

The answer to these questions is clearly stated in II Timothy 2:15: "Study to show thy self approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." Though ALL Scripture is most certainly for our admonition and instruction, all Scripture is NOT for our obedience. In fact, obeying commands given to others in past economies could be direct disobedience in this age. (Compare Genesis 17:10-14 with Galatians 5:2 and Romans 2:25-29 – Also Matthew 19:16-21 with Romans 4:5 and Ephesians 2:8, 9.) II Timothy 3:16 & 17 does not contradict or nullify II Timothy 2:15.

To the Apostle Paul, the Glorified Lord revealed God's message and program for this age of grace. To him was committed the dispensation of the Grace of God. (See Ephesians 3:1-9.) In his epistles, we find the commands given directly to the Body of Christ.

The question, then, is not only IS IT SCRIPTURAL? but IS IT DISPENSATIONAL?

Win Johnson

Notes:

TAKEN WHERE?

Scripture Reading: Matthew 24:17, 18

These verses are often quoted in reference to the catching away to Heaven of the Church which is the Body of Christ. This is in error for two reasons.

First, the Church for today had not been revealed at the time the Lord spoke these words. Therefore, the catching away which we refer to as the Rapture of the Church had not been revealed either. For this reason alone, this passage could have nothing to do with the Body of Christ. The Church, which is His Body, as well as the secret catching away was revealed to and through the Apostle Paul alone (Ephesians 3: 1-9; I Corinthians 15:51).

There is, however, a reason within the context which shows that this taking away mentioned by the Lord is not even for believers. The example given in verses 37-39 is that of Noah's experience in the great flood. It is stated that "the flood came and took them all away." Those taken away were taken by the judgment of the flood. Note Luke 17:26, 27 which relates the same example; "and as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark and the flood came, and *destroyed* them all." With this example, the Lord illustrates that at His second coming, some will be taken to judgment, just as those taken by the flood. A remnant will remain to go into the Kingdom, just as Noah and his family remained, passing through the flood. Neither you nor I, would want to be included in the company of those which are here taken. We can be assured that we will be in the company which is caught away to Glory, as revealed by the Holy Spirit in I Thessalonians 4:16-18, by putting our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment I believe that He died for my sin and was raised on account of my justification, I have my ticket for the catching away to Glory.

John N. Baker

Notes:

RAPTURE OR REVELATION?

Scripture Reading: Matthew 24:29-31

Characteristic of the nation Israel is that “The Jews require a sign” (I Corinthians 1:22). Consistent with this trait is the fact that God has always provided all necessary signs, relative to His commands and prophecies and the fulfillment of those prophecies. On the other hand, all dealings with the members of the Body are based solely upon faith without evidences or manifestations.

We know that the Rapture of the Church is imminent. It could happen at any moment because no event or series of events has been stipulated as leading up to it. Conversely, Christ’s second coming (to the earth to set up His kingdom) will be preceded by specific signs and wonders. “The sun [shall] be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” Further, when He raptures the Church, it will be a meeting in the air. (Refer to I Thessalonians 4:16 & 17.) But when He comes to set up His kingdom, He will descend to the earth.

“And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east...” (Zechariah 14:4a). His purpose at the second advent is to establish the promised earthly kingdom for Israel. His purpose at the Rapture is to establish the Church in the promised glory in the heavenlies. The contrast is consistent with all other aspects of earthly Israel’s promises and the heavenly position of the Church which is His Body. In neither event will the exact moment of occurrence be predictable; but the Rapture can take place at any time from this moment on, while the Second Coming must await preliminaries.

Robert E. Hanna

Notes:

SALVATION BY WATER BAPTISM?

Scripture Reading: Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” While this verse shows the essential feature of “faith” for salvation, it also shows the equally important requirement of water baptism. Of course, no unbeliever would have submitted to baptism as illustrated by the Pharisees and lawyers who “rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him [John the Baptist]” (Luke 7:30). John the Baptist preached “the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Luke 3:3) and demanded they “bring forth fruits worthy of repentance” (Luke 3:8). Only those who truly believed John’s message submitted to his baptism.

Peter, in like manner in his great Pentecostal address, brought real conviction to those who asked, “What shall we do?” He did not counsel them as so many would today, by saying that they, if they believed would receive the forgiveness of sins and ought to be baptized. Peter plainly said they should “repent, and be baptized...for the forgiveness of sins and... receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Obviously, the unbelievers had no part in this. But make no mistake, water baptism was not optional for the believer. Without it, he could not express faith nor receive forgiveness but stood with the rejectors. There was no middle ground. Water baptism was part of God’s program at that time toward Israel, and it was not permitted for professed believers to “pick and choose” what parts of God’s program they would cooperate with. They either did—or they did not!

If water baptism was so essential then, what about today? It is from Paul’s letters that we read of “redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins” and this through faith in Christ and His finished work at Calvary—apart from water baptism!

Ivan L. Burgener

Notes:

WHAT ABOUT THE SIGNS?

Scripture Reading: Mark 16:17-18

These two verses have caused much confusion among professing believers. Many have doubted their salvation because they were unable to exhibit any of these signs. It does say, "These signs shall follow them that believe." The words "shall follow" mean to follow side by side or accompany. Therefore, if verse 15 (which says "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature") is the marching orders for the believer today; then these signs should accompany them. Many have attempted to handle poisonous snakes and drink poison, trying to prove these verses. Some have paid for this mistake dearly!

All the confusion and doubt cast upon salvation can be cleared up when we see that this was the Gospel of the Kingdom. With the setting aside of Israel and the Gospel of the Kingdom (Romans 11:25), the accompanying signs were set aside also. One of the signs mentioned in verse 17 is speaking in "new tongues." In I Corinthians 13:8, the Scriptures reveal that tongues were to "cease." With the completion of the revelation of the mystery (Colossians 1:25), tongues did cease. Not only that, but all the sign gifts ceased. We are saved today by God's matchless grace apart from works of any kind. This includes the working of miraculous gifts also. We need no authenticating sign to assure our salvation. God's completed Word assures that if we believe that Christ died for our sins and arose again on account of our justification, "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

John N. Baker

Notes:

POWER OR PERSON?

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:4; I Corinthians 6:19

It is commonly taught that the kingdom saints on the day of Pentecost received the Person of the Holy Spirit; but, is this teaching in accord with the Scriptures?

Most fundamentalists will agree that the Old Testament saints were not personally indwelt by the Holy Spirit. During this time the Holy Spirit came "upon" (not within) the believers and energized them for specific services (Numbers 11:16, 17, 25, 29; Judges 3:10, 6:34, I Sam. 11:6; 16:13). Did this mode then change at Pentecost?

In Luke 24:49, Christ told His disciples that they would receive "power from on high." Our Lord further goes on in Acts 1:4 to tell His disciples that they would be baptized "with" Holy Spirit power (no definite article) and that they would receive "power" (verse 8) after the Holy Spirit is come "upon" them (Old Testament mode).

Let us now move on to the Day of Pentecost to see what actually took place.

Acts 2:3 - tongues of fire "upon" each of them

Acts 2:4 - filled with Holy Spirit power (no definite article)

Acts 2:38 - receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (power—ch. 1:8)

Thus, in full accord with Old Testament prophecy (Joel 2:28), these saints received the power of the Holy Spirit. During Pentecost, God was still dealing with Israel under His prophetic program. It is not until Paul and the Dispensation of Grace that we have the actual indwelling of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19, 20; Romans 8:11; I Thessalonians 4:8).

Richard A Mazek

Notes:

WAS PAUL ONE OF THE TWELVE?

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:21-26

Quoting from the writings of a well-known Bible teacher concerning our portion of Scripture, he writes, "If we had time to go on and examine this chapter we would see that the disciples elected another apostle, who wasn't an apostle. Matthias never was intended to be an apostle, even though they prayed over it as if to sanctify the whole activity. The twelfth apostle was Paul." Still another writes, "This 'blunder' was all an 'invention' and 'engineered' by Peter and the other apostles in a vain attempt to install Matthias, instead of Paul, in the place of Judas." How sad that men will go to such lengths to discredit Peter and the others in order to defend their own position of beginning the Body of Christ on the day of Pentecost.

Were the Eleven out of the will of God? Note what the Scriptures say. In Acts 1:26 we read, "And the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." In Acts 2:14 it is stated, "But Peter standing up with the eleven...." We read Paul's own testimony on this matter in I Corinthians 15:5, concerning the risen Lord, "And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the Twelve." In verse 8 Paul declares, "Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." God's Word is very clear on the matter. Matthias and not Paul was the twelfth apostle.

Why was it needful for the number twelve to be completed again? In Matthew 19:26-30, we note that there will be TWELVE THRONES in the regeneration. In Revelation 21:14 it is stated, "And the wall of the city had TWELVE FOUNDATIONS, and in them the names of the TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE LAMB." It is Matthias who will be a part of God's future program for Israel and not Paul. Paul belongs to the HEAVENLIES!

Floyd Baker

Notes:

OBEYING THE GREAT COMMISSION

Scripture Reading: Acts 8:1

Among the several definitions given by Webster for the word *commission* are these two—1. a formal written warrant granting the power to perform various acts or duties, 2. authority to act for, in behalf of or in the place of another.

The Kingdom Church was scattered abroad, and telling the gospel of the kingdom as they went; but Acts 11:19 says, "...they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution...[preached] the word to none but unto the Jews only." We can hardly consider the scattering by fear and the telling to Jews only, to be in obedience to ANY commission.

The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians, "the love of Christ constrains" or compels me to tell all men.

If there is obedience in our text, it is the Apostles who stayed in Jerusalem. There, they tried to convince the leaders of the nation of Israel to accept the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. All were abused, some beaten, some killed; but they were true to their commission—acting in behalf of another, performing the duties of the warrant given them by the Messiah when He said to the Twelve in Luke 24:47 to "begin at Jerusalem." In this dispensation of Grace, the commission or warrant to the Body of Christ, can be found in Ephesians 3:9. "Make ALL men SEE what is the dispensation of the mystery."

Jim Shackelford

Notes:

BAPTISM--WATER OR SPIRIT?

Scripture Reading: Romans 6:3, 4; Colossians 2:12

No subject divides the Body of Christ more quickly or more fully than the subject of baptism. Yet no subject, if rightly understood, should unite the Body more closely; for the basis of the one body is its one baptism. When more are added, the result is always the division of the Body.

What is the "one Baptism" of Ephesians 4:5? It is not difficult to discover. I Corinthians 12:13 tells us, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body." This baptism takes place when we trust the Lord as our Saviour. Who performs it? God, the Holy Spirit, for it is clearly the "operation of God" (I Corinthians 12:13, Colossians 2:12). We do not feel it; our permission is not asked; in fact, we only know of it as we get into the Word and there learn of it.

Now, if we are baptized by one Spirit into one Body when we trust Christ, and if there is *one* baptism for today, it is clear that it is the Baptism of I Corinthians 12:13. If a water ceremony is *later* administered, it is an *additional* baptism.

But just what is the "Spirit Baptism"? Rather than a supposed symbolizing of our Lord's death, burial and resurrection, it is the actual identification of the believer with Christ in His death (Romans 6:3), burial (Colossians 2:12), resurrection (Romans 6:4) and even His ascension (Ephesians 2:6). By it we are placed into Christ in such a blessed union that we have "put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27), and have been made "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6).

Having been made "complete in Him" (Col. 2:10), is there anything that needs to be added? Hardly. Hence there is only one baptism. To those who would add another we would only ask with Paul, "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:3).

—Selected

Notes:

PROPHECY OR MYSTERY?

Scripture Reading: Romans 16:25, 26

There is much interest astir in our day over prophetic things. Preachers and Bible teachers the land over are seeking to ready their hearers for what surely appears to be the "last days." Long-held pre-millennial truths are being dusted off, spruced up with new dressings and sent forth to "establish the saints." Since we are interested students of prophecy ourselves, we would certainly not discourage this interest; but remind our readers that the path to establishment and stability is not in understanding prophecy, but rather, as Paul says, God is "able to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery...."

There is a clear distinction in Scripture between prophecy and the mystery. In fact, the basic division in the Word is the division between the promised, prophesied program of God through Israel (Genesis 22:18, Acts 3:25, 26) and the mystery, the secret purpose of God made known through the apostle Paul (Ephesians 3). When this distinction is clearly understood and maintained, the believer will be filled with the knowledge of His will and will no longer be tossed about by various winds of doctrine.

Consider one example of the value of understanding this distinction today. If you were able to identify the Anti-Christ (a favorite pastime of many!) or to figure the exact date when the two witnesses will show up, etc., what *real* good would it do you—considering that the Body will be gone before the 70th week of Daniel 9? *But*, if you clearly understand that what happened in Acts 2, for example, was the fulfillment of prophecy (as Acts 2:16 says) and thus could not be the program for today, (which is the Mystery because neither Joel nor Peter knew of it—See Ephesians 3:1-5)—then the confusion of trying to follow a commission (Matthew 28, Mark 16, etc.), a plan of salvation (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38), a demonstration (Mark 16: 17, 18; Acts 2:4), an economic order (Acts 2:44, 4:32-34) that was never given to you in the first place, is easily dispelled!

Richard Jordan