the baptizer in this case, baptized them in the Spirit. This is made very clear when the case of Cornelius is considered. Cornelius, a Gentile, received this same baptism (for reasons discussed later). Looking back on this experience Peter said, "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He gave unto us [at Pentecost] what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:16, 17). Here what happened on the day of Pentecost is specifically said to be in fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the baptism with the Spirit.

The baptism with fire is, happily, not for the believer -- as a careful study of the Gospel Records confirms. There are four places where John's prediction of the coming ministry of Christ in regard to baptism is recorded. In two of them (Mark 1:8 & John 1:31, 33) there is no mention of a baptism with fire, and no other mention of fire in the context. However in both Matthew and Luke the baptism of fire is mentioned -- and in the context the word "fire" is used two more times (Matt. 3:10 - 12; Luke 3:9, 16, 17). The wheat is to be gathered into the garner (the baptism with the Holy Spirit) but the chaff is to be burned up with unquenchable <u>fire</u>. So also trees not bringing forth fruit are to be cut down and cast into the <u>fire</u>. These other references to fire, in the context of a baptism with fire, indicate that this baptism will take place when the <u>unbelievers</u> are cast into the <u>lake of fire</u>.

THE COMMISSION OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

Baptizing was a part of the commission given to the twelve apostles (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38). While this baptism was ultimately to involve Gentiles ("all nations," "every creature") this age of grace was not in view. Paul tells us plainly this age of grace was "hid in God" (Eph. 3:9); "kept secret since the world began" (Rom. 16:25); "not made known unto the sons of men" (Eph. 3:5); and "hid from ages and from generations, but now [through Paul's ministry] made known to his saints" (Col. 1:26). The <u>worldwide</u> preaching and baptizing inherent in the commission of the twelve apostles was not in force during the book of Acts. The apostles were not among those who "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4), and those who <u>did</u> so minister preached "to none but unto the Jews only" (Acts 11:19). It was not until after the final rebellion and setting aside of Israel (Acts seven -- compare Rom. 11:12, 15) and the conversion of Paul (Acts nine) that the gospel was preached to even one Gentile (Acts ten), ¹ and later still to other Gentiles (Grecians -- Acts 11:20).

Peter was not only an apostle, but also the leader of the apostles, and he had heard and understood the commission given them by Christ. Yet he protested against going to the Gentile, Cornelius; needed a vision to prompt him to go; and later had to defend his action before the other apostles and believers. Even when, much to the surprise of Peter, Cornelius was

¹The Gentiles at Pentecost were proselytes -- Gentiles who had become Jews by religion (Acts 2:10).

converted and received the Holy Spirit, he was confused about what he should do. His message previously put baptism before the reception of the Spirit (Acts 2:38). Now that it had been ignored by God as a prerequisite for receiving the Spirit, was it needed at all? Notice carefully his answer to this problem. "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?" (Acts 10:47). He had no direction from God here, and made no reference to the commission he had been given. He noted only the **lack** of any **objection** from **men**.

If Peter, at this point, felt that the world-wide application of his commission had at last been put in motion he surely did not indicate it by his actions or his words. We do not find him, as far as the record states, following it up by going to any other Gentiles.

When, before Paul's conversion, a problem arose concerning the salvation of Samaritans, Peter and John were sent to investigate. But when a Gentile church came into existence (Acts 11:20, 21) the church at Jerusalem did not send Peter, or even one of the other apostles, to resolve the problem. They sent Barnabas. Even when Barnabas needed help he did not send for Peter. He sent for Paul (Acts 11:25), who had been given a specific commission to go to the Gentiles. (At his conversion God had said to Paul -- Saul of Tarsus at that time -- "delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you" -- Acts 26:17 NASB).

Later, after Paul had informed the apostles and leaders in Jerusalem concerning the commission and ministry he had received from the Lord (Acts 15:6 with Gal. 2:6, 7), Peter bore testimony to the great lesson given in Acts ten. He said, "God ... put no difference between us [Jews] and them [Gentiles]" (Acts 15:9, 11). Peter, by his actions, indicated clearly that the Gentile outreach involved in the commission he had received had been set aside, for he agreed that the ministry of the twelve was to be confined to the circumcision (Gal. 2:9). We must look, then, to the commission given to Paul for the place baptism has today. Paul (though during the early days of the transition period he did baptize some) plainly tells us, "I am sent <u>not</u> to baptize" (1 Cor. 1:17). This is in direct contrast to John the Baptist who said, "He that sent me <u>to</u> <u>baptize</u> with water --" (John 1:33), and the apostles who were told "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, **baptizing them** --" (Matt. 28:19).

PAUL AND BAPTISM.

As just noted, Paul was sent not to baptize. Yet he uses the word "baptize" or "baptism" many times. We need to study his epistles carefully to determine what he says on the subject.

Paul and water baptism.

The only place where he indisputably had water baptism in view is 1 Cor. 1:13 - 17. Water baptism was still being practiced at this early date, but Paul not only did little of the baptizing, he was thankful he had not done more. As a surface reason for this, some were taking pride in having been baptized by an outstanding leader, and he was happy few could use this as an excuse to form a "Paul party" within the church. However, **IF** his commission included baptizing his converts in water, he surely would not neglect carrying out his responsibility just because it was leading to problems in the church. He did not back away from other problem

areas in this way. For instance, his preaching of grace was greatly misunderstood and misrepresented (accusing Paul of teaching anti-nomianism -- Rom. 3:8) but this did not cause him to soften his teaching in order to silence his critics. Also, just the fact that he was baptizing some at this time does not prove baptism is part of the normal program for today any more than the fact he was speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 14:18) proves that tongues is for us today.

That such passages as Romans 6:3 - 5 and Ephesians 4:5 do not have water baptism in view becomes clear when one studies the passages carefully with the contexts in mind. See the discussion of these passages later in this paper.

"ONE baptism" (Eph. 4:5) -- which one?

There are various baptisms in other contexts that help us see the ways this word is used in Scripture. Israel was baptized unto Moses as they walked under the cloud and passed through the sea (1 Cor. 10:1, 2). The Law incorporated many baptisms (washings) as noted earlier. The Pharisees were zealous for the baptizing of hands before eating ("wash" and "washed" in Mark 7:4 & Luke 11:38 are the Greek word "baptidzo"). Christ spoke of His coming suffering and death on the Cross as a baptism (Luke12:50) and linked this to the sufferings ahead for his followers (Matt. 20:22, 23; Mk. 10:38, 39). This is probably the baptism in view in 1 Cor. 15:29, as we will see later.

Initially, in the Gospels, there was one baptism practiced -- in water. Later there were two -- water followed by Spirit (Acts 2:38). Still later the two were still practiced, but the order had been reversed: first Spirit and then water (Acts 10:47). Finally there is just **ONE** baptism (Eph. 4:5). Which one remains? Surely the water baptism, which has already taken second place, is not retained while Spirit baptism falls by the wayside. To say, "In spite of this verse there are really two baptisms" sounds like the way Catholics handle the "one mediator" of 1 Tim. 2:5 in relation to their teaching that Mary is a mediatrix. Eph. 4:4 says there is one Spirit -- but this does not have the Holy Spirit's baptizing work in mind. It is speaking of His person. Thus **IF** the one baptism here is water baptism, there could be no Spirit baptism for today.

Actually, the baptism spoken of in Eph. 4:5 is not the *baptism with the Spirit* mentioned by John the Baptist either. In that baptism the one performing the baptism was Christ and the object of it was to empower the disciples for their testimony. The one in view in Eph. 4:5 is that described in 1 Cor. 12:13. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free --." Here the one performing the baptism is the Holy Spirit, and the object is to make us members of the mystical Body of Christ.

How could these be the same baptism? That occurring on Pentecost was linked to God's program for Israel -- and "all flesh" as they took part in that program later (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:16 - 18). It looked forward to the time when the wonders in the heavens and the earth will be manifested before that great and terrible Day of the Lord comes (Joel 2:30, 31; Acts 2:19, 20). It was a preparation for the ministry beginning on Pentecost and continuing (if this Age of Grace had not been inserted) through the tribulation period. In substantiation of this, one phase of the ministry during the last half of the Tribulation (the testimony of the two witnesses of Rev. 1:3 - 12) is said to be "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord" (Zech. 4:6). The very commission given to the twelve apostles at the time they were chosen looked on to the

Tribulation when "he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 10:22 -- and compare Matt. 24:13, with its context).

The baptism of 1 Cor. 12:13, on the other hand, is linked very closely to a Body of believers where there is neither Jew nor Gentile -- is in fact the very operation bringing this Body into existence, member by member. This baptism is not for power, but for salvation. The power today does not come from a **baptism** of the Spirit, but from a **filling** of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Every believer today has been baptized by the Spirit into Christ, but both Scripture and experience prove not all have power in their testimony.

The Spirit's baptism today.

It is not the work of any man -- as is water baptism. It has to do with the **working** of **God** and is put parallel to a circumcision that is "without hands." "And in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made *without hands*, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the *working of God*, who raised Him from the dead" (Col 2:11, 12 NASB).

This baptism joins us to Christ with a living union. We are baptized "into Christ" (not into the water -- Gal. 3:27). We are baptized into His death (Rom. 6:3, 4). We are so totally identified with Christ that we are looked upon as having died with Him (not like Him, 2,000 years later), as having been buried with Him, raised with Him, and seated with Him in the heavenlies (Rom. 6:4 - 6; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:6). This truth is made the basis for our sanctification under grace (Rom. 6:1 - 14), for the total setting aside of the distinction between Jew and Gentile for this Age of Grace (Eph. 2:15, 16), and the breakdown of all class distinctions (Gal. 3:27, 28). All of the truths that spring from the existence of the Body of Christ tie back to the wonderful baptizing work of the Holy Spirit as He forms that Body.

We must not read either water baptism, or the "baptism of the Spirit" taking place on Pentecost, into the passages setting forth the Spirit's work in forming the Body of Christ. If we do, we not only lose wonderful truth, but throw ourselves open to false doctrine about the Holy Spirit and a warped idea of what our behavior should be as it relates to the Holy Spirit.

PROBLEM PASSAGES.

Matt. 3:13 - 17. Must we "follow Christ in baptism"? If so, which baptism? The one most important to Him was accomplished at Calvary. "I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished" (Luke 12:50 NASB). Few wish to follow Him there! Are we to follow Him in circumcision? or into the synagogue on Saturday? or on the water for a walk? or in every other aspect of His life on earth? We must remember that Christ was "made under the Law" (Gal. 4:4) and that He was a "minister of the circumcision for the truth of God" (Rom. 15:8). The Levitical priests were ceremonially washed before they could serve. So Christ submitted to water baptism that He might (after His ascension -- Heb. 8:4) become our High Priest -- having fulfilled the type. By submitting to a "baptism of repentance" He also symbolically identified Himself with the sinful nation at the outset of a ministry which was to be

concluded by <u>actually</u> bearing their sins in His own body on the tree (Isa. 53:6; 1 Pet. 2:24).

Matt. 28:19, 20. Although individuals are involved, of course, it is noteworthy that this commission refers to teaching <u>nations</u>. How significant this national emphasis will be during the Tribulation leading up to a judgment of the <u>nations</u> (Matt. 25:31 - 46).

It would be difficult for us today to teach men to observe all things Christ had commanded during His earthly ministry without running counter to instructions given us by Paul. It is well to notice that the twelve apostles were working under the marching orders of Matt. 28:19, 20 when they proudly declared, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law" (Acts 21:20). Contrast this with Rom. 6:14 and virtually the whole book of Galatians.

One reason believers hesitate to dismiss this as our commission is failure to recognize an even greater commission given in Paul's epistles. While touched on in other places, it is most clearly set forth in Second Corinthians five. The <u>message</u> is there, "be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (vs. 20-b, 21). We go with <u>authority</u>, "God ... hath given us the word of reconciliation. Now we are ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us -" (v. 18 - 20-). The <u>incentive</u> is present, "The love of Christ constraineth us" (v. 14). The <u>world wide scope</u> is not missing. If Christ died for all (vs. 14, 15) then our commission is to reach all with the message.

Second Corinthians is filled with discussion of our ministry from every standpoint -particularly in chapters five and six. Strange as it may seem, most evangelistically minded
fundamentalists <u>claim</u> the commission in Matthew, but are seeking to <u>follow</u> the one in Second
Corinthians. They want the world wide outreach without the national emphasis; the teaching
responsibility without the legalistic content implied in the verses; the water baptism without the
salvation emphasis given it in Mark 16:16; the salvation promised in Mark 16:16 without the
following signs of Mark 16:17, 18. "But was it not Christ Himself who gave these
instructions?" they ask. True, but they were given to twelve Israelites who are destined to sit on
twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28) and who drop out of the story in
Acts when Paul effectively comes on the scene. Our commission also was given by Christ -- the
risen and glorified Christ in heaven. And, through Paul, it was given to **US** (Acts 26:16 - 18;
Gal. 1:11, 12).

Acts 22:16. When Ananias came to the newly converted Saul of Tarsus (back in Acts nine) he said to him, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Remember this was under the kingdom commission, before the beginning of the Body of Christ and this Age of Grace. The instructions TO Saul of Tarsus were never given BY Paul to us. He was saved in one dispensation that he might introduce another. Few who would say to us today, "and now what are you waiting for? Arise and be baptized" would go on to say, "and wash away thy sins."

1 Cor. 15:29. "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?"

This verse has been subjected to many interpretations. The most impossible view of it is taken by the Mormon Church and made the basis for a thoroughly unscriptural doctrine. They teach that water baptism is necessary for salvation (flying in the face of Eph. 2:8, 9) and thus, if men are to be given another chance to be saved after they die (another false doctrine), someone must be baptized in their place. There is not a single verse of Scripture that supports this strange teaching. No other group calling itself "Christian" holds this view as far as I know. What does this verse mean?

Was Paul using an unscriptural practice that had sprung up among the Christians as an argument for resurrection? This would be like saying to an unbeliever, "You believe in Santa Claus, so how can you say Christ never was born?" Actually, by using an unscriptural practice as an argument for such a vital doctrine as the resurrection of the dead, he would be giving silent approval of the practice. It is quite probable that, if there ever was such a practice in the early church, it arose after Paul had penned these lines, and as a result of a misunderstanding, or misinterpretation, of what he had said.

Was he saying, "Evangelism is being carried on to win new converts. Why should these be baptized to take the place of those who have died if there is no resurrection?"? This view makes water baptism the "doorway into the church" -- an idea not sustained by anything else Paul wrote. We are "joined to the church" when the Holy Spirit baptizes us into Christ (1 Cor. 12:12, 13). The local assemblies were composed of those so joined to Christ.

When James and John wanted to be those on the left and right of Christ in the kingdom He asked them, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" When they assented He replied, "Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with --" (Matt. 20:22, 23). The baptism Christ had in view here is referred to again as He faced the suffering and death of the Cross. "I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:50 NASB). Paul experienced this baptism into suffering in full measure. "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His Body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions" is his testimony (Col. 1:24 -- NASB). In view of the constant and critical suffering of Paul, and his statement that it is given to US also to suffer for His sake (Phil. 1:29), he states, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19).

Why should a believer undergo this baptism of suffering to win converts to Christ, many of whom had already died, if there is no resurrection? When he won them he introduced them into a life of persecution and, if death is the end, what has been gained? "Why are we also [in addition to 'those' of verse 29] in danger every hour? I protest, brethren, ... I die daily" (1 Cor. 15:30, 31). "If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me?" he asks. If there is no resurrection, why undergo this baptism of suffering? "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:31 -- NASB).

This interpretation fully fits the context and makes Paul's argument for the resurrection a very powerful one. That it does not involve water baptism seems very clear.

1 Peter 3:21. "And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you -- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience -- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (NASB).

Whatever be the interpretation of this verse, it is not Paul's instruction to us in this day of grace, but Peter's to the Jews of the dispersion (1 Pet. 1:1). Water baptism was a part of Israel's program and will again be practiced during the Tribulation when the Gentile part of the commission in Matt. 28:19, 20 will be carried out. By the time Peter wrote his first epistle he had heard Paul's message from his own lips (Gal. 2:6, 7) and he evidently had read most, if not all, of his epistles, as he indicates in 2 Pet. 3:15, 16. Peter by now realized water baptism (a putting away of the filth of the flesh) was <u>never</u> an <u>essential</u> to salvation but, when it was required, those submitting to it evidenced a good conscience toward God.

In Noah's day the waters were waters of judgment. Eight souls were saved from the water while all others perished. But this verse does not say they were saved from the water, but **BY** it. In what sense were they saved by water? They were in the ark. The water did not fall on them, it was the ark which bore the fury of the storm. Because it had been made water-tight by the pitch applied to its timbers the very water which drowned those outside bore the ark above the carnage so that the eight inside were dry and safe! The same water that slew the wicked bore the ark, and those in it, up to a place of safety. By water, lifting the ark on its surface, Noah and his family were saved from water.

Of what is this a type? Is it only a type of water baptism? Those saved in Noah's day were <u>dry</u>: those baptized are <u>made wet</u>. Was this momentous, world-devastating, tragic event used to picture only a simple water ceremony? Was the almost total destruction of the whole race, the entire inundation of the whole earth, the laborious construction of a God-designed boat and the miraculous rescue of eight people a type of only a ritual performed by men?

This would go contrary to the pattern followed by all other types. Without fail the anti-type (that to which the type points) is greater than the type, just as the substance is greater than its shadow. Paul lists a number of things which have typical significance and remarks, "[They] are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to **CHRIST**" (Col. 2:16, 17 -- NASB). This same contrast between type and anti-type is set before us in Heb. 10:1. "For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the yery form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offered continually, make perfect those who draw near" -- NASB).

What, then, is the anti-type of the salvation of Noah by water? What is the <u>substance</u> of this <u>shadow?</u> There came a time when the waters of judgment that <u>we</u> deserved fell on <u>Christ.</u> "All Thy waves and billows are gone over me" the Psalmist cried (Psa. 42:7). Jonah, who typifies Christ in His death and resurrection, quoted this Psalm when he had been cast out of the ship and was drowning in the sea (Jonah 2:3). Christ called this experience, when the waters of judgment were to be poured out on Him, a "baptism" (Luke 12:50). Because of the perfection of His redemption (the word translated "pitch" in Gen. 6:14 is the same one translated "atonement" elsewhere in the Old Testament) He arose above the waters of judgment in

resurrection -- bearing us with Him, for we are in Him. So we, too, are saved by baptism -- **HIS** baptism. The waters of God's judgment falling on <u>Him</u> save <u>us</u>.

One problem (for which I find no verse) is the idea that we are baptized as a testimony. If baptism is a testimony, why not be baptized over and over? Why not be baptized before the unbelievers instead of, usually, before the saints in our congregation? If it is a testimony, why are there so many who have been baptized who have no evidence in their lives that they are even saved? The great thrust of Scripture -- even when baptism was a part of the program -- is that the life lived before men is the testimony. Anyone can be baptized with water, but only those baptized by the Spirit into Christ can, as they walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), manifest the transformed life God expects of us in this day of His wonderful grace.

CONCLUSION.

I BELIEVE IN BAPTISM.

I believe that when God returns to His program with Israel, following the Rapture of the Body of Christ, water baptism will again be a part of that program, and that, then, Christ will baptize the believers with the Holy Spirit -- and the prophecy of Joel will have its total fulfillment.

I also believe those of all dispensations who reject Christ will be baptized with fire. This is the tragic fate to which unbelief has been driving them. What ritual or ceremony can deliver them?

But for now -- I believe the baptism of Christ at Calvary saves me. I believe the Holy Spirit, when I was converted, placed me into Him by a very real, but spiritual, baptism and made me a very part of His mystical Body. What can any ritual or ceremony add to this?

On this subject, as in others, we must be careful to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), seeking "with all humility and gentleness, with patience," and "forbearance to one another in love," to diligently "preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2, 3). The baptizing work of the Holy Spirit has made us all fellow members of the Body of Christ -- let us not be separated from one another over the baptism with water.

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