

***Response to article by Wayne Jackson
In the Christian Courier--
"New Testament Baptism: In
Water or the Spirit?"***

by Jack Langford

Since I am the "gentleman" with whom Mr Jackson had a public "debate" some years ago on the subject of baptism in the plan of salvation, and since he makes reference to effectively refuting the fact that such passages as Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3,4; Col. 2:21; I Cor. 12:13 and I Pet. 3:21 refer to a spiritual baptism, I would like to respond to his arguments. In most cases they are classic examples of not reading a passage carefully, and then projecting upon it the traditional ritualistic ideas that are popular in religion.

As to water baptism mentioned in the book of Acts, I told Mr Jackson that the Scriptures clearly state that it was specifically John's water baptism (Acts 1:5; 8:36; 10:47; 11:16; 18:25; and 19:3) and that it continued to be practiced until late in the Acts period. In addition the Scripture specifically says it was for "purifying" disciples in a ritual manner (John 3:24-26). It was therefore one of the many "Jewish purification rituals" that was practiced throughout the book of Acts time period (Acts 21:24,26). In our discussion Mr. Jackson, himself, readily admitted in these words:

"I admitted, and gladly so, that many of the New Testament Christians, during the period of the book of Acts, practiced and submitted to certain aspects of the Law of Moses. A man would be a fool to deny that. Acts 21 here is an example. Paul circumcising Timothy, and other occasions...They were gradually lead into the truth that the Law, with all of its various ceremonial applications were done away with!" (Wayne Jackson, 12/16/77).

It is a fact, therefore, that the book of Acts was a transition period, during which John's water purification was still being practiced by Jewish believers especially, and that this continued until the full revelation came that the Law was done away with.

Now concerning the passages directly in question. Mr. Jackson does not deal at any length directly with them because there is obviously no *WATER* in them (other than Noah's flood "allusion" in I Pet. 3:21). Rather, he turns to Matthew 28:19 which he thinks he can easily prove is a water baptism, in order to prove that all the rest are water baptisms as well. Actually Matt. 28:19 has no water in it, either. Nevertheless, we will follow Mr. Jackson.

The only proof Mr. Jackson offers that Matt. 28 is water baptism is that the Apostles seem to be the "administrators," therefore, it must be water since they could not baptize "in the Spirit." This is really a very superficial argument that does not look in depth at the passage. Nor does the passage actually state that the Apostles were *DIRECT* "administrators." Note the following facts:

1.) The main emphasis of the passage is actually on Christ and is from the words immediately

preceding it—"All power has been given unto Me (Christ) in heaven and on earth, *go therefore...*" In other words the commission is predicated upon *Christ's power*, not the apostles.

2.) The apostles cannot execute this commission until they are endued with this "*power*"—"I send forth the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city (of Jerusalem) until you be *endued with power* from on high." (Luke 24:48).

3.) Now the "promise of the Father to be endued with power from on high" is specifically identified as the great "*baptism of the Holy Spirit.*" (Acts 1:5). In other words the apostles **cannot** execute this commission until they are baptized by the Holy Spirit!

4.) Since the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the *direct prerequisite* to the commission, it strongly implies that the baptism of the commission is *the baptism of the Spirit!* In other words the Apostles must first have what they are going to have a part in administering. Now we all know that anybody could water baptize a person without having Holy Spirit baptism! John the Baptist, his disciples, and then, even the Apostles could and had already been water baptizing people for several years. All they needed was to be purified themselves in order to so purify others with that particular baptism. However, to have a part in this commission they must first have Holy Spirit baptism, because that is the baptism they will *indirectly* be administering!

5.) Since the emphasis of the passage is first upon "the Power of Christ" and secondly upon the ministry of the Apostles, it follows that the direct administrator of the baptism is the "Power of Christ" and the indirect administrators are the Apostles through their ministry of the gospel. Let us see if this is true by example: The very first Gentiles who were evangelized by the Apostle Peter were instantly baptized by the Holy Spirit. Note the precise language of Scripture;

"While Peter yet spake these words (the Gospel message), the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word." (Acts 10:43,44).

Thus, the first men of another nation who were evangelized by an Apostle were instantly baptized by the Holy Spirit through the power of Christ!

6.) Here are other examples of the Apostles *indirectly* administering works that only God or Christ can directly do: The commission, as given in the Gospel of John (John 20:21-23), says that the disciples are to "**Remit sins.**" In I Cor. 4:15 the Apostle Paul said, "I have **begotten** you," (the same word used in John 3:3) to the Corinthians. Also in I Cor. 7:16 & 9:22 we learn that Christian brethren can "**save**" others. In James 5:19, 20 we are again told that believers can "**convert**" and "**save**" and "**hide a multitude of sin**" in others.

Now we all know that only God or Jesus Christ can *directly* do any of these things. Yet in all these passages men are said to be the administrators. We understand that men can do these things *indirectly* through the preaching of the Gospel. In fact, that is precisely what the Apostle Paul says in I Cor. 4:15—"I have begotten you *through the Gospel.*" The very same is true of the passage in Matthew 28:19.

Then Mr. Jackson says he knows of no "reputable Bible scholar" who contends that Matthew 28:19 is not water baptism! Well, let me have the privilege of introducing you to one. James W. Dale whose works of some 1800 pages in 4 or 5 volumes of Hebrew, Greek and Latin syntax, on the singular subject of baptism, and said to be "The ablest treatise on the subject in the English

language," and furthermore endorsed by Thayer personally (Thayer's Greek Lexicon, which also says under the subject of *baptism*, "see esp. four works by J. W. Dale entitled Classic, Judaic, Johannic, Christic, Baptism,") and endorsed by numerous other scholars, had this to say in his concluding remarks about Matthew 28:19:

"The language of inspiration announces a real baptism as distinctly as can be done by the use of words; there is absolutely NO EVIDENCE of a ritual baptism in connection with these words...This wonderful baptism into the Trinity (depending upon the baptism into the incarnate, atoning, and mediating Son) has no direct or designed relation to a ritual baptism...Again, these words cannot be converted into a ritual formula, because thereby the transcendent truth which they teach is destroyed. A rite is but a shadow. This baptism as it stands in the commission is a reality."
(from Vol. 4, Christic Baptism, Pgs. 455, 458 & 461.

Mr. Jackson then argues that Rom. 6:3-4 and Col. 2:12 "involves both an immersion in '**something**', and a 'being raised' **from** the **same substance**. This makes perfectly good sense if water baptism is in view." This is an amazing statement! It makes you wonder if Mr. Jackson has ever read the passages! In Roman 6 the '**something**' into which all believers are baptized is clearly stated to be a person, the Lord Jesus Christ! In being baptized **into Christ** we are merged into His death and resurrection—and we absolutely don't come out from the "**same substance**." Our old man *remains* dead, and our New man *remains* alive IN CHRIST! Consequently, these passages could not possibly be water lest you drown your converts!

Actually I Peter 3:21 eliminates water baptism, "NOT the putting away the filth of the flesh," (for this is what water baptism does—Hebrews 9:10&13), as being the baptism in view. The context starts with the baptism of Christ's suffering (Verse 18 & Matthew 20:23), and this baptism alone qualifies as the one that gives a "clear conscience" (Verse 21 & Hebrews 9:14), through the "Eternal Spirit." In addition, this baptism of Christ's suffering and bearing the judgment of God, for the sins of the world, was prefigured by that baptism in Noah's day which also judged the world. Christ, Who bore that baptism in our place is the antitypical "Ark" Who brings us to resurrection ground.

As to expounding on I Corinthians 12:13, of course Mr. Jackson gets as far away as he possibly can from the clear statement of the passage, to a verse back in John 3:5, where it says, "born of water," which he says, proves that I Cor. is a water baptism! This is amazing "logic"! When we look at John 3, it says THREE times, "born of the Spirit," (Verse 5, and 6, & 8 leave off water). Therefore, by the same "logic," I Cor. 12:13 must be Spirit baptism by a majority of three to one!

Lastly he finds "water" in Ephesians 5:26. However, Eph. 5:26 is not talking about unsaved souls getting cleansed, but rather the Church of Jesus Christ before its final presentation to Him. The passage actually reads, "That He might *sanctify* it (the Church), having *cleansed* it by the LAVENDER of the WATER IN the WORD," (Literal Trans.). This is best explained by Christ Himself—"Now ye are *clean* through the Word which I have spoken to you," (John 15:3). And again—"Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is truth," (John 17:17).