

# IN RESPONSE - THE BAPTISM OF JOHN, THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

by Dennis Prutow  
Volume II, Number 11

My articles on the nature of baptism have evoked questions concerning the baptism of John. Was it Christian baptism? If not, is re-baptism proper? What does the Bible say?

The place to start is the encounter of Paul with people who had received the baptism of John but knew nothing about the Holy Spirit. The incident is found in Acts 19:1-7,

And it came about that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found some disciples, and he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said to him, 'No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' And they said, 'Into John's baptism.' And Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.' And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. And there were in all about twelve men.

It is clear these people were re-baptized. But why?

Paul inquired if these people had received the Holy Spirit. They responded by saying they never heard of such a thing. Then came the question regarding baptism. Why this subsequent question we might ask? Quite simply, Christian baptism is baptism into the Trinity. It is baptism, according to the command of Jesus, "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). And so Christian baptism requires introduction into the knowledge of the work of the Father, the work of the Son, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Having received a negative answer to the question about the Holy Spirit, Paul then inquired about their baptism, and learned

that it was the pre-pentecostal baptism as proclaimed and administered by John the Baptist--a baptism of expectation rather than one of fulfillment, as Christian baptism now was. Accordingly, he explained the anticipatory character of the Johannite rite; it was closely bound up with John's proclamation of Jesus as the Coming One. But now that Jesus had come and accomplished His mission on earth, now that He was raised from the dead and exalted to God's right hand, whence He had sent the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, an anticipatory baptism was inappropriate and inadequate.<sup>1</sup>

The primary reason the baptism of John was inadequate was that it foreshadowed and anticipated Christ. It was preparatory. As such, the baptism of John was a baptism of repentance. It was a baptism signifying a turning away from past life and associations. From this standpoint it was negative.

The baptism of John led people away from their old life and prepared them to be led into a new life. But the baptism of John did not symbolize that new life. It was therefore inadequate. And re-baptism was necessary.

The text presents another question. We are told these people "were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5). As a result, some sects do baptize using only the name of Jesus rather than the traditional Trinitarian formula. Such baptisms are flawed. Again, the direct command of Christ was baptism "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Why does Luke tell us that Paul baptized these disciples "in the name of the Lord Jesus"?

Literally, Paul baptized them "into" the name of the Lord Jesus. In other words, these people were properly united to Christ. There was evidence of this. "The Holy Spirit came on them, and they

began speaking with tongues and prophesying" (Acts 19:6).<sup>2</sup>

There is little doubt Paul explained to these people the meaning of the Holy Spirit, the work of Christ in procuring the Holy Spirit for them, and the plan of the Father standing behind both of these events. For these disciples to be properly united with Christ an understanding of, belief in, and trust in the plan of the Father for salvation, the work of Christ, the Son, in carrying out that plan, and the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing actual forgiveness and union with Christ are essential. For people to be properly united to the visible body of Christ, baptism "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" is also essential. And so we affirm that Luke's words in Acts 19:5 tell us what took place but they do not tell us the formula which was used in the baptism.

This brings us to a crucial point. Valid Christian baptism requires washing with water.<sup>3</sup> This is the first requirement. Second, "[i]t is essential to the validity of the ordinance that it should be administered 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'"<sup>4</sup> The Trinitarian formula is essential to Christian baptism. This is so by the word of the Savior Himself. And so we maintain John's baptism was not Christian baptism.

By way of application, this means "the baptism of all those sects which reject the Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity is invalid."<sup>5</sup> Those baptized in Unitarian Churches should be re-baptized as should those baptized by Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses.

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<sup>2</sup> For the place of tongues as a sign of the Spirit, see my exposition of 1 Cor. 13.

<sup>3</sup> A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), p. 605. For a discussion of mode see In Response, Volume II, Number 2, February, 1993.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 606.

<sup>1</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970), p. 386.

# IN RESPONSE - NOW AND THEN, 1 CORINTHIANS 13:13, LESSON XI

by Dennis Prutow

We are working to confirm the view that the *perfect* to which Paul refers in 1 Corinthians 13:10 is the completed and perfect Word of God. When the *perfect* comes, the *partial*, tongues, prophecy, and special knowledge, cease.

We have seen Paul's language in verses 11 and 12 supports this view. Indulging in tongues, prophecy, and special knowledge is childish. We are to press on to the maturity of love. In Scripture we have the privilege of seeing Christ face to face. Because we now have the gospels and their explanation in the epistles, this is abundantly true.

In addition, the knowledge to which Paul refers in verse 12 is not actually *full knowledge* but *more exact knowledge* derived from observation, study, and reflection. We are now able, by means of the understanding given in Scripture, to recognize true spirituality more fully. Because Scripture gives us a full blown picture of the spiritual fruit of love, we are able to identify the presence of the Holy Spirit more clearly than in previous ages. *We are able to do this if we will.*

Now we turn to 1 Corinthians 13:13 for further confirmation of our position. Comparison needs to be made between verses 12 and 13.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

My interest is in the two words for *now* used in these verses. In verse 12 the emphasis is upon the present point in time. The word translated "now" in verse 12 refers to the "immediate present *at once, immediately, now.*"<sup>1</sup> As Paul writes, he says, "At this point in time we see in a mirror dimly; at this point in time we have only partial knowledge." Remember, Paul says this about his own time. Paul says this about his own situation *within* the apostolic age.

Let's compare some other uses of this same word for *now*. The italics have been added to emphasize the word with which we are concerned.

As we have said before, so I say again *now*, if any man is preaching to

you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. For am I *now* seeking the favor of men, or of God? (Galatians 1:9-10).

Paul is speaking of his letter to the Galatians as he uses the word *now*. Similarly Paul says, "But I could wish to be present with you *now* and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you" (Galatians 4:20). Again Paul has reference to the time he writes his letter. "I could wish to be present with you *now*," he says.

The point is simple. The time frame Paul has in mind as he speaks in 1 Corinthians 13:12 is that period in which he lived and ministered. It is a point in time or a short period of time in contrast to a long interval of time consisting of millennia.

Were we to continue to hold to the traditional interpretation of verse 12, Paul would have to be speaking of this present age which has lasted nearly two millennia. But the word for *now* used by Paul does not indicate this.

Contrast is indeed drawn with the future: "*then, at that time... thereupon, thereafter.*"<sup>2</sup> A time would come, says Paul, when we will see face to face and we will have more particular knowledge concerning the work of the Spirit.

We affirm this latter time to be the present age.

The word translated *now* in verse 13, which is different than the word for *now* in verse 12, seems to confirm this. Although there is an emphasis on time in this latter word, "the idea of time [may be] weakened or entirely absent."<sup>3</sup> For example, in Ephesians 2:13 Paul exclaims, "But *now* in Christ Jesus you who were formerly far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (italics added).

There is definitely a time frame in Paul's thinking. Formerly, Christians were without Christ and without God. But *now* this is not the case. But there is more than reference to time. Christians find themselves in a new estate. They are in Christ. And interestingly enough, the time period related to being in Christ involves the remainder of this present age and reaches into the age to come.

The idea of time is completely absent in 1 Corinthians 15:20, "But *now* Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep." Christ was raised some time before Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians. Paul is not saying Christ was raised *as he wrote*. The emphasis is upon the new framework in which Christians live, the new era in which they are privileged to labor.

This is exactly what we have in 1 Corinthians 13:13, "But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." At the inauguration of this age, tongues, prophecy and special knowledge held a significant place. Paul lived during that time. *Of that period* Paul was able to say, "*Now* we see in a mirror dimly..., *now* we know in part..." Paul also recognized the transitory and temporary nature of tongues, prophecy, and special knowledge. "When the perfect comes, the partial will be done away" (1 Corinthians 13:10). When Scripture is complete, these special gifts will no longer be needed.

On the other hand, *now*, during this new era, during this entire interval of time, faith, hope, and love will abide. These fruit will be the distinguishing marks of the presence of the Holy Spirit abiding in human lives.

Therefore, the same contrast drawn in previous lessons is emphasized by the two words for *now* used by Paul in verses 12 and 13. It is the contrast between the apostolic age with its tongues, prophecy and special knowledge, and the present age taken in its entirety. In contrast to apostolic times, we *now* have the completed Scriptures.

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<sup>1</sup> F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

# IN RESPONSE - LOVE ABIDES FOREVER, 1 CORINTHIANS 13:13, LESSON XII

by Dennis Prutow

In this final lesson of our exposition of 1 Corinthians 13 it is my objective to complete the exposition and to review the chapter by way of a schematic of Paul's thought.

First, let's continue the exposition. Verse 13 reads, "But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Faith, hope, and love are to abide throughout this age. Faith will always be needed during this era. Trust in Christ is essential to salvation and will continue to be necessary. Continuing faith and growth in faith are also essential to the salvation we have in Christ.

Hope also remains. The hope to which Paul refers is the hope of the resurrection. When Paul defended himself before Governor Felix, he exclaimed,

I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked (Acts 24:14-25).

The hope Paul cherished was the hope of the resurrection of the dead. This is the great Christian hope. This hope per-

sists, is vital, and continues throughout this age.

Finally there is love. Love is the first of the fruit of the Spirit listed by Paul in Galatians 5:22. Love heads this list because it is the primary characteristic of God. "God is love" (1 John 4:8). If Christians are to be known by their fruit as Jesus declares in Matthew 7:20, then love must abide as the primary manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in human lives. During this entire epoch love remains the key Christian characteristic. This is what Paul tells us forcefully in 1 Corinthians 13. And it is love which is so fully expounded in the life of Christ set down in the gospels and so wonderfully explained in the epistles which is the chief manifestation of the Spirit.

But why is love the greater of this trinity of virtues? Love is the greatest of the three because it will continue and abide eternally. What of faith? Once we cross the verge into the other world with Christ, faith will no longer be needed. In this life we are saved and live by faith. Once in the presence of the Savior, faith will dissolve in the resplendent glory of His presence. Although faith abides and is mandatory in this life, we will joy in the life to come without this specific faith in Christ "because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 2:2).

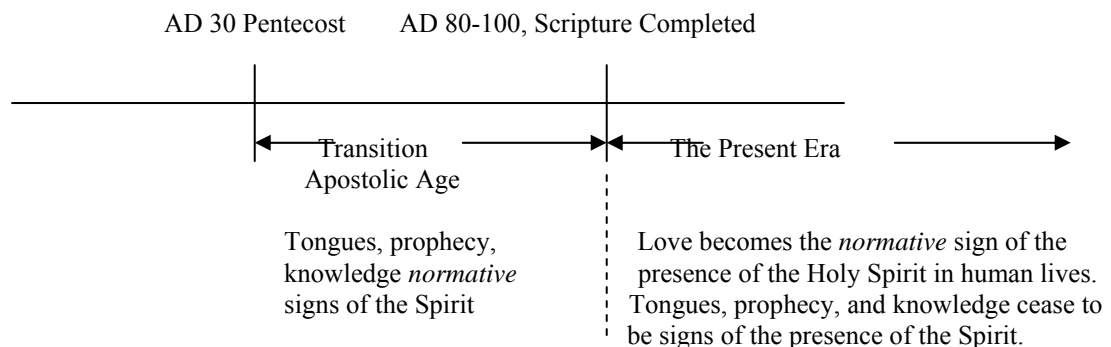
And what of hope? Hope in the resurrection will be removed by the reality. When Christ comes a second time in glory, "the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51). The blessed hope will then be an actuality. Hope as we know it will no longer be needed.

But with love, it is quite different. The love we now know through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit will be infinitely enlarged. We will be engulfed in the warmth and ecstasy of God. Our knowledge of Him will continue to grow and increase. We will exemplify Him in our love and devotion for Him. And we will participate in His ever new, refreshing, renewing, love lavished upon us. Because God is love, we will abide in love forever.

Love is the greater of the Christian qualities for this very reason. We should therefore place top priority upon love in this life. There is a sense in which priority placed upon tongues is retrogressive. We are taken back to an earlier time with all of its inadequacies. Love on the other hand is progressive. It propels us forward. When we major in love, we prepare for the life to come.

With this, allow me to review our chapter with the following diagram.

In this present era, it is dangerous to depend upon tongues as the sign of the



presence of the Spirit. Verses 1-3 of our chapter tell us tongues are possible without love, the essence of Christianity.

This is all the more the case since tongues cease to be a normative sign when Scripture is complete and we have

a well defined outline of love. At this point, love becomes the normative sign of the presence of the Spirit. This is love defined in content by the Ten Commandments (1 John 5:3, 2 John 6), described in implementation by 1 Corin-

thians 13:4-7, and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:27).

A thorough study of these aspects of love is required to understand it as the preeminent sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit. And this study can and

should be carried out in the *perfect* Word of God given to us in the Bible.

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## IN RESPONSE - FAMILY SANCTIONS?

by Dennis Prutow

The discussion of common love brought a question concerning relationships within a family where a son and brother is a professed homosexual.<sup>1</sup> Christian families faced with such situations where church discipline is lacking may ask about actions a family might take.

What method of final sanction, if any, is given to the family which would parallel those found in the institutions of Church and State? Is the answer to be found in *disinheritance*? If so, what form should such family imposed covenantal disinheritance take, and when is it necessary to implement such a final measure?

There are two issues present. First there is the matter of inheritance viewed in terms of common grace. Second there is the biblical schema tied to the concept of inheritance concomitant with special grace.

In keeping with the theme of common grace and common love, that which we have in this life, whether lands or money, is a token of God's love and grace to us. This is true for believer and unbeliever alike. In addition, our physical possessions are to be used to the glory of God and the care of others. Two portions of Scripture are pertinent in our discussion, Matthew 5:38-42 and Romans 12:19-21.

With regard to the specific question, the search for some form of final sanction to be applied by the family seems to be a search for that form of punishment due the rebellious homosexual child and sibling. Disinheritance might indeed be the punishment of choice. But does this not suggest the desire for vengeance in terms of exacting punishment?

On the other hand, the son might *demand* his inheritance much as the prodigal did. Should we withhold the inheritance on the basis that this child and sibling is an enemy of the cross? We must admit that withholding the inheritance might increase suffering. This would be especially true if AIDS was in the picture. If the son demands his share of the inheritance, what are we to do? Look at the words of Christ.

You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you (Matthew 5:38-42).

Christ tells us not to withhold the blessings of *common love* from those who are disobedient to Him. Paul puts it this way, 'Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. 'But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:19-21).

It would be evil, according to the standards of *common grace*, to withhold an inheritance *as a family sanction*. We are to overcome evil with good. Again, there is the example of the father and his prodigal son mentioned earlier.

When we look at the matter from this perspective, there do not appear to be final *family* sanctions in the New Testament. Such sanctions are reserved to the church and to the state. Covenant families should utilize the procedures of discipline operative in the covenant community, the church. In severe cases where bodily harm or life is threatened by unbelieving family members, the legal sanctions of the state may be called into play. But even in such legal situations, the demands of common love are not abrogated. "And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also" (Matthew 5:40).

These matters are always complex and each situation must be dealt with on its own merits. But the general principles just outlined seem to apply.

We turn now to the second point. The inheritance in the Old Testament had eternal significance. When Esau sold his

birthright, he not only disavowed his place as the first born in the family of Isaac and forsook his earthly inheritance; he disavowed the Covenant of Grace and the inheritance of eternal life. The inheritance of the Old Testament carried this eternal significance. The land, for example, foreshadowed, anticipated, and typified heaven.

In the Old Testament economy homosexuality was punishable by death (Leviticus 20:13). This sanction had eternal consequences. The ultimate inheritance was lost.

But [in the New Testament] the sanction by which the gravity of the offence was recognized and penalized in the Old Testament economy is revoked. The sanction has been changed from the corporeal to the spiritual, a change which by its very nature underlines the gravity of the offence and therefore the abiding sanctity of the law violated by it.<sup>2</sup>

We must understand the ultimate sanction, the ultimate disinheritance, is exacted by God alone. Vengeance is in His hands. This disinheritance is nothing less than torment forever in the flaming pits of hell. In the new dispensation, the physical has given way to the spiritual. And earthly inheritances are mere adumbrations of the heavenly.

At the same time, while we rest upon the sanctions of God to balance the scales of justice and righteousness, we are called upon to pursue every avenue of common good in hopes that these common mercies will be used as testimonies of God's goodness and lead erring children to repentance.

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<sup>1</sup> This question was answered in Volume II, Number 9 of *In Response*, 'Common Love and 1 Corinthians 5:11.'

<sup>2</sup> John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), p. 54.