

## On Counseling for Baptism

### 1.

When baptism should occur, and how much knowledge a “convert” should possess before the person is baptized into the Body of Christ has been an ongoing discussion that hasn’t always been civil. This lack of civility stems from disagreement over what constitutes the Body of Christ, over whether a particular denomination constitutes the entirety of the Body or whether the Body consists of many denominations or whether the Body consists of individual disciples within many denominations. The Apostle Paul writes, “Anyone who does not have the Spirit [*Pneuma* or Breath] of Christ does not belong to him” (Rom 8:9), and, “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh...[to] set the mind on the flesh is death...[for] the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you (vv. 5–9). Therefore, those individuals who are in the Spirit—who have the Spirit of God within themselves—submit to the laws of God, are not hostile to God, and do not live according to the flesh, or set their minds on the flesh. They, as the Apostle John commands, do not love the world or the things of this world (1 John 2:15–17). And these disciples do not come with physical markers such as circumcision. They are an invisible holy nation, an invisible royal priesthood, chosen to “proclaim the excellencies of [Christ who called them] out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9). They are recognized for they have love for one another (John 15:17). And no person who will deny another disciple because the other disciple is of a differing denomination has love for those whom the Father has drawn (John 6:44) and Christ has chosen (John 15:16). Doctrinal differences exist to determine who is genuine (1 Cor 11:19). These differences disclose the presence or absence of love for the greater Body of Christ, for even thieves love their own. Thus, the disciple who realizes that Christendom consists not only of disciples who have been drawn and called by God, but also of individuals who “forces his way into [the kingdom of God]” (Luke 16:16) should recognize other disciples in whom the Spirit of God dwells regardless of denominational affiliation. This, then, negates the importance of Church Letters, or Baptismal Certificates. A person will not be baptized into a human organization, but into the invisible Body of Christ, a spiritual nation, a city of light set on a hill. A baptized disciple is a son of God, a child in the household of the Father, upon whom judgment has come (1 Pet 4:17). So baptism is into judgment, not a denomination.

The Universal Church baptizes infants, with baptism becoming a physical inauguration ceremony akin to physical circumcision. With baptism, the infant becomes part of the Universal Church, not part of the greater Body of Christ. For the infant lives according to the flesh. His or her mind is set upon the things of the flesh, such as nursing. The infant doesn’t not know to submit to God’s law, is actually hostile to God, for the infant’s attention is entirely focused on his or her own comfort and survival.

However, justification for infant baptism tangentially addresses the dilemma of the Church. Human beings, from birth, are in bondage to what the Apostle Paul calls the law of sin and death that resides in the flesh (Rom 7:25). This bondage is couched in a theology that has developed around original sin. Indeed, all life has died, or will die since Adam ate

forbidden fruit. Human beings inherit death through life coming from physical breath—the biological process that gives life also assures that death prevails over this form of life. In this sense, Satan is the prince of the power of the air humans breath (Eph 2:2). Because of his lawlessness, Satan and his angels will kill all life over which they reign; he has been a murderer from the beginning. The creation has served as his killing fields, but will ultimately be his own death chamber (Ezek 28:18–19) when he is cast into time, or into our created dimensions that dictate change through the passage of time (Rev 12:9–10). Whereas the presence of life and the absence of life cannot, within a living being, coexist in the timeless dimension that is heaven, the passage of time allows even an angel confined within the creation to pass from life to death.

Until a human being receives spiritual birth through receipt of the Breath of God [*Pneuma 'Alion*], the person has no life other than what comes from physical breath. The person is as a beast (Eccl 3:18–20). The baptized infant will die at some future point in time, with judgment coming upon this person after death (Heb 9:27). However, judgment is today upon the household of God, the holy nation composed of all disciples who symbolically died in a baptismal pool and live after death as new creations in Christ. A baptized infant doesn't yet possess an "old man" to be put to death, so nothing literally or symbolically dies when an infant is sprinkled. Rain doesn't drown the old man. Sprinkling is not baptism. When the earth was baptized into death by water in the days of Noah, all of the earth was under water. Baptism means immersion or submersion. So to sprinkle an infant causes the face of the infant to be wet—the practice reveals both the parents' and the priest's failure to understand the spiritual birth process.

The practice of infant baptism becomes the foremost demonstration by which the Universal Church discloses its acceptance of the lie Eve swallowed in Eden—that she would not die (Gen 3:4). Baptism allegedly saves the soul of the newly born infant. But the assumption that human beings have everlasting life apart from receiving such life as the gift of God (Rom 6:23), with the wages of sin being death or the absence of life (same verse), comes from the old serpent that deceives the whole world (Rev 12:9). Such belief comes from Gentiles, or Greeks. In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, Jesus uses a Greek Cynic *after-death-fortune-reversal* story to turn the mocking of Pharisees (Luke 16:14) back upon themselves by placing Himself in the position of a Stoic teacher and the Pharisees in the role of being Greek students. By telling these mocking Pharisees a Greek story, Jesus called them Gentiles without ever mentioning the word. This is especially apparent in the conclusion of the story when Jesus said, "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead" (v. 31). The Pharisees were not keeping the law Moses gave them (John 7:19); they would not hear Jesus nor believe the One who sent Him (John 5:24). They were estranged from God as the Universal Church became when it no longer heard Moses and the Prophets, Jesus and the Father who sent Him. Therefore, Christendom's acceptance of the Cynic fiction Jesus told as fact places Christendom in the position of being Greek pupils who celebrate being spiritual Gentiles. Christendom's belief that a human being possesses a soul that will never die comes from spiritual Eve swallowing the same lie that the first Eve did. Again, everlasting life is the gift of God, given individually through judgment, for the wages of sin is resurrection to condemnation (John 5:29) as opposed to life. No further judgment comes on the disciple who hears the words of Jesus and believes the One who sent Him. A human infant doesn't yet possess the mental capability to hear and believe. Judgment will not come upon a human being until he or she is mature enough to hear and believe the Father and the Son.

Until a person is born from above or born again, the person spiritually is as the world was prior to when the law was given. Paul writes that, “sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law” (Rom 5:13). Beast-like ignorance of the law of God is the natural covering for sin or lawlessness (1 John 3:4), but beasts have no spiritual life. An infant human being has such beast-like ignorance of the law, and no spiritual life so no need for Christ as the infant’s spiritual covering for lawlessness. The infant’s lawlessness is not counted against him or her even though the infant is subject to death because of Adam’s transgression (v. 12). The infant’s lawlessness is not like the transgression of Adam (v. 14) until the infant hears Moses and the Prophets read. The infant has no accountability before the law until he or she has matured enough to comprehend the words of Moses. Or, since Calvary, until the Father draws the person from the world and writes His laws on the heart and mind of the person through receipt of the Holy Spirit (Jer 31:33 & Heb 8:10)—until the person is spiritually circumcised (Deu 30:6)—and accepts judgment upon him or herself.

A dog doesn’t need baptized. Born as a puppy, a dog is a breathing creature [*naphesh*] the same as Adam when created. A dog will return to dust, or the elements of the earth at death, but while alive, a dog can learn a great amount, can display evidence of reasoning, will display tremendous loyalty. Yet a dog has no promise of spiritual birth, growth, and of eventually receiving a body that crosses dimensions. And until a human being is born again, or born from above, or born from Spirit [*Pneuma*], the person is, according to Solomon, like a very intelligent dog—and God is testing the person to see what he or she will believe concerning spiritual life. Satan will use belief in a person not dying in entirety (Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Bk 1:XXI) to cause spiritual Israel, the Christian Church, to rebel against God in the Tribulation (2 Thess 2:3). So this not a trifling issue, a belief of ignorance that will cause no harm to Christians. That was the case in the past when the Tribulation remained centuries in the future. But the revealing of Christ (Luke 17:26–30) is now near. And approximately eight months after Christ is revealed, the entirety of the Christian Church (except for the portion represented by Joshua and Caleb) will rebel against God, who will then send a great delusion over those who do not love righteousness thereby preventing repentance. The greater Church will die in the spiritual wilderness of Sin as the circumcised nation that left Egypt died in the physical wilderness because of its unbelief (Heb 3:19).

The spiritual birth process was foreshadowed by Adam as an adult human corpse receiving the breath of life and becoming a breathing creature [*naphesh*] (Gen 2:7). Spiritual birth first occurs when the last Adam—the man Jesus of Nazareth (1 Cor 15:45)—received the Breath of God (Matt 3:16) and was called His beloved Son (v. 17). Jesus was thirty years old, the age at which He could have, if of a priestly family, entered temple service. Thus, since a circumcised male Israelite wasn’t considered old enough to physically serve the nation (in the military) until twenty, the first Adam would probably have been created as the equivalent of a post-Flood twenty year old male. He certainly was not a physical child. And drawn disciples (John 6:44, 65) who would be baptized should be old enough to spiritually serve in the spiritual nation of Israel—they should be young adults or older.

Nicodemus didn’t understand how a person could be born a second time when Jesus revealed what was necessary to understand spiritual concepts. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus typifies devout members of spiritual Israel today. This juxtaposition is initially difficult to accept but is absolutely true. The practices of the greater Christian Church are as tradition bound today—these traditions maintained through historical exegesis—as were the practices of the Pharisees in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century. Jesus said that none of the Pharisees kept the Law, the old written code; likewise, the greater Christian Church today doesn’t keep the laws of God

written on disciples' hearts and minds, but labels law-keeping as *legalism*. Unfortunately for the greater Church, Jesus was a legalist, as is the Father. Disciples are to do good (John 5:29), which is hearing Jesus say to keep His commandments, and believing the One who sent Him by putting those words into practice. Jesus as the Logos (John 1:14) spoke the commandments from atop Mount Sinai. The words He spoke were the Father's, then and in His Sermon on the Mount, when He said not to think that He came to abolish the law. Rather, receipt of the Holy Spirit moves the commandments from outside the circumcised Israelite to inside the spiritual Israelite. Disciples are no longer under the law, but have become the tablets upon which the laws of God are written. And as the circumcised nation was first rejected in the wilderness, then rejected in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century, the spiritual nation will first be rejected in the Tribulation, then rejected when its judgment is revealed (Matt 7:21–23). Jesus will deny knowing these teachers of lawlessness because they placed tradition before Scripture and taught spiritual infants to ignore or to erase the laws of God written on their hearts and minds.

The juxtaposition of the out-of-covenant circumcised nation in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century with the out-of-covenant spiritual nation in the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century will withstand close scrutiny. Neither understood/understands the spiritual birth process; for the Church has assigned personhood to the Breath [*Pneuma*] of God, which Jesus compared to wind (John 3:8). Indeed, the person using *pneumatic* tools realizes that his or her tools are powered by moving air, not by a little person inside them. When the Breath of God filled the 120 on Pentecost and three thousand received spiritual birth (Acts chptr 2), it came with “a sound like a mighty rushing wind” (v. 2). Prior to spiritual birth, human beings are *psuche* and *soma*, physical breath and body (Matt 10:28). When He sent the twelve out, Jesus assigned to His disciples' physical breath the qualities that pertain to spiritual breath, for His disciples did not receive the Holy Spirit until He breathed on them following His Ascension and return (John 20:22). However, after spiritual birth, disciples are *psuche*, *pneuma*, and *soma* (1 Thess 5:23). They have received additional life through receiving the Breath of God; they have been born a second time, or born of spirit [*pneuma*].

Spiritual birth only comes with receipt of the Breath of God, the Spirit [*Pneuma*] Holy [*Alion*], just as physical birth comes with the infant human being breathing on his or her own. A human infant isn't *born* until he or she leaves the womb, thereby severing the umbilical cord through which he or she had received life from his or her mother's breath. Likewise, a human infant growing to maturity in the Church lives spiritually on his or her spiritual mother's breath. This person isn't born of God until he or she receives the Breath of the Father—a person has no spiritual life until born of Spirit.

Again, human life begins with conception inside the womb of the mother. This life receives its mother's breath as it develops; this life will not breathe on its own until born. Likewise, an infant human being or a small child who hasn't yet developed the mental maturity to ask for, and to receive spiritual judgment is as a spiritual fetus in the womb of its mother, the Church. This infant or small child doesn't yet possess his or her own spiritual breath. Rather, this child relies upon the breath of the collective saints in which he or she wiggles through services, and needs to use the bathroom at inopportune times, thereby causing his or her physical mother to miss hearing part of the sermon, for his or her spiritual instruction and understanding. At some point in the future, the child will be born from above, the date of this birth determined by God the Father, not by the Church or by the child's physical parents or by the child. The child's physical maturation process will then foreshadow the newly-born spiritual infant's spiritual maturation. In all things, the physical precedes the spiritual, and the visible reveals the invisible. An adult human being doesn't

appear as a spiritual infant, but all spiritual infants will appear as adult human beings, with the entirety of this son of God's spiritual maturation to be spent in a body of flesh.

To summarize the above: judgment today is upon the household of God (1 Pet 4:17), the holy nation of spiritual Israel (1 Pet 2:9). The ritual by which an infant son of a physical Israelite was made part of this once holy nation was through circumcision on the eighth day. Therefore, since the invisible holy nation of spiritual Israel has no physical markers, or determiners, but consists of all who have been born of Spirit (Rom 8:9) which comes through the receipt of the Breath of God the Father, baptism replaces physical circumcision as the ritual of inclusion. Baptism makes a spiritual Israelite infant a member of the household of God through the invitation of judgment. Circumcision is of the heart and soul/mind (Deu 30:6), not of physical foreskins. This spiritual circumcision comes from writing the laws of God on the heart and mind of a newly drawn disciple through receipt of the Holy Spirit (Jer 31:33 & Heb 8:10) as a condition of the second covenant mediated by Christ Jesus. It doesn't come through any physical custom or practice of human beings. No man is able to order God to give a person spiritual birth.

The circumcised nation of Israel was made the holy nation of God when this people accepted the terms of the Sinai covenant (Exod 19:5–6). However, the nation failed to (1) obey the voice of YHWH, and to (2) keep the covenant of YHWH (v. 5). Jesus said that none of the Pharisees kept the law Moses gave them (John 7:19 — compare with Deu 30:11 where Moses said the commandment to obey the voice of YHWH Israel's Elohim and to keep His commandments and statutes written in this book of the Law [verse 10] was not too hard for Israel to do). Jesus also told the Pharisees that if they would not hear Moses and the Prophets, they wouldn't hear one raised from the dead. So this physical nation was rejected. The covenant that established the circumcised nation as holy to God was abolished (Eph 2:15 & Heb 8:13). But the abruptness of one covenant ending and another being established became a seamless transition through receipt of spiritual birth (i.e., the Holy Spirit) following baptism being the bridge between the circumcised nation being holy and any human being becoming a holy spiritual Israelite. Israel is the woman of Revelation chapter 12. She goes from being the circumcised nation that gave birth to the One who will rule the world, Christ Jesus (v. 5), to the spiritual nation who gives birth to offspring that keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus (v. 17).

The above needs explained: spiritual birth initially came to ten of Jesus' disciples when He breathed on them, and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). Each of these ten had been selected beforehand by God the Father (John 17:6); they had been individually called by Jesus (John 15:16). And the Holy Spirit or spiritual birth was promised to them before Jesus was taken (John 14:16), so they would not be left as orphans. These ten, who would again be twelve, are spiritually as the sons of the patriarch Jacob were physically. They are the foundation of spiritual Israel, the chief cornerstone of which is Christ Jesus. In them, the circumcised nation and the spiritual nation overlap, with this overlapping continuing through the birth of the three thousand on Pentecost when the gathered disciples were filled, or empowered by the Holy Spirit as a wife is filled by her husband. These three thousand were all part of the holy circumcised nation prior to this nation slaying the Covenantor on Calvary; they were Jews from around the region. And Peter tells 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 2:38). These three thousand are part of circumcised Israel foreknown by God (Rom 11:2, 7). They were seeking God to the extent that they had journeyed from their homelands to Jerusalem to fulfill the requirement of the

Law that three times a year all males shall appear before the Lord in the place where He chooses (Deu 16:16). They were in Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Weeks.

After writing that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Rom 10:13), Paul writes, "But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have not heard?" (v. 14). Herein is the dilemma: only circumcised Israel had been given the Law and knew of the Lord. Only circumcised Israel was, when Christ was crucified, in a position to call on the name of the Lord—and this nation took onto itself responsibility for slaying Christ (Matt 27:25). It had to do so to utterly abolish the covenant by which circumcised Israel was made the holy nation of God. It had been divorced when sent into national captivity, but the Lord was not free to marry another bride until death ended the covenant (Rom 7:1–4). Either the entire circumcised nation had to die, or the Lord who had married the faithless woman [nation] had to die. On Calvary, the Logos or Spokesman who had uttered the living words from atop Mt. Sinai died according to the desire of the leaders of the circumcised nation. However, this faithless nation will be returned to a covenant relationship with God (Ezek 16:59–60 & Jer 31:31–34) after the fullness of the Gentiles have come to belief (Rom 11:25). This fullness is not far in the future, but near at hand. This fullness will come during the Tribulation, when all Israelites who keep the Sabbath will do so by faith in God. Of the formerly faithless nation, a fullness of the twelve tribes will receive the Holy Spirit after demonstrated obedience. They are foreshadowed by the twelve Paul baptizes at Ephesus (Acts 19:1–7).

The circumcised Israelites who were foreknown by God when the holy nation of God was confined to the circumcised nation have long since died: they died in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century. The fullness of the twelve tribes—the 144,000 who follow the lamb wherever He leads (Rev 14:1–5)—who are spiritual virgins in that they are not a part of any Christian fellowship remain to be identified through their covering of obedience. The Holy Spirit came upon the former on Pentecost at Jerusalem following baptism. The Holy Spirit came upon the latter through the teaching of Paul at Ephesus following baptism. The commonality of these two occasions of empowerment by the Holy Spirit is obedience or repentance to God prior to baptism. They receive the Holy Spirit as Abraham did, and as promised by the second covenant mediated by Moses (Deu 29:1) in that obedience precedes spiritual birth (Deu 30:6). Their spiritual covering for sin is their long-time demonstrated obedience by faith to God. Therefore, they need only to acknowledge with their mouths that Jesus is Lord, and believe in their hearts that God raised Him from the dead (Rom 10:6–10).

Obedience will be the spiritual covering of all Israelites following the Church's liberation from bondage to sin at the second Passover, the event that initiates the seven years of tribulation. Christ will then no longer bear the sins of Israel; the fullness of iniquity will have come, and with its coming will come liberation from sin. So He will have no reason to bear the sins of spiritual Israel. The Church (the saints collectively) will no longer be in bondage to the appetites of the flesh, but will be able to walk blameless before God as Abraham was expected to walk after his name was changed to reveal him receiving the Breath of God. However, prophecy and typology discloses that the Church will become the rejected nation of God. The daily [sacrifice] will be stopped when the Church rebels against God 2300 days before Christ returns to restore all things.

The above has been written before: spiritual Israel will believe the ten witnesses—rather than the two—that claim the giant of obedience to God is too large to defeat. They will persuade this spiritual nation to go along with the man of perdition's attempt to change times and the law (Dan 7:25). They will worship God on the day following the Sabbath, just

as the rejected circumcised nation attempted to enter the promised land the day following its rejection. And they will all die in the spiritual wilderness of Sin because of their unbelief that becomes disobedience (Heb 4:6). They are unable to enter God's rest because they will not keep His Sabbath rest. They are hypocrites: they know to do right, and they have the power to do right, yet they return to spiritual Egypt where they formerly served the spiritual king of the South as a slave nation. And they are replaced by the other half of humanity that enters God's rest as their spiritual children. These children are baptized by Spirit when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28) halfway through seven years of tribulation; when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ (Rev 11:15 & Dan 7:9–14); when Satan is cast from heaven (Rev 12:9–10) and can no longer reign as the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2). Therefore, all who endure to the end shall be saved (Matt 24:13). And this is the good news that must be proclaimed to the world as a witness to all nations before the end comes (v. 14).

The good news that all who endure to the end shall be saved is especially grim news to the greater Christian Church of today, which won't be bodily raptured to heaven to escape the Tribulation, but will be rejected eight months or so into the Tribulation because of its unbelief. Disciples, when counseling for baptism, need to be forewarned about this prophesied rejection. They will have the power to walk blameless before God as Abraham walked blameless by faith when liberated and their obedience is their only covering for sin. If they will walk blameless, they will live. They will become the oil and the wine that Sin, the third horseman of the Apocalypse, cannot harm—they will be, if they follow the two witnesses, as Joshua and Caleb were. They will lead the children of the spiritual nation to victory, to glorification. If, however, they join the greater Church in rebellion, in the great falling away (2 Thess 2:3), they will experience a delusion that will cause them not to repent of their lawlessness. Christ will not be crucified anew. He will not cover their sins a second time with His blood. They will have committed the unpardonable sin, for they will have blasphemed the Holy Spirit by returning to sin when they have, through the Holy Spirit, been liberated from sin. And they cannot repent because of the strong delusion sent by God over this rejected spiritual nation.

Between the two occurrences of empowerment by the Holy Spirit following baptism lies the example of Cornelius and his household, where empowerment by the Holy Spirit precedes baptism. This is the model for the spiritual nation until the fullness of iniquity results in the liberation of Israel. A person receives the Holy Spirit and spiritual birth prior to baptism. Receipt of the Holy Spirit is necessary to cause the person to leave the world. Thus, since Cornelius (Acts 10:44–48), spiritual birth has preceded baptism in the name of Jesus Christ with the notable exception of the twelve baptized by Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19:1–7)<sup>1</sup>.

The Apostle Paul's long running battle with the circumcision faction was over understanding the spiritual birth process. The circumcision faction's contention was that a spiritual Israelite must first become a physical Israelite before becoming part of the holy

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<sup>1</sup> The twelve who were baptized at Ephesus foreshadow the 144,000 spiritual virgins that follow the Lamb of God wherever He leads (Rev 14:1–4). They are those who walked blameless before God when they had no spiritual covering for their sins other than their obedience throughout the first half of the Tribulation. The literary trope that has precluded understanding these chapters of Revelation is the use of attributes as appearance. The glorified Jesus doesn't truly appear as a Lamb (Rev 1:13–16) even though His role in the plan of God is as the paschal lamb for the household of God—His role has determined His appearance in both chapters 5 and 14. Likewise, the role or attributes of every other living being described in these chapters have become the being's appearance. Therefore, the number "144,000" functions as the attribute of completeness. It might or might not be a real number.

spiritual nation. Baptism had been part of the traditional procedure by which a proselyte became part of the circumcised nation. A male was circumcised, baptized, then expected to give an offering at the temple in Jerusalem. This proselyte was made a part of the physical nation through the action of cutting away the natural covering that symbolized Adam's disobedience to God that resulted in God covering Adam's nakedness with skin garments (Gen 3:21). The presence of the male foreskin symbolized beast-like ignorance of God. The proselyte made himself symbolically naked before God through circumcision, with his only covering now being his obedience to God. Receipt of the law conveyed the knowledge necessary to obey God. Thus, circumcision caused the man to be as Adam was in Eden before disobedience produced awareness of his nakedness. Again, Elohim covered this nakedness with the skins of animals; circumcision symbolically removes the man's skin garment.

Circumcision produced the need to walk blameless before God as Abraham was required to do (Gen 17:1) and did (Gen 26:5). Abraham didn't walk blameless through perfection, but by faith. Abraham did what God told him to do when God told him to do it (Heb 11:8), not the following day as in the case of the rejected nation that left Egypt (Num chptr 14)<sup>2</sup>. Abraham received the Holy Spirit<sup>3</sup> with the covenant by which circumcision separated him and his physical seed from all other peoples. So the argument for physical circumcision includes the need for Abraham's seed to walk blameless before God. This argument makes Christ's sacrifice as the paschal lamb for the household of God meaningless. A physically circumcised Israelite's covering for sin is his obedience to the laws of God. Abraham, as Abram, practiced obedience through faith for decades before spiritual birth was offered to him. He demonstrated his ability to obey God before God offered him salvation. Thus, when the offer of salvation was made, God was fairly certain that Abraham would obey Him in whatever He asked. This certainty was confirmed when Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac. God said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me" (Gen 22:12). The implication of the text is that God tested Abraham to determine with absolute certainty Abraham's obedience by faith.

Under the second covenant mediated by Moses (Deu 29:1), spiritual circumcision, a euphemistic expression for spiritual birth through receipt of the Breath of God, followed demonstrated obedience to God (Deu 30:1-6). The Israelite who, therefore, received spiritual birth was expected to "obey the voice of the Lord [who spoke the Ten Commandments], to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you [the Israelite] turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul [*naphesh*, or mind]" (v. 10). For circumcised Israelites, receipt of the Holy Spirit and spiritual birth followed demonstrated obedience to God. It never preceded obedience,

<sup>2</sup> The rejection of the circumcised nation in the wilderness of Sin foreshadows the rejection of the spiritual nation 2300 days before Christ returns. The issue over which rejection occurs will be the Sabbath of God, which the spiritual nation of Israel will attempt to enter the following day. The physical nation was rejected because of unbelief (Heb 3:19), which became disobedience (Heb 4:6). Spiritual Israel will be rejected in the Tribulation because of unbelief that becomes rebellion (2 Thess 2:3). Rejection meant death to the physical nation, this death coming through forty years of wandering in the wilderness of Sin. Rejection will mean spiritual death to spiritual Israel through God sending a great delusion over those who didn't love righteousness (2 Thess 2:11-12) enough to walk blameless by faith before Him after their liberation from bondage to sin.

<sup>3</sup> The addition of voiced breath through the /ah/ radical to Abraham's and to Sarah's names reveals when these two received the Breath of God [*Pneuma 'Alion*], and spiritual birth.



for no spiritual covering existed for a circumcised Israelite except his obedience. With spiritual birth came the expectation of walking blameless before God. If a person didn't, the person condemned himself to the lake of fire. Thus, God didn't offer salvation through receipt of the Holy Spirit to individuals prior to demonstrated obedience. These individuals were then tested. In the case of King David, he miserably failed a test, which probably wasn't of God as Abraham's was. When Nathan brings David's sin to his awareness, David repents. He writes, "Hide your face from my sins, / and blot out all my iniquities. / Create in me a clean heart, O God, / and renew a right spirit within me. / Cast me not away from your presence, / and take not your Holy Spirit from me" (Ps 51:9-11). King David had the Holy Spirit, which Jesus confirms (Mark 12:36). So salvation was offered to the patriarchs, and to circumcised Israel upon long-term demonstrated obedience to God. It wasn't offered, though, until God was quite certain that the person would continue to walk blameless before him.

The circumcision faction didn't understand that physically cutting away a person's natural covering of ignorance (Rom 5:13) created the need for the person to physically walk blameless before God. Under the second covenant mediated by Moses, the Holy Spirit wasn't given until the person practiced walking blameless and perfected this walk. However, the better promise of the spiritual second covenant mediated by the glorified Christ is spiritual birth through receipt of the Breath of the Father prior to having perfected walking blameless before God.

Since Calvary, the Holy Spirit has been given to drawn and chosen human beings prior to these persons perfecting their walk with God (1 John 1:7-10). They sin, or commit lawlessness. But they have a spiritual covering akin to a garment of animal skins for their lawlessness. This garment is Christ Jesus (Gal 3:27) through baptism. Spiritual birth doesn't follow baptism, but precedes baptism. There is no need to put on Christ until after the person is a spiritual Israelite. If a Gentile puts on Christ, the Gentile remains a Gentile when lifted from his or her symbolic death—again, baptism symbolizes the death of the old or natural man [personage]. This Gentile didn't magically become a spiritual Israelite; a spiritual corpse doesn't receive life through symbolic death. Human beings are spiritually as Adam was physically prior to Adam receiving the breath of life and becoming a breathing creature; human beings are spiritual corpses prior to receiving the Breath of God. So, if the person were not a spiritual Israelite prior to being baptized, the person merely got wet. Those individuals who are spiritually covered by their ignorance and lack of spiritual life have no need for Christ, as a garment, to cover their nakedness.

Baptism is necessary as the primary symbolism expressing a person putting on Christ as the person's daily sacrifice for sin. This symbolism is also expressed in the annual taking of the Passover sacraments of the bread and the wine, the body and blood of Christ Jesus.. Therefore, baptism replaces circumcision as the inclusionary ritual by which a spiritual Israelite infant becomes a member of the holy nation of God. A person drawn and called from the world is spiritually as a Hebrew infant of less than eight days age until the person has been baptized. Like a human infant of less than eight days age, this spiritual infant has little need for a spiritual covering; this spiritual infant is really unable to commit sin or lawlessness in the spiritual realm.

Since judgment is today upon the household of God, baptism, then, becomes the asking for spiritual judgment to be placed on the person. This decision to ask for judgment should not be made without weighing its consequences. But spiritual growth beyond that comparable to the physical growth of an eight-day-old infant will not occur until baptism although a person can certainly practice walking blameless for God without having put on

Christ. But this is all the person is doing—practicing. Until judgment comes upon the person, the person will not either be glorified, or spiritually condemned. The person hasn't confirmed or accepted God's offer of salvation as part of the firstfruits of the harvest of the earth. And if the person never accepts this offer in his or her physical lifetime, the person will be resurrected to judgment in the great White Throne Judgment, thereby losing out on his or her chance to be part of the firstfruits. If, however, the person accepts judgment, his or her judgment will be revealed upon Christ's return. The person **will not** take part in the great White Throne Judgment; for every person comes under judgment only once. Every person has only one chance to receive salvation. The advantage the firstfruits have is judgment over an extended period, with Christ bearing their sins as they strive to walk blameless before God.

The invisible nature of spiritual birth is revealed through narrative, through Scripture, in the story of Adam's physical birth and Jesus' spiritual birth and glorification. The three baptisms of the earth (Matt 3:11)—by water into physical death (Gen 6:13); by Spirit into spiritual life in a physical body (Matt 3:16; Joel 2:28 & Acts 2:17); by fire into a body of spiritual life (Rev 21:1)—represent the three steps in the spiritual creation of the sons of God. These three steps are followed in this order for the main crop, or wheat harvest of the earth during the great White Throne Judgment; their physical death precludes their need to be baptized into death. The three steps were also followed in the above order by Jesus, who told John the Baptist, when John objected to baptizing Jesus, that, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15). Jesus was born as a physical Israelite; He was born into the holy nation of God. Likewise, His disciples were physical Israelites prior to receiving spiritual birth through receipt of the Breath of God (John 20:22). So too were the three thousand who received spiritual birth on that day of Pentecost following Calvary. And what is observed is that inclusion into the household of God prior to receiving the Holy Spirit, whether by being a circumcised Israelite prior to the Sinai Covenant being abolished (Eph 2:15 & Heb 8:13) or by entering judgment as the main crop harvest of the earth, causes the symbolism or actuality of physical death to precede receipt of the Holy Spirit. This is what typology reveals about the 144,000 that follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They are baptized into repentance for sin—after the manner of John's baptism—prior to receiving spiritual birth (Acts 19:1–7). During the first half of the Tribulation, they will demonstrate this repentance through obedience to God—they will keep the Sabbath and the other commandments when the man of perdition attempts to change times and seasons. And they will receive the Holy Spirit following their obedience because of the baptism of the twelve at Ephesus. They will be the fullness of the natural vine receiving salvation. They are the hope of today's circumcised nation, those who have practiced walking blameless before God, those who are willing to continue walking blameless when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Messiah. They will follow Christ Jesus wherever He leads. But they will not begin following Christ until after the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:26–30).

The 144,000 are not disciples whose sins are presently covered by Christ. They become disciples after spiritual Israel is liberated from bondage to sin; they become disciples during the Tribulation. Therefore, they fall outside of the pattern of birth that exists between Cornelius (Acts chptr 10) and the second Passover liberation of spiritual Israel from the law of sin and death that dwells in their members (Rom 7:25). Thus, teachers of spiritual Israel who use their representation in the twelve Paul baptized at Ephesus to teach that the Holy Spirit is received following baptism and the laying on of hands do not understand spiritual birth; they are novices in the faith. They need to be silent until they mature.

Between Cornelius and his household's baptism by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:45) and when the Son of Man is revealed through the sudden slaughtered of uncovered firstborns, both of the Christian Church and of the world, the holy nation of spiritual Israel consists of those individual who are drawn from the world by the Father. This drawing causes the person to be born anew, or born again, or born-from-above—all three expressions are apropos. And this drawing is what causes the person to leave the world and cease being hostile to God (Rom 8:7).

Spiritual Israel, the holy nation of God (1 Pet 2:9), is an invisible nation. Today, it has no external marker such as physical circumcision, or even keeping the Sabbath when the remainder of the world attempts to enter God's rest on the following day<sup>4</sup>. Anyone can be a spiritual Israelite. The only qualifier is spiritual birth, which is of the mind. Therefore, baptism must necessarily follow spiritual birth through receipt of the Holy Spirit. Only when a person has identified him or herself as being drawn by God through losing his or her natural (received from Satan's broadcast as the prince of the power of the air [Eph 2:2]) hostility toward God.

To clarify and for emphasis: since Cornelius's baptism by Spirit and until the liberation of spiritual Israel from bondage to sin, receipt of the Holy Spirit precedes water baptism. Newly born spiritual infants must identify themselves to the Body of Christ before they will be known, or identified. They will remain as infants of less than eight-days of age until they are baptized, which is their asking for judgment to come upon them. They do not, however, receive the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. No direct or physical transfer of the Holy Spirit is required after a category of persons receive baptism by Spirit. This explains why Peter and John had to lay hands on the converts of Philip in Samaria. These Samaritans were Gentiles; they were not of the holy nation of circumcised Israel. Gentiles had not yet received baptism of Spirit. They will not receive such baptism until it occurs in Cornelius' household. Therefore, just as Jesus had to directly transfer the Holy Spirit to His disciples by breathing on them (John 20:22) prior to when circumcised Israel was baptized by Spirit on Pentecost, Peter and John have to directly transfer the Holy Spirit to Gentile converts in Samaria.

It is theological nonsense to insist that the Holy Spirit is received through someone born of Spirit laying hands on a newly baptized disciple. No direct transfer has been needed since Cornelius. None will be needed until Israel is liberated from spiritual bondage. None will be needed after Satan is cast from heaven. So only for the three and half years between the liberation of the Church and the liberation of the world will it again be necessary to directly transfer the Holy Spirit to those individuals not of the circumcised nation who demonstrate repentance through obedience to God. This will be a repeat of John and Peter going to Samaria; thus, John and Peter symbolize Joshua and Caleb.

So baptism at this time should be thought of and taught to be the necessary ritual by which a born anew disciple invites judgment upon him or herself. This foremost issue is to be stressed when counseling a spiritual infant. Following the disciple's invitation of judgment will come the disciple's spiritual growth, perhaps extremely rapid growth, but this growth

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<sup>4</sup> The Sabbath will mark who is of God, and who has been deceived by the lawless one during the first half of the Tribulation. As such, Sabbath-observance becomes the marker separating those human beings who are of God from those who are of Babylon. Therefore, Sabbath-observance forms the mirror-image shadow of the mark of the beast [the tattoo of the Cross] during the second half of the Tribulation. Sabbath-observance marks the people of God while Satan still reigns over humanity during the first half of the Tribulation. The mark of the beast identifies those who worship Satan and his angels when the Father and Son reigns over humanity from heaven during the second half of the Tribulation.

will follow the pattern of human maturation. The spiritual infant, following baptism, will experience a spiritual childhood that is revealed through the visible, physical maturing of the person, meaning that the person will mature spiritually in a manner akin to how the person matured physically and mentally. A person mature beyond his or her years physically will, most likely, be a person mature beyond his or her years spiritually. But disciples will experience the spiritual terrible twos, and so on through puberty and young adulthood. Glorification is the person reaching his or her spiritual majority. A person isn't glorified as a baby god, but like Jesus is. The disciple spent his or her spiritual childhood in a body of flesh.

## 2.

When the Father draws a person from the world, three things happen through receipt of spiritual Breath: the person knows God; the person has the laws of God written on his or her heart and mind; the person's sins are forgiven (Jer 31:33–34 & Heb 8:10–12). If the person didn't suddenly know God, the person wouldn't know to seek additional knowledge about God. It is pointless to attempt to prove either that God exists, or that the Bible is the Word of God. Those who are not born of Spirit cannot understand, nor will they want to seek understanding. Those who are born of Spirit know both are true—they know that God exists, and that the Bible is the Word of God. So the first two lessons of most Bible correspondence study courses are superfluous. Questions about the validity of Scripture should be answered from the perspective that the one who asks already knows the answer, but doubts what this person cannot explain knowing. And this is a point that needs remembered: the spiritual infant will seek validation for what the person knows, but cannot explain knowing. Knowledge exists in the person's mind that wasn't previously there. Thus, when reading Scripture, the person ends up validating this newly acquired knowledge. So counseling should stay in the received text. Speculations can wait.

Under the spiritual second covenant, a person is not under the old written code, but still remains under the obligation to live within the laws of God that are now written on the heart and mind of the new disciple. Jesus reveals through two commandments the relationship between the old written code and the inner laws of God (Matt 5:21–22, 27–28). Receipt of the Holy Spirit begins a civil war within the person that pits the inner laws of God written on the heart and mind against the lingering law of sin and death that resides in the flesh. A Christian's walk with God is the story of the disciple fighting this war. If a disciple loses a battle to sin, the disciple needs to repent as King David did. If the disciple surrenders and refuses to continue his or her fight, the disciple will go into the lake of fire. The disciple has determined that he or she is spiritual garbage—judgment is upon the disciple (1 Pet 4:17), and given to the disciple (Deu 30:15). When Jesus returns, He will reveal what the disciple's judgment is (1 Cor 4:5). The disciple knows whether he or she is a hypocrite—and no hypocrite's righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees (Matt 5:20). No hypocrite will enter the kingdom of heaven, in which unity as oneness is a descriptive characteristic.

The new disciple needs to understand that salvation comes with the disciple's invitation of judgment—with baptism. Salvation is not a process. Sanctification, or the condition of being made holy, is not a process. All such teaching is of spiritual novices.

The terminology of conversion that has developed over the past seventeen centuries reveals the Church's long-standing failure to understand the metaphor of breath imparting life. Personhood was assigned to the Breath of God [*Pneuma 'Alion*]. Once this error was formalized at the Council of Nicea (ca. 325), all understanding of the spiritual birth process was precluded. The holy nation of God was taken into captivity by the king of spiritual

Babylon (Isa 14:4–21), just as the physical nation had been taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. Therefore, until a remnant of spiritual Israel was released from Babylon to rebuild the temple in spiritual Jerusalem, no understanding of the spiritual birth process existed. Literally, the spiritual birth process wasn't understood until the time of the end arrived, that point in the spiritual creation process when the prophecies of Daniel were unsealed through the periscope of typology.

Since the spiritual birth process is now better understood, the terminology of conversion needs addressed, for new disciples will hear this terminology uttered from the many novices teaching lawlessness to spiritual Israel. Justification is righteousness. No person is without sin. Abraham who walked blameless before God (Gen 26:5) did so by faith, not by perfection. Whatever God asked of Abraham, Abraham did immediately. But Abraham's faith failed in the matter of Abimelech (Gen chptr 20). He forgot that God could protect him from this king, and he sought to protect himself through telling a half-truth. God had to speak to Abimelech in a dream; God identifies Abraham to the king as a prophet (v. 7). So God covered Abraham's failing in a manner similar to how Jesus bears the sins of spiritual Israel. Therefore, walking blameless by faith before God has always been centered round obedience to God being the desire of the person's heart and mind.

At the conclusion of Revelation, the angel tells John, "Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy" (Rev 22:11). The line is balanced: the evildoer is the opposite of the righteous. Doing evil is the opposite of doing right. The filthy or unclean is the person of the world. The holy is the person of the household of God. There are no degrees, nor middle states. A person is either unclean, or common—or the person is holy, sanctified, set apart by God as a vessel of special use. Sanctification is being made holy. It doesn't come in degrees, nor is it a process. It is the corresponding condition to righteousness that being unclean or common is to being evil through evildoing. And Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment [condemnation]" (John 5:28–29). Doing good is doing what is right, and is the opposite of doing evil. Doing is works, but not works to obtain salvation, which is given to a person through the person having been made holy by being drawn by the Father. This person is then made righteous by Christ Jesus. Sanctification and justification, therefore, are the works of the Father and the Son. No human being can make anything holy to God, including him or herself. Likewise, no human being can make him or herself righteous once the person sins the first time. What a person can do is what Abraham did: walk blameless by faith before God. This is the reasonable expectation of a person. Moses said that this wasn't too hard to do (Deu 30:11). It remains doable today. But it takes practice, which is why after giving a person spiritual life, Christ Jesus bears the person's sins as he or she perfects his or her walk with God (1 John 1:7).

Again, sanctification is not a process. This needs doubly stressed. A person is made holy by being drawn by the Father from the world. The person is made righteous through being called by the Son prior to the person responding by inviting judgment upon him or herself. The person has been made holy, made special, *justified and sanctified* through no activity of his or her own. After being both justified and sanctified, the spiritual infant elects, or doesn't elect to continue growing. The decision to continue growing incorporates being baptized. Since the person wasn't consulted prior to being drawn from the world, the Father doesn't withdraw this justification and sanctification if the person neglects to grow, but rather, places both justification and sanctification on hold until judgment comes upon the person.

Sanctification is a person being made holy through receipt of spiritual birth. Justification is the person putting on Christ as the person's covering for sin. But being made holy and covered by Christ's righteousness should cause the disciple to desire to please God through sacrifice. And the only acceptable sacrifice a person can make to God is humble obedience by faith.

A disciple who has been made holy through receipt of the Holy Spirit knows right from wrong. The laws of God are not far from this person (Deu 30:11–14 & Rom 10:8), but are within this person, written on this person's heart and mind. If this person cannot yet read what is written on his or her heart and mind, the person can look into the mirror of the perfect law of liberty (Jas 1:25)—the Ten Commandments—and see how the person looks externally.

The teaching of sanctification as a process needs to be eradicated. The same goes for teaching that conversion is a process. (*Conversion*, here, becomes another word for sanctification.) The only process that occurs is that of spiritual maturation, foreshadowed by the disciple's physical maturation. And throughout this entire process, the person is justified and sanctified—righteous through putting on Christ, and holy by being drawn from the world.

The born-again disciple who habitually practices evildoing has returned to the world after judgment has come upon the person. No sacrifice remains for this person. The person has only two options: deep repentance followed by bringing forth fruit worthy of repentance, or the lake of fire. The person is as King David was in the matter of Bathsheba. David could not put on Christ's righteousness; he had to return to walking blameless before God by faith through repentance. And his psalm of repentance (Ps 51) provides an example for all spiritual Israelites who have left the covenant for whatever reason[s].

A disciple isn't lost until the disciple dies out of covenant with the Father and the Son. However, after spiritual Israel is liberated from bondage to sin, this holy nation will refuse to enter God's rest because of the nation's unbelief (because the nation believes the report of the ten witnesses that obedience to God was too large of a giant to conquer). God will send a great delusion over this nation that will cause it to die out of covenant. If any of this nation is able to repent, salvation remains possible. The implication of Scripture is, though, that the delusion will not allow any rebel to repent.

Spiritual infants being counseled for baptism need to understand that they are already holy and righteous, but not yet *saved*, for judgment is not upon the disciple. Salvation comes through judgment. No person will be glorified until being judged worthy of salvation, which isn't a matter of perfection, but of willingness to be ruled by God. To walk blameless by faith again means doing what God says to do when He says to do the thing—means hearing the words of Jesus and believing the One who sent Him (John 5:24). To walk blameless before God is to spurn all hypocrisy. If a disciple knows to do right, the disciple is under obligation to do what the disciple knows is right. If the disciple fails to do what he or she knows is right, the disciple will repent and can expect to return to the same decision until the disciple passes the test.

The spiritual infant also needs to understand that God will not truly ask more of the disciple than what he or she is capable of delivering, but that God will always stretch the disciple's abilities. Spiritual growth comes through trials and tests. Job was perfect in all his ways (Job 1:8 & 2:3); yet God allowed him to be severely tested. So tests and trials can come from a disciple's shortcomings, or they can come from the disciple's perfection. Either way, they will come to the sons of God that are spiritually neither male nor female but like angels.

The above needs addressed by those who counsel spiritual infants: the son of God growing in their minds remains housed or tabernacled in a body of flesh that is biologically male or female. This son of God is a spiritual Israelite who is to live as a spiritual Judean, not as a Gentile. Although a son of god is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, free nor bond, the body will live as a Judean, with liberty limited by the demands of the flesh. Christ Jesus is in all things the model for salvation—and Jesus did not live as a Gentile, but as a Judean who rightfully cleansed the temple of God. Disciples are today the temple of God. Jesus will periodically drive Babylon and the things of Babylon out of the disciple's mind, if the disciple doesn't do so regularly. This is what John references: "Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is of the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world" (1 John 2:15–16).

Few disciples retain or achieve great physical wealth when the disciple strives to store treasure in heaven. The *Prosperity Gospel* mixes the physical covenant with the spiritual and as such is a doubly accursed gospel. What disciples can expect physically is to have enough physical means to survive, but not enough to trust in them. The blessings will come—and most will not have financial price tags. A blessing doesn't require a credit check.

Therefore, those drawn individuals who have been made holy, who have been sanctified, are to practice doing what is right under the covering of Christ Jesus' righteousness. There will come a day when the fullness of iniquity removes this covering. Then those who have practiced doing right will walk blameless before God on their own. Those who haven't practiced, but have squandered their practice time will fall flat on their faces with all of heaven watching. And as human parents are proud and happy when their infants first walk on their own, so will be God when His sons first walk blameless before Him without the covering or support of their elder brother, Christ Jesus. The Tribulation will see those first tottering steps taken. By the middle of the Tribulation, these sons of God will lead a holy nation into war against Satan and his angels who have been cast into time—and they will prevail just as the children of the circumcised nation that left Egypt did under Joshua and Caleb. They will defeat giants, the last of whom will be death and the grave.

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