THE POWER OF BAPTISM

There is power in Baptism. That's right! There is power in Baptism! There is also much controversy in the religious world that centers on Baptism. The reason for this controversy, however, is because the traditions of men differ from the teachings of the Bible. That's right! The traditions on Baptism have accumulated through the centuries. These traditions do not resemble what we read in the Bible. For instance, there is the tradition of infant baptism. There is also the tradition of sprinkling or pouring instead of immersion. The Bible does not teach these traditions. Therefore there is a conflict between the traditions of men and the teaching of the Bible. People are the reason for the controversy, not the Bible. Can you accept the Bible's teaching on Baptism? If so, you will come to understand the Power of the Baptism that Jesus commanded.

Hello I'm Larry Murdock.

Jesus did command baptism in water. Jesus' great commission given to His disciples and recorded by both Matthew and Mark commanded that people be baptized.   Matthew recorded the occasion when Jesus was speaking about His authority. Jesus told his disciples that He had been given "all authority in heaven and earth." (Matthew 28:18) That is a heavy claim! That's right! But Jesus stated this claim more than once. On another occasion, Jesus said, "All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (Matthew 11:27 ESV) God himself had spoken to this issue of Jesus' authority when the Father spoke from heaven and said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased, listen to him." (Matthew 17:5)
It is no wonder then that the apostle Paul concluded, "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." (1Cointhians 15:27 ESV) Furthermore, the apostle Paul said, "God has highly exalted [Jesus] and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11 ESV)

The apostle John wrote, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." (John 3:35-36 ESV) Notice again that last phrase, "whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life." Friends, that is a bold statement. Since the Son of God has commanded baptism, that command gives baptism its power. If we obey Jesus then we shall see life. But if we disobey we shall not see life.

In Jesus' last great command to His apostles, he said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20 ESV)

In the New Testament book of Acts we see the apostles following the command of Jesus to disciple the nations. They began to do this in Jerusalem, for that is where Jesus told them to begin. On the day of Pentecost, the 50th day after Jesus' resurrection, the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached for the first time. Although all the apostles were preaching that day, we have recorded the sermon that the apostle Peter preached. You can read it in Acts 2. Peter concluded his sermon by saying, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2:36 ESV)

"Now when [the people] heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:37-38 ESV) Friends, the thing that gives baptism its power is the fact that it was commanded by Jesus Christ. Peter was simply passing on the command of Christ. Those people who were baptized that day were NOT baptized in the name of Peter, or by any other name than the name of Jesus Christ. If you are baptized by the authority of a priest, then you were not properly baptized. If you were baptized in the name of a church, then you were not properly baptized. If you were baptized when you were a baby, then you were baptized by the authority of your parents and some church. You were baptized according to the traditions of men. Jesus never commanded baptism of a baby. Peter gave the conditions that a person must meet in order to obey Jesus' command of baptism. Peter said,

"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ." So repentance is required. Can a baby repent? Can anyone else repent on your behalf? Of course not! People who are old enough to know their sins are the ones eligible for repentance.

Furthermore, notice that the people who heard Peter's sermon were cut to the heart by the message that they had crucified the Son of God. In other words, they believed that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, and they believed they had crucified Him. That faith qualified them to take the next step, repentance. In other words, they would have never repented of their sins if they had not believed in Jesus. The fact that they were cut to the heart by Peter's sermon is evidence that they believed his sermon. They then cried out and asked, "What shall we do?" When they came to that conviction then Peter could tell those believers to "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."

Those people needed forgiveness! They needed forgiveness just like you need forgiveness. You see, Jesus died for your sins also. He died for all sins of every generation. However, because Jesus died for all sinners in every generation does not mean that all sinners will be forgiven! That's right! People in this generation must come to the same conviction as those people on the day of Pentecost. You must believe that Jesus is God's Son and that He died on the cross for the sins of all mankind. In fact, you must believe that to the extent that you will renounce the sins of your life. That is what God calls "repentance." It does no good to baptize a sinner if that person will not renounce his or her sins. Why do people baptize babies? If repentance is required of those wishing to be baptized, how does a baby qualify for baptism? If faith in Jesus is required of those wishing to be baptized, how does a baby qualify for baptism? Friends, the traditions of men have twisted the truth about baptism! To many people who call themselves Christians baptism has no power whatsoever! Why even teach a doctrine on Baptism if you cannot teach what Jesus taught about it? Jesus taught his apostles to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the ages." (Matthew 28:19-20)

Mark wrote it this way, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16 ESV) You see, faith, repentance and baptism have something to do with our avoiding condemnation. Well, why should I be condemned? My sins condemn me! The apostle John wrote, "Whoever believes in him [Jesus] is <u>not</u> condemned, but whoever does not believe <u>is condemned already</u>, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil." (John 3:18-19 ESV) You see, friends, our sins and our love of sin have already condemned us, but Jesus has come into the world to save us from that condemnation. Jesus gives us an opportunity to believe the gospel and repent of our sins. Jesus' apostle John also wrote that "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (John 3:17) You see, our sins have already condemned us!

Yes, in order to take advantage of Jesus' coming into the world and dying for our sins, we must believe in Christ, repent of our sins, and receive Christ's forgiveness by being baptized into the name of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul put it this way, "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Gal 3:26-29 ESV) Both Jews and Gentiles can put on Christ when they believe, repent, and are baptized into Christ. Both males and females can put on Christ when they believe the gospel, repent of their sins, and are baptized into Christ. Even slaves and free become brothers and sisters in Christ, following their baptism into Christ.

Do you see the power of baptism? It is the one event that unites all the obedient believers with Christ. Baptism is the unifying point. It not only brings us into unity with Christ, but it also brings the believers together into the body of Christ, the church of Jesus Christ.