

Beauties of the Truth

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Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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Women's Role in the Church Today

As one examines the biblical account of the province of women both in the religious affairs of ancient Israel and in the early Christian church, it becomes evident that certain limitations were imposed. Clear differences emerge in the responsibilities assigned to the sexes, with the man consistently given a leading role and the woman a subordinate place. How are we to account for these differences?

HUMAN TRADITION OR DIVINE INTENTION?

The long held conservative view accepts all of this as part of God's arrangement and specific intention. But another explanation that has grown rapidly in acceptance in more recent years seems to better fit the modern concept of equality of the sexes. It is that these differences in religious roles are due merely to cultural traditions of the period, based largely upon Jewish values which themselves have fluctuated and been subject to varied interpretation by their own authorities. Hence, according to this view, today's practice in the church should not be limited by such traditions, and fully equal privileges of service should be accorded to all so disposed, regardless of gender.

However, if the biblical pattern of a lesser share in religious service is attributed merely to a cultural context, then a number of provocative questions present themselves, which need to be addressed. For example, how are we to explain:

(1) That under the Mosaic Law Covenant, given directly by God more than 16 centuries preceding the New Testament, women were ineligible from becoming priests or underpriests and could not take part in the Levitical services? (Paul alludes directly to this in defending his own strong teaching on this subject - **1 Corinthians 14:34**)

The High Priest Aaron and his sons were selected directly by God to minister to Him in the priestly office. (**Exodus 28:1,2,40,41**) Under the Law arrangement, only male Levites could actively serve in the Tabernacle and Temple ritual sacrifices. (Later synagogue worship was based on this pattern and could be led only by adult male rabbis.) The Law on which these provisions were based did not derive from Jewish custom, but was received by Moses directly from God (**Exodus 24:4-8; Deuteronomy 5:3; 16:3**). That the Law stemmed directly from God's commands is repeatedly emphasized in the Old Testament accounts. (**Deuteronomy 6:20-25, Deuteronomy 10:12,13**) Every matter of consequence, particularly that pertaining to worship, was covered by the Law and not left to individual judgment or practice.

(2) That Jesus, despite direct statements that he loved the honorable women who ministered to him (such as Mary and Martha - **John 11:5**) and the high regard evidenced towards women in his teachings and relationships, did not select any from among them in choosing his twelve apostles or evidently the seventy evangelists who were sent out later? (These latter were "publicly appointed" by Christ - **Luke 10:1**)

(3) That in the early church, almost without exception, we do not hear of women serving as "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers;" specially given by the Lord "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"? (**Ephesians 4:11,12, 1Corinthians 12:28**)

(4) Also in the early church, that the elders or pastors, elected by a church assembly (or "appointed" by raising hands in the congregation) were always limited to men? Why were women excluded from being such active servants in leadership and formal teaching responsibilities?. (Thus **Titus 1:5-9, 1Timothy 3:1-7**)

(5) That the Apostle Paul could maintain that his teaching on this subject (that women be "silent" in the churches and assume a subordinate role to qualified men) was not based on his own personal opinion (or customs of the time), but on the commandment he had received from the Lord? (**1 Corinthians 14:34-37, 1 Timothy 2:11,12**)

A SEEMING PARADOX

Our understanding is that these limitations to the service of women go beyond mere cultural traditions and were specifically commanded of God. However, they were designed to apply only in the formal teaching atmosphere of the church and public religious services. In every other way, the sisters are privileged to participate in worship and praise, and in "labor in the Lord" to the full extent of their capability. They are to be "helpers" and "church servants" in varied aspects of the ministry. (**Romans 16:1-3**) This includes assisting in various witnessing activities, comforting those with special needs, entertaining brethren at convention gatherings, and the like. The sisters may be active participants in Bible studies and in testimony meetings. And of course, they are especially gifted in working with children.

It is also evident that God is not a respecter of persons in His calling and He makes no distinction as to race, color, sex or nationality. (**Galatians 3:28**) All have the "one hope;" the "one Lord" and the "one faith". (**Ephesians 4:4,5**) Both men and women alike are baptized into the "one body" of which Jesus is the head. They both share in the "glory, honor and immortality" (**Romans 2:7**) to be awarded to the faithful in the "First Resurrection." Both will be "priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years". (**Revelation 20:6**) And there will be no differences at all in the eternal ages to come.

Why, then, it may be asked, should God have placed any restrictions whatever on the present services of sisters in the Gospel church and upon the women of ancient Israel? If this is not due to any discrimination on God's part, and yet He has clearly set forth limitations on the role of women, how are we to understand this seeming paradox? The answer is provided by the Apostle Paul, who clearly shows that any differences along the line of gender in church responsibilities are **due merely to the symbology** represented by the respective sexes.

THE SCRIPTURAL ANSWER

In **Ephesians 5:22-32**, Paul outlines the beautiful relationship between Christ and the church, revealing the biblical pattern wherein the man symbolizes Christ as the head and the woman symbolizes the church as his body. (See also **1 Corinthians 11:3**) By divine appointment and order, the church is always to be subservient to her Lord and respectful of his headship. It would simply not be appropriate for the church ever to attempt to teach her Lord and Master. Even so, the woman, who symbolizes the church, is not to assume teaching authority over the man, as it would violate this higher relationship instituted of God. In carrying out this picture, only the man is permitted formally to preach and teach along spiritual lines in the services of the congregation.

When this principle is understood, it illuminates the seeming discrepancy in the divine commandment of distinguishing unique roles of the sexes in the church. The man and the woman are being used to portray

higher and deeper truths in God's arrangement, reflecting the special relationship existing between Christ and the church. From this standpoint, it has well been said that "no sister need feel slighted and no brother may feel puffed up by this Scripture regulation - rather, all will have in mind that the Lord is the only teacher and that the brethren dare not utter wisdom of their own, but merely present to others that which their Head sets forth as the Truth" (*Scripture Studies* Volume 6, page 270).

FINAL THOUGHTS

Whereas the foregoing represents the normal practice and understanding within the Bible Student fellowship, we should note that special circumstances may warrant modifications for the general spiritual welfare of the group. In the makeup of a local congregation, there simply may not be any qualified brothers available to lead the meetings. The male gender in itself should not be used as the sole criterion, if such person is not fully consecrated, spiritually knowledgeable and suited for the task. In such a situation, it would be entirely proper for a capable sister, mature and grounded in the faith, to accept the leadership role for however long required. Specific counsel covering such eventuality has been provided by our Pastor (see Reprints page 1902).

Finally, returning to the Apostle Paul's inspired explanation of this whole subject, we see how it removes the seeming paradox, demonstrates God's purpose in the arrangement, and thus to that extent sheds light on the "great mystery... concerning Christ and the Church". (**Ephesians 5:32**) In this we may find satisfaction and contentment, to the glory of our God.

- Charles Redeker

Say Ye Not, A Confederacy (Isaiah 8:12)

These words condemned the conspiracy of Pekah of Israel with Rezin of Syria against Jerusalem in the days of Ahaz of Judah. Yet the last kings of Judah could not avoid the same temptation to trust the arm of foreigners and doubt the arm of the Lord. The final years of the kingdom of Judah were plagued by relations with neighboring kingdoms to the south and north. But neither declarations of independence nor alliances with Gentile nations could avoid the divine judgment which resulted from internal compromise of their Mosaic law covenant and the throne of David.

Considerable effort is made to date the Kings of Judah and Israel in history. However, it is important first to understand events and circumstances that flow through history and scripture, then upon this basis to mark the strength of prophetic time. In this regard we will examine the momentous era that marked the last five kings of Judah.

JOSIAH

This history is recorded in **2 Kings 22-23** and **2 Chronicles 34-35**. Josiah was the last of the "good" kings of Judah. "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left". (**2 Kings 22:2**) Josiah came to the throne of Judah at the tender age of eight. In sharp contrast to his father, Amon, and his grandfather, Manasseh, he matured into a ruler second only to David in fame and praise. Indeed, "Before him there was no king like him ... nor did any like him arise after him". (**2 Kings 23:25**) King Manasseh had even offered a son as a burnt offering on one of the many pagan altars he built throughout Judah. Amon served the idols that his father served and reigned only two years before his own servants murdered him.

Only gradually did Josiah come to affirm his faith in the Lord and his obedience to the law of God given to Moses. He first began to seek the God of David at the age of 16. Later, when he was 20, Josiah condemned polytheistic religious practices in Judah and began to destroy pagan shrines in the high places. At the ages of 26, he financed the restoration of Jerusalem's temple with money collected from the people at the entrance.

It was then that the priest Hilkiah discovered the book of the Law in the long-neglected temple precincts. Scholars debate whether the book was the entire Pentateuch or just Deuteronomy. Nevertheless, it was the find of the century. When Josiah heard the words of the Law read by his secretary, Shaphan, he rent his garments in despair. The reason for his grief was probably the curses and commentary on them in **Deuteronomy 28:15-68**. The prophetess Huldah confirmed that the nation would indeed suffer devastation owing to its history of disobedience.

Perhaps with some hope of averting this doom, Josiah called Judah together to hear God's word read publicly and led his people in renewing their covenant commitment to the Lord. After the reading, Josiah launched a thorough religious reform and then prepared a Passover feast at the temple to symbolize the reconsecration of Judah. For the first time in many generations, the whole nation of Judah celebrated a Passover.

Notwithstanding, the judgments of God's determination stood fast against temporary and superficial reform. "The Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath... And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there". (**2 Kings 23:26-27**) For his own faithfulness, Josiah was spared seeing this destruction of his nation and city. "Throe eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place". (**2 Kings 22:20**)

This sparing occurred due to his early demise. Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, sought a passage through his territories on an expedition against the Chaldeans. But Josiah refused to allow a march of the Egyptian army through his domain and prepared to resist the attempt by force of arms. Though Necho claimed to be on a mission from **God, Josiah did** not accept such words of a foreign King. Some historians conjecture that Josiah's resistance was a political move to enlist the favor of the Assyrians. But the Bible attributes no such foreign motives to him. We can only assume he did not want to compromise the autonomy of his country in this struggle between two super powers. In the battle that ensued at Megiddo Josiah was wounded and died. Then Necho marched on to Carchemish by the Euphrates. Josiah was taken to Jerusalem and buried. There he was mourned by Jeremiah and the whole nation, but not condemned for his final decision to resist alliances. In death, he was spared the final scenes that would carry out God's judgments against the nation.

JEHOAHAZ

The sons of Josiah were first Johanan (apparently died young), then Jehoiakim (also named Eliakim), afterward Jehoahaz (also named Shallum in **Jeremiah 22:11**), and the youngest, Zedekiah (also named Mattaniah). Jehoahaz was not first in the line of succession, but "the people of the land" chose him over his older brother. (**2 Kings 23:30**) Jehoahaz was 23 when he began to reign and immediately returned to the worship of his pagan gods. These evil ways received quick retribution. He only reigned three months in Jerusalem when Necho returned from campaigns on the Euphrates and ordered Jehoahaz to be arrested in Jerusalem and brought to his headquarters at Riblah. Jehoahaz was taken to Egypt and died there without ever seeing his homeland again.

Due to his short reign of only three months, Jehoahaz is not usually counted in the addition of years for the Kings. Henceforth the kings of Judah were subjected to one or another of its powerful neighbors.

JEHOIAKIM

The young deposed king Jehoahaz was replaced by his older brother Eliakim, renamed Jehoiakim. Necho apparently rejected any king not appointed by himself and so named Jehoiakim to the throne, emphasizing that Judah was then firmly under the thumb of Egypt. The change of names is significant of his dependence and loss of liberty, as heathen kings were accustomed to give new names to those who entered their service. Necho also extracted a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold in bitter revenge for his previous repulsion. (**2 Kings 23:34-35, 2 Chronicles 36:3-4**)

The 1st, 4th, 8th and 11th years of Jehoiakim's reign were significant milestones in the further decline of the southern kingdom of Judah. At first Jehoiakim remained a vassal of Egypt, which effectively controlled all the territory north through Syria. Using slave labor, Jehoiakim expanded the royal palace in the Egyptian style and was condemned by the prophet Jeremiah of murder and theft, for "practicing oppression and extortion". (**Jeremiah 22:13-19**) All this was styled as "that which was evil in the sight of the Lord". (**2 Kings 23:37**)

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the balance of power shifted between Egypt and Babylon. Pharaoh Necho went up again to Carchemish on the Euphrates and this time was defeated. Jeremiah marked a brief record of the event in **Jeremiah 46:2**. After his great defeat at Carchemish, Necho lost all his Syrian possessions. Henceforth "the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land, for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt". (**2 Kings 24:7**) This event now transferred Judah to the thumb of Babylon. Jehoiakim became Nebuchadnezzar's servant for the next three years. (**2 Kings 24:1**)

In this same fourth year, the prophet Jeremiah caused a collection of his prophecies to be written out by his faithful servant, Baruch, to be read publicly in the court of the Temple. Part of this reading was the prophecy of 70 years concerning the whole land becoming a perpetual desolation. (**Jeremiah 25:11-12**)

Nevertheless, Jeremiah proclaimed his warning with a provision whereby the judgments could be averted. "Go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands, and I will do you no hurt". (**Jeremiah 25:6,36:3**)

Fear of the desolating judgments had the effect of causing the people to proclaim a fast in the next year in Jerusalem and throughout the land. They also endeavored to influence Jehoiakim to repent. (**Jeremiah 36:9,16**) This fast was held in the 9th month of the 5th year with an endeavor to prevent the judgments. This coming to his attention, Jehoiakim had it read before him. But he heard not much of the bitter denunciations before he took the scroll from the reader and cast it into a fire. However, the counsel of God stood sure. A fresh scroll was written, with the addition of a further denunciation against the king. All this appears to have made little impression upon Jehoiakim, who still walked in his old paths.

Coming to Jehoiakim's eighth year, he defied the new power center in Babylon. (**2 Kings 24:1-7**) After abiding three years under the shadow of Babylon, Jehoiakim rebelled in the fourth. What moved him to this rebellion is difficult to say, unless it was the restless turbulence of his own bad disposition and dislike of paying the tribute to the king of Babylon. Or else seeing Egypt entirely severed from the affairs of the north since the battle of Carchemish, and the king of Babylon occupied with distant wars, he hoped to make himself independent. Though Nebuchadnezzar was not able at that time to come in person to chastize his unruly vassal, he sent against him numerous bands of Chaldeans, with Syrians, Moabites and Ammonites, who were also subject to Babylon. These cruelly harassed the whole country, being for the most part moved by hatred against the Jewish name and nation.

Now the question arises, just what happened in regard to **Daniel 1:1-2** and **2 Chronicles 36:5-7**? It should be understood that the first year of Nebuchadnezzar corresponded to the fourth year of Jehoiakim. So Daniel's reference to the third year of Jehoiakim would seem to precede Nebuchadnezzar's rise to the throne of Babylon or else he uses a different reference basis (i.e. accession year) than used by Jeremiah, Kings and Chronicles. Daniel may indeed refer to the events that led up to the assumption of lands previously dominated by Egypt. We notice that Daniel records that Jehoiakim was only given into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, i.e. became his servant, and took tribute of some vessels of the temple. Daniel does not say captives were taken in this year, though we sometimes assume this because of the context following verse 3. The first two verses are *easily* read as marking the subjection of Jehoiakim and Judah's vassalage. From verse 3 begins a narrative dealing with captives and events in subsequent years, but no mention is made of the year of their being taken.

2 Chronicles 36 could also be understood as recording events following the 4th year of Jehoiakim. But the year is not mentioned, nor is a captivity recorded here. Whatever the year, Nebuchadnezzar had Jehoiakim bound to carry him to Babylon. But Nebuchadnezzar did not pursue his intention, but demanded tribute and carried off some of the temple vessels. For verse 5 says he reigned 11 years. Both the Daniel and Chronicles accounts could refer to the 4th year of Jehoiakim during the ascendancy of Babylon over Egyptian domains, Daniel using the Babylonian counting of years. We see similar tribute or submission of Judah was rendered by Rehoboam and Shishak, (**2 Chronicles 12:8-9**) by Asa to Benhadad, (**2 Chronicles 16:1-7**) by Hezekiah to Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:13-17), by Jehoahaz to Necho. (**2 Chronicles 36:2-5**) However, we notice the events of **2 Chronicles 36:6-7** may also apply to either Jehoiakim's 5th or even 8th year. Daniel may as well use the Babylonian vantage point of the third year of Jehoiakim as being a vassal to Nebuchadnezzar. If the vassalage counts after the victory of Babylon over Egypt in Jehoiakim's 4th year, then Nebuchadnezzar may have come against him in his 8th on the occasion of his rebellion.

The exact circumstances of his death are uncertain, although it seems that Jehoiakim was assassinated in the 11th year of his reign in Jerusalem. (**Jeremiah 22:18-19,36:30**) This was likely carried out by his distraught subjects when they saw Nebuchadnezzar's army coming to lay siege against the city. His body appears to have been ignominiously thrown over the walls to convince the enemy that he was dead. Thereafter his carcass was left exposed for some time, dragged away and buried "with the burial of an ass" without lamentation "beyond the gates of Jerusalem." Nebuchadnezzar had to content himself with deporting his successor.

JEHOIACHIN

Jehoiachin is also known as Coniah and Jeconiah in the book of Jeremiah. He was only 18 when coming to the throne although **2 Chronicles 36:9** says 8 years old. This is acknowledged by most scholars as a copy error in order to accord with **2 Kings 24:8**. He reigned only 3 months and 10 days, barely 13 weeks after Jehoiakim's death. Thus he, like Jehoahaz, does not add to the years of the period of the Kings. His short reign and long captivity is recorded in **2 Kings 24:12-15, 2Ch 36:9, Jer 22:24-28, 24:1, 29:1-2, 52:31-34, Eze 17:12-13, 19:9**.

He offered a short resistance to the forces of Nebuchadnezzar. But then seeing that further opposition



Jeremiah dictating his prophecies to Baruch

was futile, he surrendered and was taken as a prisoner of war along with his mother, his generals and troops and princes, officers, craftsmen, smiths and carpenters, (**2 Kings 24:12-15**) Jeremiah 24:1, Ezekiel 17:12), 10,000 in all, this being the first definitive statement regarding a deportation by Nebuchadnezzar. Ezekiel (33:21) dates his own captivity with this year before the smiting of Jerusalem and refers to it as "our captivity." Daniel and his three noble companions may also have been taken in this same sweep of the best talents and resources of the country. Nebuchadnezzar spared the life of Jehoiachin and others not only for their youth and vital contribution to his own country, but in deference to a worthy opponent. He was also not hasty to entirely crush the cultural or national identity of those continuing in the land who offered a southern buffer to his own expanding domains.

ZEDEKIAH

It was not Nebuchadnezzar's object to destroy altogether a power which, as tributary to him, formed an outpost towards Egypt. He therefore still tolerated the throne of Judah. The youngest son of Josiah, of the old Davidic lineage, was installed on the throne. It was then that his vassal's name was changed from Mattaniah to Zedekiah. To rename someone was to claim control over that person. Nebuchadnezzar departed with treasures from the temple, but he left Jerusalem intact and the last Hebrew king of Judah on the throne. Nebuchadnezzar hoped that loyalty would bring tranquility to his southern frontiers.

Jerusalem might have maintained its autonomy within the Babylonian empire had Zedekiah possessed wisdom and regard for the prophets of God... but he did not. (**Jeremiah 37:12**) In his fourth year, he heeded the false prophet, Hananiah, who forecast the imminent return of all the plundered treasures along with the deportees. (**Jeremiah 28:1-9**) He also dismissed Jeremiah for denying the prophecy and cast him into a miry dungeon. (**Jeremiah 38:6**) This same year he made some mission to Babylon in regard to the powers of the north. (**Jeremiah 51:59**)

The history of Zedekiah is largely covered in Jeremiah from the 27th chapter forward. Jerusalem seems to have been a center of reference for the neighboring kingdoms of Tyre, Sidon, Edom and Moab to consult in the courts of Zedekiah as regards their own subjective roles in the march of history. Jeremiah used the public

exposure to saddle himself with an ox yoke to symbolize how Babylon would put a yoke on the neck of Jerusalem and Judah and that the surrounding nations should also submit to the inevitable.

His first act of overt rebellion was to form an alliance with Egypt, equivalent to an act of hostility with Babylon. The repercussions are mentioned in **Jeremiah 34:21,37:5-11,Eze 17:15-20**. Learning of the defection, Nebuchadnezzar at once sent an army to ravage Judea. The whole country was overrun and reduced, except Jerusalem, Lachish and Azekah, which still held out. (**Jeremiah 34:7**)

Panic followed and Zedekiah proclaimed a false Sabbath year ordinance within Jerusalem, releasing debts and servitude. (**Jeremiah 34:8-17**) Jeremiah promptly condemned the hypocrisy. Zedekiah's penance was too little and too late. He prophesied that the city would yet burn with fire and that the Lord "will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant."

In the meantime Pharaoh moved to the assistance of his ally. On hearing of his approach, the Chaldeans raised the siege and advanced to meet him. At this diversion, Zedekiah allowed the people to take back their slaves. But the Babylonians promptly returned, after chasing off the Egyptians. Neither rebellion nor alliances could spare the nation.

Two years into the siege, in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, "famine prevailed in the city, and there was not bread for the people". (**2 Kings 25:3**) In what may have been an eyewitness account, the author of Lamentations describes the horrors, "The hands of compassionate women boiled their own children for food". (**Lamentations 4:10**)

Babylonian soldiers broke through part of the wall in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign, on the ninth day of the fourth month. That evening, Zedekiah tried to escape with his army. But they were overcome near Jericho and led to Nebuchadnezzar's military base. There the Babylonians killed Zedekiah's sons and officials before his face, then put out his eyes, and bound him in bronze shackles. Then they "carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death". (**Jeremiah 52:11**)

As for Jerusalem, the destruction was complete. There was not another successor on the throne of David. The burning of Jerusalem and the temple and deportation is briefly recorded in **2 Chronicles 36:18-21** in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy. Although Ezekiel does not mention Zedekiah in **Ezekiel 21:25-27**, he is understood to be the subject. God allowed Babylon to remove his crown and there was not another appointee, until he came whose right it is.

LOOKING FORWARD

Jeremiah, serving during these last five kings, was not entirely a prophet of doom. Chapters 31 and 33 prophesy of restoration for the bewildered captives. But the prophecy extends beyond their release under Cyrus. It extends to the arm of the rightful heir to the throne of David returning his people to the land, not to be rooted up again. "For I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them". (**Jeremiah 33:26**) We are privileged to be watching the fulfillment of this prophecy, while Israel is learning the futility of all human alliances and the strength of the divine. "I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS". (**Jeremiah 23:5,6**) A greater than Cyrus has arrived.

- Jerry Leslie

1 Keil and Delitzsch: If Jeremiah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim announced that because Judah did not hearken unto his warnings addressed to them "from the thirteenth year of Josiah even unto this day;" that is,

for the space of three and twenty years, nor yet to the admonitions of all the other prophets (ch. 25:3-7) whom the Lord had sent unto them, therefore the Lord would now send his servant Nebuchadnezzar with all the people of the north against the land and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, utterly to destroy the land and make it desolate, etc. - then it must be affirmed that he publicly made known the invasion of Judah by the Chaldeans as an event which had not yet taken place, and therefore that the supposition that Jerusalem already in the preceding year had been taken by Nebuchadnezzar, and that Jehoiakim had been brought under his subjection, is entirely excluded... Therefore Hitzig and others conclude from **Jeremiah 36:9** that Nebuchadnezzar's assault upon Jerusalem was in the ninth month of the fifth year of Jehoiakim as yet only in prospect, because in that month Jeremiah prophesied of the Chaldean invasion, and the extraordinary fast then appointed had as its object the manifestation of repentance, so that thereby the wrath of **God might be averted**.

The Doctrine of Baptisms

Never in Church history has the information concerning baptism been made so clear as in the writings of Pastor Russell. He has made it plain from Scriptural comparison that in Christian baptism:

- (1) Water baptism is a symbol with no inherent merit.
- (2) Baptism is correctly immersion, not sprinkling.
- (3) Baptism is to be performed only upon those who have made an intelligent, personal, and unreserved consecration to do God's will.
- (4) Immersion represents participation in Christ's death.

Perhaps most unique is Bro. Russell's insight into the meaning and purpose and limits of John the Baptist's baptism. To summarize:

- (1) John's baptism was only for Jews.
- (2) John's baptism and its privileges expired at the end of the 70 weeks of the prophecy of **Daniel 9:24-27** (i.e, 36 AD).
- (3) Jesus' disciples administered John's baptism up to that date.
- (4) Prior to 36 AD, all baptisms (except Jesus' in Jordan) were John's baptism.
- (5) John's baptism was for the purpose of returning Jews to favor under the yet functioning Law Covenant so that they could receive Messiah (the greater than Moses) and be transferred into him (with no additional baptism).

These points are revolutionary in the history of this doctrine. Additional truths made plain are:

- (1) The "baptism of the holy Spirit" was a phenomenon of only two occasions, (a) Pentecost, (b) the house of Cornelius. Its purpose was to demonstrate God's acceptance of both Jews and Gentiles into the body of Christ. At other times, the gifts of the Spirit could be conferred only by the hands of the apostles.
- (2) The "baptism of fire" was a symbol for the destruction of that part of the Jewish nation which rejected Messiah. It was not personal, but a national judgment or destruction.

(3) The "remission of sins" was an integral part of John's baptism. It was not a part of Christian baptism. Gentiles and post 36 AD Jewish converts did have their sins remitted by their faith in the blood, but not by baptism. (**Acts 10:43**) This is a subtle but scripturally sound distinction.

(4) John's and Jesus' disciples, baptizing at the same time, were not in competition. They both were administering the same rite which was actually beginning the work of the new age. (**John 1:31,Ac 10:36-37,Ac 13:23-25,Ac 19:4**)

(5) Baptism "in Jesus' name" before 36 AD was yet John's baptism. This phrase simply intensified the concept of transfer from Moses into Christ.

A review of 81539 and 85962 will be helpful to all in absorbing the epitome of Bro. Russell's findings on the doctrine of baptism.

Following is an exhaustive list of texts containing the word baptism. This list has been divided into categories of the word's usage, with helpful summary notes. These categorized scriptures should be convincing as to the accuracy of Pastor Russell's exposition of baptism.

- *David Doran*

CATEGORIZED TEXTS ON BAPTISM

REFERENCES TO ALL BAPTISM

Acts 19:3a - Questions which baptism (John's or Christian)

Hebrews 6:2 - translated "washings" in NAS

REFERENCES TO TYPICAL "BAPTISMS" OR WASHINGS

1 Corinthians 10:2 - Immersion into Moses prepared the nation for transfer into the greater than Moses by John's Baptism which brought them back into this original Moses' Baptism. Verse 4 clearly shows the aim to be the eventual transfer to Christ. **Hebrews 9:10** - translated "washings" **1 Peter 3:20** - The flood was a figure of baptism (see verse 21)

REFERENCES MEANING BATHING OR WASHING

Mark 7:4 - "wash" in KJV, "cleanse" in NAS

Mark 7:4 - "washing" in KJV and in NAS

Mark 7:8 - "washing" not in NAS. This is a spurious entry in KJV.

Luke 11:38 - "washed" in KJV, "ceremonially washed" in NAS

REFERENCES AS PART OF JOHN THE BAPTIST'S NAME

Matthew 3:1,11:11,12,14:2,8,16:14,17:13 Mr 6:14,24,25,8:28 (**Mark 1:4** in NAS, KJV is accurate)

Luke 7:20, 28 ("the Baptist" is spurious), 7:33, 9:19

JOHN'S BAPTISM AS ADMINISTERED BY JOHN

Matthew 3:6 - sin confession was a requisite **Matthew 3:7** (8) - repentance and fruitage were necessary

Matthew 3:11a - water was a symbol of repentance **Matthew 3:13** - John unaware this occasion not "John's baptism" **Matthew 3:14** - Though imperfect, John (as God's prophet) was not in need of baptism

Matthew 21:25 - Jesus wanted priests, elders, to see need for John's baptism

Mark 1:4a - shows place of John's works - perhaps symbolizing his rejection by the existing powers

Mark 1:4b - John's baptism involved repentance resulting in the remission (NAS forgiveness) of sins

Mark 1:5 - shows how widespread John's message was **Mark 1:8a** - same as **Matthew 3:11 Mr 11:30** - same as **Matthew 21:25 Lu 3:3** - same as **Mark 1:4 Lu 3:7** (8) - same as **Matthew 3:7,8 Lu 3:12** (-14) - repentance symbolized by John's baptism would result in fairness, compassion, gentleness and contentment

Luke 3:16a - water is a symbol of being immersed into a condition (by comparison to fire and holy Spirit)

Luke 3:21 - (a) refers to the people, (b) refers to Jesus. Though his baptism was different, he used baptism as part of the general movement of reform in Israel.

Luke 7:29 - Sincere Israelites were convinced (in part by Jesus' preaching) of John's place as a prophet and, therefore, joined the repentance movement. (NAS "having been baptized" seems less accurate than KJV "being baptized")

Luke 7:30 - "rejected the counsel of God" seems the opposite of verse 29's "justified God"

Luke 20:4 - same as **Matthew 21:25 Joh 1:25** - the Pharisees were unwilling to accept another prophet, righteously claiming that they will accept a message of repentance only from Elijah, Messiah, or "that prophet"

John 1:26 - same as **Matthew 3:11 Joh 1:28** - NAS says "in Bethany" **John 1:31** - primary purpose of John's work: pointing to Messiah **John 1:33a** - God Himself authorized the baptismal work of John. Also, a more significant baptism would follow John's.

John 3:23 - quantity of water implies that sprinkling is unlikely **John 10:40 Ac 1:5a** - same as **Luke 3:16**, but by Jesus instead of John **Acts 10:37** - John's baptism was the beginning (in a sense) of the work of a new age

Acts 11:16a - same as **Acts 1:5** except it shows Peter's remembrance was of Jesus' statement rather than of John's

Acts 13:24 - The purpose of John's baptism's was to prepare the way for Messiah. Also shows that John's baptism was for Israel. **Acts 19:4** - Proof of the expiration of John's baptism (of repentance) and the need for a new, non-transference, baptism for Jews or for Gentiles. This text vibrantly shows the point of John's baptism: "to believe in him who was coming after:"

BAPTISM OF "FIRE" AND OF "HOLY SPIRIT"

Matthew 3:11b - John pointed to the change coming that would result in things more real than the symbolism of water - i.e., either spirit begettal or destructive power (cf. vs. 12 and **Matthew 22:7**). Immersion into water and into Christ's death are for us to attend to. Immersion of the holy Spirit or of fire are God's doing. **Mark 1:8b** - same as **Matthew 3:11**, except omits "fire"

Luke 3:16b - same as **Matthew 3:11** **Ac 1:5b** - Jesus applied John's prophecy to himself

Acts 11:16b - Peter remembers Jesus' words in **Acts 1:5**

JOHN'S BAPTISM ADMINISTERED BY JESUS' DISCIPLES

John 3:22,26 - Of the Gospel writers, only John mentions this. The context can be misinterpreted. It does not say there are different baptisms - only that the administration by Jesus' disciples was overtaking that administered by John. The baptisms were the same, not competitive. If a different baptism were being carried out, it would nullify John's which (**John 1:33**) was ordained by God. (The next text shows **John 3:22** did not mean Jesus personally did any immersing... which might have implied to some that there was an alternative immersion.)

John 4:1, 2 - See above. Note (verses 3, 4) that Jesus purposely left lest his immersing be misinterpreted.

Acts 2:38 - This text could be misunderstood because of the phrase "in the name of Jesus Christ." This is still John's baptism with the added information that the transfer into Messiah will be effected. Note verses 36 and 37. These Jewish "brethren" want to know how to escape their sins under the Law as well as their part in the national sin of crucifying Jesus. Peter suggests baptism as the sign of their repentance of their sins (imputed under the Law). Verse 39 intensifies this national application.

Acts 2:41 - This is yet John's baptism for Jews with the transfer now happening into the "greater than Moses"

Acts 8:12 - This, being still before the expiration of the 70 weeks, is yet the baptism of John with transfer into Christ

Acts 8:13 - Simon's baptism. The gifts are Christian, but pre-70 week baptisms are John's. They result in begettal after Pentecost. **Acts 8:16** - Gifts of the spirit did not come from baptism. They came from the apostles, or from the "baptism of the holy Spirit" at Pentecost and in Cornelius' home at the end of the 70 weeks. **Acts 8:36,38** - (37 spurious) The eunuch was a Jewish proselyte. (**Acts 8:27**) No Gentile was received before Cornelius.

Acts 9:18 - Paul (who had been sinning against the Law in fervent ignorance) repents and receives John's baptism, putting him back under the covenant and ready for immediate transfer into Christ. **Acts 18:25** - This is post-Cornelius. The 70-week promise was over. Apollos was not aware that John's baptism was expired.

Acts 22:16 - Paul's recollection of his baptism (John's baptism, cf. **Acts 19:5**) which allowed him immediate transfer into Christ.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM (POST 70TH-WEEK, JEWS & GENTILES), LITERAL (WATER) AND SYMBOLIC (CHRIST'S DEATH)

Matthew 3:13, 16 - The only instance of John administering something other than John's baptism. This act (purely Christian baptism) will have no repetition until the end of the 70 weeks.

Matthew 20:22,23 - same as **Mark 10:38,39**, which please see. (But all reference to baptism in the Matthew account is spurious.) **Matthew 28:19** -This formula is nowhere repeated. Even the mention of Father, Son, and holy Spirit is found nowhere else in the Bible. (though **Revelation 1:4,5** contain its equivalent) All early church fathers, when referring to this verse, refer to baptism in Jesus' name. Is it possible that this verse is a corruption of the early MS even though no alternative has yet been discovered?

Mark 1:9 - same as **Matthew 3:13** **Mr 10:38,39** - the symbol of water (and even the Spirit gifts) are not the true baptism into Christ. This speaks of immersion into God's will, with all of its attendant experiences.

Luke 3:21 - (second occurrence) same as **Matthew 3:13** **Lu 12:50** - same as **Mark 10:38,39**, but Luke continues in verses 51-53 to show some of the possible consequences of this baptism (second occurrence in NAS is translated "undergo")

Acts 1:22 - same instance as **Matthew 3:13** **Ac 10:47,48** - The first purely Christian water immersion recorded, save of Jesus in **Matthew 3:13**. Note that it followed the gifts of the spirit. Through this example God showed water immersion only symbolizes what has already taken place. Verse 44 is the second "baptism of the spirit" (the first occurred at Pentecost). By these two, it was manifest that both Jews and Gentiles were accepted into Christ. (On the surface, verse 43 might seem to contradict 85962, "Baptism for Remissions of Sins for Jews Only." But the point is: John's baptism was for remission of sins - a return to righteousness under the Law, in order to a transfer into Christ. Christian baptism is not for that reason. Nevertheless, as verse 43 says, remission of sins does occur to all, Jews or Gentiles, who believe. See next comment also.)

Acts 16:15 - Lydia and family. Note a difference recorded beginning with the Cornelius baptism, (**Acts 10:47-48**) repeated here, and with the jailer, (**Acts 16:33**) and with Crisp's. (**Acts 18:8**) In every instance in Acts, after the 70-week expiration, except the Effusion ecclesia in **Acts 19:5** (where the details are not clear), families or households are received as units. This is unlike anything specified under John's baptism.

Acts 16:33 - the jailer and family

Acts 18:8 - Crispus and family (with other Corinthians)

Acts 19:5 - Ephesus Ecclesia. (see **Acts 19:4** note) John's baptism was now invalid for Jews, and was never for Gentiles. God apparently withheld the holy Spirit in this case until after water baptism to enforce this understanding. (See note, **Acts 10:47-48**). Romans 6:3, 4 - the clearest Bible statement on true Christian baptism. It says we die for the same reason He died - not for a ransom, but for an offering for sin. Baptism is a burial of the old will in favor of the new, spirit-begotten will.

1 Corinthians 1:13 - Please note, baptism is not factional.

1 Corinthians 1:14-16 - Our allegiance is not to the immerser.

1 Corinthians 1:17 - Paul is not ignoring **Matthew 28:19**, but is trying to show that the reality supersedes the symbol.

1 Corinthians 12:13 - This is not water immersion. This is the holy Spirit directing our immersion into one body with one purpose, though the body's various parts provide various functions.

1 Corinthians 15:29 - Not the Mormon concept of vicarious immersion. Shows the purpose of our incorporation into the body of Christ: that we might ultimately raise and bless the dead.

Galatians 3:27 - Same point as **Romans 6** and **1 Corinthians 12:13**. Verse 29 shows the result - blessing all the families of the earth as part of Abraham's seed. Restates **1 Corinthians 15:29 Eph 4:5** - The one baptism is into Christ. Even John's baptism effected this for faithful Jews who transferred into Christ. "One' baptism is part of the "doctrine of baptisms". (**Hebrews 6:2**) Colossians 2:12 - Paul echoes his **Romans 6** teaching.

1 Peter 3:21 - Immersion into Christ is a mechanism of deliverance (cf. **Colossians 1:14** and **Ephesians 1:7**). Though Peter mentions water in verse 20, that is not the point of comparison. The baptism that saves us is the real baptism in Christ, not the water immersion. Peter also cautions that, unlike John's, this baptism is not the cleansing of the flesh, but for a relationship with God based on faith in Jesus' redemptive work.