

Water or Spirit Baptism? (2) 1 Cor. 12:13

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In our last article, we dealt with Romans 6 and showed from scripture that it definitely refers to water baptism. The second passage that is probably the most frequently used when trying to prove spirit baptism is I Cor. 12:13, "*For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one spirit.*" This passage is very clearly speaking of water baptism. There is absolutely no reason for a person to believe it is speaking of anything else. However, in order to arrive at this conclusion, there are several things which we need to put into perspective.

The very foundation of this study begins with a question that maybe is not obvious at first: "what is the definition of church?" Although we are not going to attempt to go into depth about that subject in this article due to space, it is a very important consideration, and will certainly determine what you believe about I Cor. 12:13.

The word "church" when used in the New Testament is found 114 times. The only type of a church taught in the New Testament is a local church. By local we mean it is assembling in some definite locality. It is not invisible or mystical as some would teach.

The invisible, mystical church has been a false doctrine propagated by Protestants ever since they left the Roman Catholic Church. Since then, they have been trying to find some proof that you do not have to be a part of the visible, catholic church.

When we speak of the word "church" therefore, we must define ourselves, because of the great misunderstanding which has taken place among Protestants down through the years, and now has infiltrated many Baptist institutions, and much of Baptist thinking.

Some of the reasons that we would hold to only a local church belief are:

1. Christ used the word "church" and always spoke of it in a local sense.
2. Christ only promised to build one kind of a church, and certainly that church is local and visible. At present that church is earthly, and in the future will become heavenly. At the same time it will still be local (in heaven) and visible (in heaven).
3. The term "universal church" is a post-apostolic term that was first used by Hegessipus approximately 300 A.D. It is definitely not apostolic or scriptural in origin.
4. The local church is the only kind of a church that Christ could entrust the Great Commission and the ordinances to.
5. To have a universal church which includes all the saved is to displace and confuse the teaching of the Word of God on the Kingdom of God.

With those considerations out of the way, and understanding that unless a person is thinking right when it comes to the term "church" he cannot clearly understand I Cor. 12, we can go on.

In I Cor. 12, water baptism is the subject Paul says we are baptized into one body. (You cannot be a member of two churches any more than you are two bodies.) The definition of this one body is very important. You cannot understand what the baptism is all about until you understand what body you are placed into. It must be remembered that the book of I Corinthians was written to the church at Corinth.

The church had many problems with divisions and strife. This was one of the major reasons Paul was writing to them. (I Cor. 1:10-11) The purpose of chapter 12, as well as the whole book, is to emphasize to the Corinthian church, (which by the way was local and visible) that they had no reason to be divided, and have sects and groups within the church, because in reality, God had made each of them different in order that they might complement each other.

We also notice that in chapter 12 Paul is dealing with the matter of spiritual gifts. "*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.*" (verse 1) In the church there were those with different gifts. "*Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*" (verse 4)

Many of those within the body, the local church, had problems with understanding why others did things differently than them, and why they were involved with different ministries than they were. Paul is explaining that in the body we have many different members. "*For as the body is one and hath many members...*" (verse 12). These different members are actually helping each other in accomplishing the task of the total body.

In verse 13, Paul emphasizes that they were placed into that body by the Spirit of God, and therefore the placing of them into the body by the Spirit demanded that they not try to sever, split or fragment the body. They needed to recognize that others were different from them, and had different functions, yet they were not to discard others who were different from them. Verse 17, "*If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?*"

We say that this body is definitely the local church, and on this we must be agreed before we can even understand what this baptism is all about. Paul is writing to a local church in Corinth, speaking about them being in one body. In verse 14-25 he tells how the different parts of the body are meant to work with and to help each other. In verse 26, he speaks of one member suffering and all the members suffering with that member.

This is impossible in a universal or invisible body, which some would teach that all Christians belong to. There is absolutely no way I can know what a brother or sister in Christ in China or Russia is experiencing and thereby suffer with or rejoice with that person. This passage of scripture makes sense only when taken in a local sense and understanding that the body is the local church. Paul was writing to the church at Corinth, and by application, to me as a member of the Mazon Baptist Church.

As further proof, we find in Eph. 1:22-23, "*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.*" Here we find that the church is defined as His body. In Col. 1:18 we find, "*And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.*" Here again, the body is defined as the church. So, understanding that a church can only be a local, visible church, such as Mazon Baptist Church, or the Corinth Church, we therefore conclude that the body is also the local church.

In addition, we find that the word "body" is used 18 times in verses 12-27. It is definitely true that a body that never assembles cannot function. We cannot dissect our parts and lay them all over, and expect them to work. They must be assembled. Therefore we conclude that the universal church which some would teach cannot be a body, because it never has assembled.

Having therefore concluded that the church and the body are local institutions, and that the body and the church are used interchangeably in scripture, we come to I Cor. 12 and ask ourselves, "What is this baptism into the body?" Some would call this a spirit baptism, which took place on the Day of Pentecost, and is today repeated at the time a person is saved and placed into the body. However, as we have already demonstrated, the body is the local church.

To enter the local church, there are more requirements than salvation. In Matt. 28, the Great Commission, God says that first salvation comes, and then water baptism. This passage of scripture plainly teaches that salvation comes, and then baptism, which places us into the local body. The only kind of baptism taught here is water baptism.

As some look at I Cor. 12:13, they ask, "What does the Holy Spirit have to do with my baptism?" Certainly scripture does not teach that one is saved by baptism, nor that one receives extra grace or some mystical presence of Christ in the ordinance of baptism. However, I think that if we compare it with Acts 2:41 and 47 it will clear things up. "*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls....Praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*" These people that received the Word of God and baptized, were added to the church. There were about 3000 of them that were saved, baptized, and became members of the church there in Jerusalem.

In verse 47, it tells us that the Lord added them to the church. It is a well known fact that there are some who are members of local church, they have their names on the roll, but have never really been born again. Certainly we don't always know who they are, though sometimes their fruits do give them away. Therefore we would ask, "If a person is a member of the Lord's Church, which certainly is local and visible, does that mean the he could bypass salvation and be a Christian by simply being baptized and joining the church?"

The answer is obviously no. Men may admit a person as a member in a church, and may consider him as one of their members, the Lord is never confused about those that are his own. I believe that when God adds a man to a church, he is placed not only on the roll

of the church clerk, but in God's mind he is a true member of that church, and therefore only this type of person is considered by God as a member of His body. Would God consider a lost man a member of His church on earth? Absolutely not! Therefore, it is the Spirit of God or the Lord that puts us into the local body. This takes place through the ordinance of baptism, which makes us a member of that local church.

Baptism is more than a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the instrument by which we are placed within a local church. The Holy spirit, when He adds us to that church, makes us a part of that body, giving us an attitude and a desire to be a part of the rest of the body and to work with the other members. Maybe one of the explanations why some can come and go so easily from church to church, move their letter around, and criticize so well, is found in I John. "*They went out from us, but they were not of us.*" Maybe the reason that they were not of us is that they have never been added by the Lord in the first place.

I believe that there is definitely a work of the Spirit of God in placing a person within a church. Therefore this matter of moving from church to church needs to be very carefully dealt with. When people come to join our church, one of the questions they are asked is, "Are you very sure that God wants you as a member of our church?" If the Lord has not led them here, then we are better off and they are better off if they never make a commitment to be a part of our body.

I Cor. 12:13 cannot be spirit baptism because:

1. Spirit baptism is nowhere taught, as the Universalists teach it, in the Word of God.
2. It places them in the local church. If this was spirit baptism, then no Baptist has a right to refuse membership to any saved person. If there is such a thing as Spirit baptism, which takes place at the time of salvation then every Christian is thereby qualified to be a member of any local church, and to freely go in and out, to be involved in all the business matters of the church, whether they attend regular or not. But according to scripture, this is water baptism which places a person in a local church. Once placed in that church, they are committed to that church, and that church is committed to them. This belief has been held historically by Baptists through the years. It has even been held by men like Harry Ironside who was not a Baptist.

It is rather interesting that even many Protestants of the past recognized this truth. But today, men who call themselves by the name Baptist have infiltrated our institutions and our churches, and are teaching so-called Spirit baptism in order to pave the way for an ecumenical movement, which will one day open the doors for the Antichrist. Some may think this is a rather harsh charge. But isn't the ecumenical movement exactly what the Antichrist is today using, and when he is revealed in the future he will use it to set up his one-world church.

The spirit of today is: "We should all get along and work together. After all, we all love Jesus. Don't worry about doctrine. The doctrine of baptism is not worth dying over." I beg to differ. Baptism has been the blood-shed for Christians down through the years. Many have lost their life because they believed that a man needed proper, scriptural water immersion, and without it a man could not be a member of their church. They did not

deny that others could be saved. But they did deny membership into their church, and denied that other Christians were right in disobeying the clear commands of Christ about water baptism. We also, as Christians, need to hold the line in this matter.

When you understand what a church is, you can understand what a body is. When you understand what a body is, then the baptism of I Cor. 12:13 gives you no problem.