

LESSON 26
(1961, 1967, 1969)

AMBASSADOR COLLEGE
BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Is Infant Baptism Necessary?

About Our Cover ...

On the island of Malta an infant is immersed in a bronze bowl. Infant's godfather performs the act simultaneously. Thousands of other little infants are similarly "baptized" in the churches of this world every week.

Did Jesus and His apostles practice "infant baptism"? Does the Bible even ALLUDE to it? This lesson reveals the truth regarding infants and the PROPER TIME to be baptized. It lays bare the conflicting doctrines of "baptism" taught in today's Christian-professing world!

AVOID A COUNTERFEIT BAPTISM!

DID YOU KNOW that most churches today do NOT baptize their members the way Jesus commanded?

The churches of this world are in utter confusion regarding baptism. Most are actually employing COUNTERFEIT FORMS of "baptism" in place of the ONE TRUE BAPTISM commanded in the Bible!

This lesson reveals the surprising TRUTH. Study it carefully!

"Baptism" in the World

Several conflicting doctrines of "baptism" are being taught and practiced today by professing Christianity.

Some denominations practice INFANT BAPTISM. They sincerely believe infants are eternally doomed if they die unbaptized.

Then there are those who will baptize you "into the church" -- their religious sect, or denomination -- instead of "into Christ."

Other sects believe one must receive an ADDITIONAL "BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT" after he has ALREADY received the "spirit." It is claimed that the only evidence proving one has received this special "baptism" is that of speaking in "tongues" -- the so-called "power to witness for Christ." BUT IS THIS WHAT YOUR BIBLE SAYS?

Another religious movement insists that you must receive the "BAPTISM BY FIRE" in order to be "saved." Do you want it?

One church even teaches its members to be BAPTIZED ON BEHALF OF their dead FRIENDS AND RELATIVES who died unconverted!

ARE these ideas and practices REALLY scriptural? Or are they merely the INVENTIONS -- the doctrines and commandments -- of MEN? Let's learn the TRUTH from the Bible!

But first, let's be sure that we go about this study CORRECTLY.

PHOTO CAPTION: "INFANT BAPTISM" EN MASSE -- Vicar looks at

nineteen babies he "baptized" in a mass service.

Before You Begin

This lesson is intended to direct you to YOUR BIBLE. Here is the method of study:

Remember -- you are to open your Bible to every passage. Never say to yourself, "Oh, I think I know what the verse is referring to" -- and then pass over the scripture. Don't forget that this is a BIBLE STUDY course -- not just a study of the lessons we send you. You need to "KEEP YOUR NOSE IN THE BIBLE," so to speak. You should read AND reread and STUDY each passage referred to in this lesson. MEDITATE on the new knowledge you will learn, especially within the following twenty-four hours, and in your time of prayer -- SO YOU WON'T FORGET IT! Make God's Word A PART OF YOU!

Here is the method of taking effective notes: Write down neatly on your paper the title of the lesson and underscore it. Next write down the lesson number. Then as you come to each question section, write down its heading. Then, underneath, number each question as you come to it. FOR EACH question write down the answer from your Bible, together with any pertinent ideas that come to your mind.

Writing down every word of each Bible passage, and any comments you wish to make as you go along, will aid you greatly in REVIEWING and remembering later on. Be SURE TO STUDY the scripture which answers each question, if you have not done so with previous lessons.

This lesson, like all others, is extremely important to you. Have you PRAYED to God for understanding? If not, go now to a private place, kneel down, and ask Him for spiritual UNDERSTANDING and wisdom. Ask God to HELP YOU grasp and APPLY the knowledge this lesson will reveal to you in the Bible!

And now for the lesson itself.

LESSON 26 Origin of Infant Baptism

Where did the practice of infant baptism originate? Was it commanded by God? Or is it a "commandment" of MEN? Let us examine HISTORY and learn the TRUTH!

The common practice of infant baptism gradually evolved from the false pagan concept that all are born with the inherent sin ("original sin") of Adam, and unless baptized, the individual is eternally lost because of Adam's sin.

Infant baptism actually makes God appear as unfair because it implies that sin and the resultant death penalty are due to ONE MAN AND WOMAN -- Adam and Eve -- and have been passed on to all their descendants. NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH!

Through Adam "sin ENTERED into the world" because Adam was the FIRST MAN to sin. But the death penalty has come on everyone because "ALL have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

In his "History of the Christian Church", the church historian Neander accounts for the early introduction of infant baptism as follows:

"... from the want of duly distinguishing between what is outward and what is inward in baptism -- the baptism by water, and the baptism by the Spirit -- the opinion (of the Roman Church) became more fully established, that without external

baptism no one could be delivered from that inherent guilt ("original sin"), or could be saved from the everlasting punishment that threatened him, or raised to eternal life; and when the notion of MAGICAL INFLUENCE, a CHARM connected with the SACRAMENTS, continually gained ground, the theory was finally evolved of the unconditional necessity of INFANT BAPTISM. About the middle of the third century this theory was generally admitted in the North AFRICAN Church ... but while in theory the necessity of infant baptism was admitted, still in practice it was very far from being generally prevailing." (Vol. 1, pp. 313-14 -- Torrey's Translation.)

MANY OF THE "FATHERS" OF THE EARLY ROMAN CHURCH, who believed in various pagan traditions and beliefs, PROMOTED THIS PAGAN THEORY OF INFANT BAPTISM! Among them were Origen, Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage in North Africa, and Augustine, who was its chief defender and promoter. Christ and the apostles never baptized infants. It is a pagan idea spawned by carnal men!

Rheinwald, in "The Christian Review", says: "Though its (infant baptism) necessity was asserted in Africa and Egypt in the beginning of the 3rd century, it was, even to the end of the 4th century, by no means universally observed -- least of all in the Eastern Church. Notwithstanding the recommendation of it by the fathers, it had never become a general ecclesiastical institution until the age of Augustine" (Vol. 3, p. 193).

It was not until the 6th CENTURY that infant baptism became a universal practice.

 PHOTO CAPTION: At left, Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, was one of the many "fathers" of the early Roman Church who promoted the doctrine of infant baptism. Right, Emperor Justinian the Great of the Eastern Roman Empire, made infant baptism compulsory in the sixth century.

"The administration of baptism to infants was subsequently rendered compulsory by an edict of Emperor Justinian, who reigned over the Eastern Roman Empire from A.D. 527 to A.D. 565. He enacted 'that such pagans as were yet unbaptized, should present themselves, with their wives and children, and all that appertained to them, in the church; and THERE THEY SHOULD CAUSE THEIR LITTLE ONES IMMEDIATELY TO BE BAPTIZED.' " (Cole's Archaeology of Baptism, p. 120.)

The evidence of recorded history alone proves that infant baptism is merely a doctrine of men which was inspired by pagan Egyptian beliefs and practices!

Why Infant Baptism Is Not Commanded

It is actually a mockery of God's Word to submit newly born infants to water baptism. Infants cannot even begin to think for themselves, let alone REPENT OR BELIEVE!

God reveals in His divine Word that before one may be baptized, he must fully repent of having broken God's laws. He must thoroughly ABHOR, be sorry for, his past sinful life! Then he must BELIEVE the true GOSPEL of the KINGDOM OF GOD and believe on Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. Even older children have not reached the maturity and stability of judgment where they have the self-discipline to fully repent, and believe. The

average mind does not mature until about age 25 -- though there are exceptions. Only a very few mature and become sober and serious in outlook by age 16.

An immature mind may experience an emotional feeling of TEMPORARY remorse. This may often be falsely construed as repentance, when it is only momentary, and soon forgotten. It is much like "puppy love." How many youngsters, 13 to 18, have a number of temporary emotional experiences of feeling sure they are "in love" and cannot be talked out of it. They usually grow out of it, but in rare cases, of course, they may really "know their minds" -- though this is the rare EXCEPTION, and NOT the rule. So it is with repentance and belief.

The immature child baptized around age 12 to 15 may be ever so serious about it at the time. But when the child reaches the age between 16 and 20, he or she comes under "teenage" influences which are quite different today than one or two generations ago. The young adult must meet many temptations characteristic of energetic, dynamic, reckless, excitement-craving youth in the blossoming flower of sex appeal. Experience shows that perhaps not one in a hundred can be truly "converted" prior to this age and still remain converted and constantly growing spiritually closer and closer to Christ and His kingdom through these trying years.

 PHOTO CAPTION: These children, about to be baptized in Tennessee, are not ready for baptism. Repentance and baptism require a mature mind!

Some present the argument that the infants and older children of Cornelius' household were baptized by Peter (Acts 10). This is merely an ASSUMPTION. The Scriptures nowhere indicate whether or not Cornelius' "household" included any children under adult age. Those baptized in Cornelius' house must have been MATURE ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND the conditions of salvation and able to truly repent and believe! Children, if any were present, would NOT have been baptized. The same explanation applies to the baptism of the Philippian jailor's "household" (Acts 16:31-33)

Jesus' Example

Jesus set us the example of what we should do regarding infants and little children. Notice what He did!

1. Did Jesus baptize infants and young children -- or did He, instead, pronounce BLESSINGS upon them? Mat. 19:13 and Mark 10:13-16.

COMMENT: Jesus did not baptize children! And His early Apostolic Church did not perform such baptisms either! Nowhere in the Bible is there an example or command for this practice.

JESUS BLESSED LITTLE CHILDREN BY LAYING HIS HANDS ON THEM AND PRAYING FOR THEM. He undoubtedly prayed to His Father in Heaven for divine protection and guidance of their young lives, and that the parents who brought these children to Him would be given wisdom to properly train them in the ways of God.

This is Christ's own example for the ministers of His true Church. Today, God's ministers DO invoke this same blessing upon infants.

Now let's understand what God expects from Christian parents

and their children.

2. Does God command parents to teach their children obedience to His laws? Deut. 6:6-7 and Eph. 6:4.

3. Are children also commanded to obey and honor their parents? Prov. 1:8, Ex. 20:12 and Eph. 6:1-3. Should they obey in everything? Col. 3:20.

4. As a child, did Jesus also set the example of perfect obedience to His parents for all children to imitate? Luke 2:51.

COMMENT: Jesus obeyed His earthly parents in all things, as well as His Heavenly Father! He was "subject" or obedient to their wishes.

5. Should children who disobey -- sin against -- their parents, be chastised and corrected? Prov. 19:18 and 22:15. Is this chastisement to be administered in love? Prov. 3:12 and Heb. 12:5-7.

COMMENT: Contrary to the diabolical teachings of modern child psychologists, God commands physical punishment for disobedient children. (This truth is made plain in our free booklet on "Child Rearing." Write for it.) God punishes His spiritual sons in real Godly love and consideration for their welfare to teach them lessons. Likewise, parents are not to punish their children in hate, but in the love of God explaining that they are being punished because they have done wrong! This point is so important it cannot be overstressed. Punishment must be in LOVE -- but with authority! This is the only way to instill obedience in a child.

6. If children are properly taught the ways of God and are punished in love, will they depart from Him and His laws when they are older -- when MATURE in mind? Prov. 22:6. Do we find a good example of such an individual? II Tim.3:15.

COMMENT: Even though Timothy's parents had only the Old Testament scriptures, they properly trained him during his childhood. He did not depart from God when he grew older, but continued with such fervency in the ways of God, that he became converted and was later ordained as a minister in God's Church!

Timothy's example shows that children, properly trained and instructed in the ways of God, can come to real repentance and belief in Christ, when they become mature in mind. They will then, through personal conviction and by free choice, seek the ways of Christ and baptism in real sincerity from the heart!

When to Be Baptized

How soon should we be baptized once we have truly repented of our sins? One or two religious groups insist that baptism should be put off until the candidate has "proved he HAS the Holy Spirit and IS living a righteous, spiritual life" -- or has come to a "certain SPIRITUAL knowledge."

This definitely is NOT what God commands! Notice the teaching of the Apostle Paul:

Paul says God's "law is SPIRITUAL," and that the carnal -- unconverted -- natural mind is not subject to God's law (Rom. 7:14 and 8:7). This plainly says it is impossible to truly understand and follow the spiritual application of God's law until one has repented and received the Holy Spirit of God.

Yet these sects demand that one must be doing both of these things which GOD says are impossible, before they will baptize him! It's amazing how far man can TWIST the clear teachings of the Bible!

Another sect will not baptize an individual until he comes

to "see" and accept "God's law" as interpreted by its doctrines. Then he is placed on six months' probation to "see if he is really WORTHY of baptism."

This is utter nonsense!

The command of God is (1) preach the gospel. This leads to the conviction of those called by God, of the sins they have committed -- which, in turn, leads to repentance and faith in Christ; (2) baptism; and (3) then they shall receive the HOLY SPIRIT, WHICH renews their minds and TEACHES THEM BY HELPING THEM TO UNDERSTAND SPIRITUAL TRUTH which was IMPOSSIBLE for their carnal minds to comprehend BEFORE!

So, here we have two different sects -- the first demanding of those desiring baptism that they ALREADY be KEEPING the SPIRITUAL Law of God, before they will baptize them so they can receive the Spirit. And the second demanding that those desiring to be baptized ALREADY UNDERSTAND the SPIRITUAL Law of God before they can receive the Spirit.

What spiritual blindness!

Then just what DOES God demand BEFORE baptism? A COMPLETELY SURRENDERED AND REPENTANT ATTITUDE! THAT'S ALL HE WANTS!!

Everyone knows he himself has sinned, and lived contrary to God's will, though he may not have spiritual understanding of God's will. God will grant REPENTANCE to a carnal mind before the actual conversion of that mind by the Holy Spirit. One does not need a college education in Bible KNOWLEDGE in order to know how to repent and be baptized into Christ. Jesus instructed His apostles to preach the Gospel, BAPTIZE repentant believers, and THEN TEACH them the COMMANDMENTS (Mat. 28:19-20).

Notice now the crystal-clear teaching of the New Testament:

1. On the day of Pentecost, did the repentant believers have to put off their baptisms for some reason, or were they all baptized that SAME day? Acts 2:41.

2. Did Philip baptize the believing Ethiopian eunuch at once? Acts 8:35-38.

3. Was the Apostle Paul -- formerly known as Saul -- baptized only a short while after Christ convicted him of his sins? Acts 9:8-9, 18.

4. When did Paul baptize the Philippian jailor and those of his REPENTANT household? Acts 16:25, 30-33.

COMMENT: Notice that they were baptized the same hour after midnight! They did not even wait until daylight! Baptism should never be delayed without reason. It might be neglected until too late! In every case recounted in the New Testament, repentant believers were baptized almost immediately.

But what about those who are not able to be baptized for reasons completely beyond their control?

The simple Bible answer is that water baptism is not the thing that saves us from the death penalty, makes us righteous, or imparts eternal life. While God commands it "for the remission of sins," yet it is merely SYMBOLIC of that which remits our sins -- the DEATH of Christ. While it also pictures His resurrection, by which we ourselves are finally saved, it is merely the SYMBOL, not the reality. Therefore, God makes allowances for cases of individuals ABSOLUTELY NOT ABLE TO BE BAPTIZED. YOU need not worry about anyone UTTERLY UNABLE to be baptized.

BUT God does command water baptism for the one who is able. If one defies the command and refuses, or neglects, or even puts off obedience to this command until too late, it certainly would be an act of disobedience which would impose the penalty of sin, and could cause the loss of salvation!

Thousands have been baptized by representatives of the Worldwide Church of God in their areas. Some few are waiting until men can be sent to them. When necessity prevents your immediate baptism, or when circumstances are completely beyond your control, God will understand and make allowances. But to avoid all unnecessary delay, contact Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong in care of the address on page 2 which is nearest to you JUST AS SOON AS YOU MAKE YOUR DECISION.

The "No Works" Baptism

Baptism in most of the churches today -- whether done by immersion or not -- is looked upon as merely a ritual or initiation into a church organization, instead of a burial of the old sinful life and the beginning of a new way of life.

The majority of people have grown up in, been baptized into, and attended some church or another. They hate to think, let alone admit, that they have never really been converted. Human nature impels them to stubbornly maintain their OWN righteousness.

Most "baptized" church-going "Christians" of this world never really knew what to repent of. At the time of their "baptism" they intended to "do better" or to "make their peace with God." But their "ministers" never revealed God's definition of sin to them -- what they must repent of! Consequently, their baptisms have been nothing more than mechanical rituals or initiations into church organizations -- mere dunkings! For since they have never been taught God's definition of sin, they have failed completely to realize what rotten and sinful lives they have led.

These individuals HAVEN'T REALLY REPENTED. They have never been broken up about the wretched state of their lives. And they have not detested and utterly abhorred their own vanity and selfishness.

Such people don't immediately begin to study and understand the Bible after baptism. They just continue to go along with the customs, the ways, and the TRADITIONS OF THIS WORLD. Their lives are not ACTUALLY changed. They don't come to know God personally. And they continue in most of their sins!

Their carnal, natural mind will not take correction from the commandments of God "Because the carnal mind IS ENMITY AGAINST GOD" (Rom. 8:7). This is why the "No Works" baptism persists.

Baptism is a vital step on the road to real conversion, and it must be done God's way, and after TRUE REPENTANCE!

The sad truth is that most "professing Christians" -- and this may include you -- have not repented and been baptized properly, and have NEVER RECEIVED THE Holy Spirit! They haven't even begun to get ready to start on the road to real conversion! (Acts 2:38; Rom. 8:9; I Cor. 12:13.)

Perhaps you have been immersed and are wondering if your previous baptism was valid. Ask yourself why you were baptized in the first place. Were you baptized simply because many of the members of your family were baptized and you felt "looked-down-upon," or had that "left-out feeling"? Did you stand in the water and go through the ordinance of baptism simply to "join" the group with whom you had been fellowshiping? Were you baptized because you temporarily thought it was "right."

PHOTO CAPTION: Revival meetings often lead many to be baptized

"into" the sponsoring church. But how many are taught the Bible definition of sin -- what they must repent of -- before baptism?

If you were baptized for any of these reasons -- your baptism was not valid BECAUSE YOUR MOTIVES WERE NOT RIGHT! YOU need to counsel with a true minister of God as soon as possible to be ABSOLUTELY SURE about your previous baptism!

"Tongues" and "Tarry Meetings"

Is speaking in "tongues" a PROOF of having received the priceless gift of God's Holy Spirit? Many claim it is. Let's notice what these people believe about this grossly misunderstood subject.

There is a modern religious movement which ERRONEOUSLY BELIEVES that Peter, James, John, and the other apostles were all converted and had received the Holy Spirit either when first called by Jesus, or while He was yet alive. Then, having ALREADY received the Holy Spirit BEFORE Christ's ascension, His disciples, so they erroneously believe, had to "tarry," and "pray down Pentecost," until, finally on Pentecost, they "got their BAPTISM" -- a SPECIAL dispensation of spirit power -- and consequently spoke in UNKNOWN tongues.

Based on this assumption, they say that one first "joins" their church by "repenting of his sins" and being baptized by immersion, after which he immediately receives the "Holy Spirit." (BUT WHAT CONSTITUTES REAL SIN AND REAL REPENTANCE THEY DO NOT KNOW. THIS IGNORANCE VOIDS ANY POSSIBILITY OF THEIR RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD!)

And they go on to erroneously teach that some time afterward, one so baptized, if he "seeks" it diligently enough in a "tarry meeting," may receive "THE Baptism" -- a special endowment of "Spirit power" which is supposed to be AN ENTIRELY SEPARATE AND LATER SPECIAL ACT OR BLESSING FROM GOD.

The teaching is that when one receives this latter "baptism," he always "speaks in unknown tongues" -- that is, "unknown" languages. Often thrills and sensations are felt surging in overpowering waves through the body. From that time all timidity and bashfulness in "witnessing for Christ" is gone. The tongue is loosened. The recipient now boldly and loudly testifies in open meeting. Often in a jazzy manner and with a fluency and flippancy of "speech" never before possible!

What is this strange phenomenon? Is it from God? Is it used according to HIS purpose? Or -- is this "unknown" speech from some OTHER source? Here's the TRUTH from God's own inspired Word.

1. Does the Bible really teach anything about speaking in "unknown" tongues as these "tongues-seekers" ASSUME? I Cor. 14:2.

COMMENT: A vital key to our understanding is that the word "unknown" has wrongly been added by the translators of the King James Version. You'll notice that this word appears six times in I Corinthians 14 and that it always is in ITALICS when used in connection with "tongues." Whenever the translators inserted additional words which THEY THOUGHT would make the intended meaning of the Scriptures clearer, they ITALICIZED them so the reader would know that they were NOT A PART of the literal word-for-word translation. Most of the time these additional italicized words do help in making the meaning clearer, but in this case, the use of "unknown" is absolutely misleading!

2. Is the ability to speak in "tongues" -- one or more known foreign languages -- a special gift God might bestow upon some Christians, especially ministers, through the power of His Holy Spirit? I Cor. 12:1, 10-11.

COMMENT: Remember that in the New Testament, the original inspired Greek word that was translated into the English language as "tongues," is "glossa". This word means "languages" -- known tongues! If a "language" were UNKNOWN it would be nothing but a NOISE!

3. On the day of Pentecost, 31 A.D., did God bestow this special gift of languages upon the disciples at the same instant they received the Holy Spirit? Acts 2:4. Was this gift given so all the people could understand them? Verses 5-8. Wasn't THIS then God's specific purpose for giving the disciples the gift of tongues? Verse 11.

COMMENT: Remember, the apostles did not receive the Holy Spirit until the day of Pentecost -- AFTER Christ's ascension to heaven -- NOT before. They were given the gift of other languages, not as evidence of having the Spirit, but to enable them to be understood by Jews of the diaspora -- the dispersion.

On that day of Pentecost, 31 A.D., there were Jews from many FOREIGN countries gathered in Jerusalem. Therefore, it was necessary for God to bestow the gift of VARIOUS languages upon His disciples in order that they could make known to these people the Gospel -- the good news of Christ's sacrifice for their sins, His resurrection and future return to rule this earth! Notice carefully that there was a SPECIFIC PURPOSE for this gift of languages. And NOWHERE do we find even the remotest indication of UNKNOWN -- unintelligible -- "languages" being spoken by the disciples!

4. Did God later bestow the gift of speaking in foreign languages upon certain other Spirit-filled individuals in His true Church? I Cor. 14:12, 26. Why?

COMMENT: The Church at Corinth was a Gentile Church composed of many individuals from different FOREIGN countries. God, therefore, gave certain ones in His Church there the gift of speaking the languages of these people so they could UNDERSTAND God's Word more clearly and be EDIFIED -- be strengthened and built up more perfectly in the grace and knowledge of God.

Notice especially that God gives spiritual gifts ONLY when they can serve a SPECIFIC NEED in the Church!

5. Did Paul encourage the Corinthians to desire the spiritual gift of "prophesying," RATHER than the gift of tongues? I Cor. 14:1-5.

COMMENT: "Prophesying," in this instance, refers to INSPIRED PREACHING. Paul said that inspired preaching is a far greater gift than speaking in TONGUES -- various foreign languages! But if one did receive the gift of speaking in a foreign language, and spoke to a certain nationality in the Church, he was to interpret or have an INTERPRETER convey the MEANING OF HIS WORDS to the rest of the congregation that would not have been able to understand him (I Cor. 14:5, 13, 27). Or else he was to KEEP SILENCE! (Verse 28.)

6. Is the gift of languages the LAST one of a list of gifts mentioned by Paul? I Cor. 12:10, 28. Doesn't this indicate it is the LEAST gift of the Holy Spirit?

A Typical Tarry Meeting

1. Are those who receive God's spiritual gifts, such as

tongues, capable of controlling these gifts in an intelligent and sane manner? I Cor. 14:32-33. (The word "spirits" here is used in the sense of SPIRITUAL GIFTS.)

COMMENT: This certainly is NOT the case at a "tarry meeting" in the churches of this "tongues movement"! Each "tongues-seeker" in such meetings repeats senseless phrases as "Glory! Glory!" OVER AND OVER AGAIN. Constantly they are urged to "say it a little FASTER." Variations of this phrase are "Hallelujah!" or "Praise you Jesus!" The seeker is told to keep it up FASTER AND FASTER and not to become discouraged.

 PHOTO CAPTION: "Speaking with tongues" has been practiced by certain church groups for decades. Now other church denominations are beginning to practice the utterance of unintelligible SOUNDS whose source practitioners say is God.

Sometimes they are told to lift their arms above their heads and HOLD them there. When they become so tired they are unable to hold them up any longer, others will come and support their arms. All pray aloud at once, begging God to give them the "blessing." Hour after hour they continue to beg, plead, and agonize.

Occasionally, perhaps after many of these "tarry meetings," one or more at a meeting will begin to "speak in tongues," which is usually nothing but ridiculous babbling -- unintelligible gibberish! The individual falls backward and rolls upon the floor, ranting and raving and foaming at the mouth like a maniac. Nothing but utter confusion presides! God says He is "not the author of confusion" (I Cor. 14:33). If not, who is? Satan and his demons! And it is THEIR tongues that many "tongues-seekers" speak in!

2. Are "tongues" therefore the main evidence of one's having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit? I Cor. 13:1. "CHARITY" means love.

COMMENT: There is no statement or example in the scriptures that shows one must speak in tongues to prove he has received the Holy Spirit of God.

3. What conclusively proves that one has truly received the baptism of God's Holy Spirit? Mat. 7:20, Gal. 5:22-23 and I John 3:24.

COMMENT: The lives we live are the evidence of whether or not we have received the baptism of God's Holy Spirit. Only the HOLY SPIRIT can produce the "fruits of the Spirit."

You need not plead and beg and agonize for God to give you this greatest of all gifts. God needs no begging! The Holy Spirit is free -- and God tells us in His Word He is more willing to give us this gift than we are to give bread to our hungry children! (Luke 11:13.)

 PHOTO CAPTION: "BAPTISM WITH FIRE"! -- Tinder-dry brush explodes into fury of flame during raging brush fire. Below, white-hot molten metal pours from open hearth furnace into ladle. Both vividly portray the "baptism by fire" which will utterly destroy the incorrigible wicked when earth's crust becomes an all-consuming MOLTEN mass!

The "Baptism With FIRE"

John the Baptist, speaking of Christ, said: "He ... shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with FIRE" (Mat. 3:11).

People just don't understand what they're asking for when they seek "the baptism with fire"! Let's understand what John meant!

1. Just what did John the Baptist prophesy concerning "baptism with fire"? Mat. 3:11.

2. To whom was John speaking? Mat. 3:5-6. Are we to assume from this that all Jerusalem and all Judea, and all this region was righteous, or at least repentant and seeking salvation?

COMMENT: Not at all! The whole population came in great crowds to see John -- mostly out of CURIOSITY!

3. Did John baptize ALL of this group who came to him? Mat. 3:7-8. What is to be the ultimate fate of the "tree" -- one who has not truly repented and shown forth the "fruits" -- proof in the life he leads -- of true repentance? Verse 10 and last word of verse 11.

COMMENT: John was speaking to the UNREPENTANT hypocritical Pharisees and Sadducees whom he REFUSED to baptize, as well as those who did repent and whom he BAPTIZED. So notice carefully that SOME of those there to whom John spoke -- the repentant -- were to be BAPTIZED with the HOLY SPIRIT later. But that the others there -- the unrepentant -- were awaiting the wrath to come, which shall burn them with -- baptize them into -- a fiery death! (Verse 11, last word.) This fire is the ultimate fate of the wicked, who shall be cast into the lake of fire -- this earth's surface burning up -- which is the second and final death (Rev. 21:8).

4. Did John also compare the evil to chaff? How did he say Christ would separate them from the good, so they could be burned? Mat. 3:12.

COMMENT: At the final judgment, Christ's fan is to be in His hand. With it He will purge His floor. Of what? Of chaff which He will FAN AWAY -- remove. Christ will have gathered His wheat into the garner -- the Kingdom of God. Then He will later remove -- destroy -- the chaff by FIRE. That is the fate of the chaff -- unquenchable fire!

5. Did Jesus also compare the evil to tares -- weeds which are a menace to the good? What are Jesus' own words concerning His gathering of His wheat -- the good -- and the burning of the tares -- the evil? Mat. 13:30. Also scan quickly the rest of this parable, beginning with verse 24. Did Jesus elaborate on what the symbol" of this parable represent? Mat. 13:36-42.

 PHOTO CAPTION: Grain harvest pictures the "wheat" of Jesus' parable which is to be gathered into God's Kingdom.

COMMENT: "His (God's) floor" in Matthew 3:12 is the same as "His field" of Matthew 13:24 -- both are this earth. "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his FIELD." But while he slept, the enemy, the devil, came and sowed tares -- sinners. Now He lets both the wheat and the tares (the chaff) -- saints and sinners -- grow together in His field -- His floor (this earth) -- until the harvest. Then He will send the angels to BAPTIZE THE TARES -- the unrepentant chaff -- WITH FIRE that burns them up; but the wheat -- the saved -- are gathered into His garner which represents His Kingdom.

That settles it!

John the Baptist was speaking to both those ultimately to receive salvation and to the unrepentant sinners.

When he said, "Christ shall baptize 'you,'" the "you" included BOTH groups. The repentant are those He would baptize with His Spirit -- the others with all-consuming fire at the time of the final judgment! You don't want the "baptism with fire," do you?

"Baptism for the DEAD"

Another doctrine being taught today is that of "Baptism for the Dead." Its history, like that of infant baptism, clearly descends from paganism. It is widely practiced and taught by one large denomination whose members have themselves "baptized" for dead relatives and friends who died unbaptized. This custom is based on their misrepresentation of I Corinthians 15:29.

First notice how this custom crept into the professing Christian world.

History shows that the heretic Marcion, about 150 A.D., introduced an idea of his own -- the practice of baptizing the living for the dead. Chrysostom describes the procedure as follows:

"When a catechumen (one receiving training in doctrine before church membership) dies, they conceal a living person under the bed of the departed. Then they stand before the dead, and ask the dead person whether or not he is willing to be baptized. Instead of the dead, who is unable to answer, the person under the bed replies in the affirmative. Whereupon they baptize him instead of the deceased, and thus make quite a farce of the whole matter. Such power has Satan over the minds of foolish men. And if you complain of this transaction, they appeal to the words of the Apostle Paul, who speaks of being 'Baptized for the dead'" (Hoary. xl in I Cor. by Chrysostom).

Now let's learn the truth about I Cor. 15:29.

1. Can the dead possibly be aware of someone being baptized on their behalf? Eccles. 9:5, 10.

COMMENT: Those who are baptized FOR the dead actually believe they're being baptized for (on the behalf of) the flitting "immortal souls" of their dead unconverted friends or relatives! Such baptism is supposed to automatically SAVE those "souls" and send them straight to Heaven!

How foolish this doctrine of men really is! We have already proved by scripture that the doctrines of the "immortal soul" and that of men going to heaven are of Satanically inspired, pagan origin. With this knowledge alone, the MAN-MADE doctrine of vicarious baptism crumbles!

Baptism obviously is for the LIVING, NOT the DEAD! Only the LIVING can REPENT, and repentance is a PRIOR CONDITION to baptism. The dead are dead -- they "know not anything"!

2. Would Christians have any HOPE of a future resurrection if Christ had not been resurrected? I Cor. 15:16-19, 32. But don't verses 3-8, 20 prove Christ was resurrected and that we therefore can have HOPE of being RESURRECTED too?

COMMENT: The subject of the entire 15th chapter of I Corinthians is the CHRISTIAN'S HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION.

3. Exactly what does Paul say about "baptism for the dead"? I Cor. 15:29.

COMMENT: This verse is not correctly translated from the original inspired Greek. Paul is NOT talking about being baptized

"in the place of" the dead, or "in behalf of" the dead, or "for" the dead. The inspired Greek word translated "for" is "huper". "Huper" is a vague word having too many meanings to accurately choose from.

Therefore, the context of the entire chapter must determine the actual meaning of the word as Paul intended!

As one proof of the resurrection, Paul cites in verse 29 the example of those who were baptized, symbolizing their HOPE in the RESURRECTION. He is actually asking the question, "why be baptized IF the dead rise not?" Therefore, since Paul is speaking of the HOPE of the resurrection in the context of chapter 15, verse 29 should properly read: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for (THE HOPE OF) the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for (THE HOPE OF) the dead?"

What is the hope of the dead? The resurrection! In verse 29 Paul is writing about baptism, which pictures, among other things, the HOPE of the RESURRECTION! Arising out of the watery "grave" of baptism is a symbol of the hope of the DEAD -- the hope of a FUTURE RESURRECTION which they had when they were alive.

To surrender one's life to Christ now, to crucify the self now, to be baptized -- all this is foolish unless there is hope thereby of a resurrection!

This verse has absolutely nothing to do with the false doctrine of baptism in place of or "for" the unbaptized dead! The Holy Spirit-inspired New Testament Church did NOT practice this totally unscriptural custom! And the apostle Paul DID NOT teach it!

Who Has AUTHORITY to Baptize?

Finally, who is AUTHORIZED to administer baptism? Must it be done by an ordained minister?

1. Are those who are sent forth by Christ -- by His Church -- the ones He commands and gives authority to do baptizing? Mat. 28:18-19. Did Christ authorize His disciples to baptize for Him? John 4:1-2.

COMMENT: Jesus commissioned His disciples to baptize for Him -- by His authority.

2. Did Jesus commission the Apostle Paul to baptize repentant believers, or to preach the gospel? I Cor. 1:13-17.

 PHOTO CAPTION: Thousands of Christians have died with the HOPE of being resurrected at Jesus' return. And thousands of others are being baptized today for this same "hope of the dead."

COMMENT: Paul baptized very few! He had others do it for Christ. He was the called minister by whom Christ carried the gospel to the Gentiles -- through whom Christ, as head of the Church, ruled the churches which had been raised up by the preaching of Paul and the YOUNG MEN he had taught and sent out under his direction. Paul did not consider it important or essential that he, personally, baptize all those being converted under the ministry God carried on through his supervision. "Christ sent me not to baptize," Paul said.

The principle to remember is that it is really CHRIST who baptizes you! The man who puts you under the water is merely performing this physical act FOR Christ, in His stead -- BY HIS

AUTHORITY.

Consider that it is CHRIST who is baptizing you by a HUMAN INSTRUMENT who has been COMMISSIONED BY HIS TRUE CHURCH! And even if His human instrument turns out to be imperfect, remember all humans are imperfect, and that the baptism was DONE FOR, and IN THE NAME OF the only One who ever was perfect. And since it was in reality done by Christ, it should never be done again if one has understood and complied with God's conditions for salvation.

Your Next Step

Thousands have come to realize they are receiving the truth of God through the AMBASSADOR COLLEGE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE. They are beginning to see, by the "fruits," that the WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD is the ONLY Church preaching Christ's TRUE Gospel. And many have realized the importance of PERSONAL CONTACT with the ministers of Jesus Christ who are doing His work -- who are preaching the good news of God's coming Kingdom as a WITNESS TO the world, and are feeding His flock spiritually.

If you have TRULY REPENTED of your sins and realize the vital necessity of this personal contact and guidance by the true servants of Jesus Christ regarding baptism and other spiritual matters, then send your name and address immediately to Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong in care of the closest address on page 2, and request to be visited. (Be sure to MENTION YOU completed Lesson 26.)

Those who have come to realize the importance of being baptized NOW should NOT PUT IT OFF! Next week, next month, or next year might be TOO LATE!