

Paul's Baptism

Commentary for April 16, 2019 — When It Occured and Was Paul an Apostle?

In Acts chapter 9, after Saul's encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, a man named Ananias received a message from God about Saul (Acts 9:10-16). God said:

"... for he [Saul] is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before [1] the Gentiles, and [2] kings, and [3] the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

• Acts 9:15-16

Soon after his encounter with Christ, Saul (later Paul, Acts 13:9) was baptized¹:

"And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto you in the way as you came, has sent me, that you might receive your sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost [Spirit].'

And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."

• Acts 9:17-18

Paul was baptized at that moment. Ananias was convinced of Paul's repentance of his sins for three reasons: (1) by his own revelation from God to expect an encounter with Paul, (2) Paul's receiving of God's Holy Spirit clearly evident to Ananias, and (3) Paul's sudden recovery of his sight. Paul repeated his story to an angry crowd outside seeking to harm him the Temple (Acts 22:7-17). Paul told the crowd what Ananias said to him,

"And he [Ananias] said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you, that you should know his will, and see that Just One, and should hear the voice of his mouth. For you shall be his witness unto all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why tarriest you [why do you wait]? arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'"²

• Acts 22:14-16

Notice from the Gospel of Mark the purpose of the baptism of John the Baptist:

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

• Mark 1:3-4

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, 'Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. ...

Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he

¹ The story of Saul/Paul becoming a believer in Christ's resurrection is in Acts 9:1-31.

² Paul came to realize later with the revelation of the Mystery the he and everyone else had been baptized "in **Christ**" when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.

saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, 'O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.'"

• **Matthew 3:1-2, 5-8**

If Saul/Paul, a Pharisee, lived in the area of Jerusalem or its environs during that time, he may have gone to see John, and been rejected for baptism at that time by John. This may be a reason Paul does not mention being baptized by John. At that time before his conversion Saul was one of the **"generation of vipers"** referred to by the Baptist. In fact, he would remain one of the vipers until his encounter with Christ on the Damascus road.

This is verified in parallel passages in Luke 3:3;

"When John had first preached before his coming [the coming of Jesus] the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, 'Whom think you that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there comes one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.'"

• **Acts 13:24-25**

"And he said unto them, 'Unto what then were you baptized?' And they said, 'Unto John's baptism.' Then said Paul, 'John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.'"

• **Acts 19:3-4**

The Question

Some people have questioned Paul's fulfilling the qualifications of being an apostle according to the criteria expressed by Dr. Ernest Martin several times since he first gave them in the 1995 article "The Curse of Church Authority," used as the basis of Chapter 22, "[The Curse of Church Authority](#)" in his book [Essentials of New Testament Doctrine](#). Dr. Martin:

"Only a special group of people was selected by Christ to be apostles and assume such awesome and vast powers to establish the doctrines and prophecies of Christendom, and formulate the body of writings that came to be the New Testament.

Even to become an apostle in the first place required particular credentials. For one, [1] an apostle had to have been baptized by John the Baptist and [2] to have seen Jesus Christ in His resurrected state (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Corinthians 9:1). They also [3] had to have many extraordinary signs and miracles associated with their ministries (2 Corinthians 12:12).

All the early apostles (including the apostle Paul) met these essential qualifications for the position of an apostle, but no man of succeeding generations could meet them.

As a matter of fact, when Christ's original human apostles died, there was only one apostle left who continued to live with the same extensive powers that the earlier apostles had and met all the credentials of apostleship. That person is our Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. And in Hebrews 3:1, Christ is called 'the apostle.' It is evident that no human could possibly have the rank and authority of an apostle today since it is impossible for modern man to meet the needed credentials recorded in the New Testament."

The question was raised, when was Saul/Paul baptized by John the Baptist? We know the

original 12 apostles were chosen earlier:

“And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.”

• **Luke 6:11**

Saul/Paul’s baptism by John the Baptist cannot be determined. First we must examine the career of John the Baptist. He was known as a special child because of the circumstances of his birth:

“And you shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, ... he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost [Spirit], even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.”

• **Luke 1:14–16**

John was famous from his birth and he did performed good works that had God’s approval. The story of his birth was known to the people of Judea, just like the birth of Jesus was known to the people.

While Paul never mentions or alludes to John the Baptist, many people listened to and were convicted by John’s message and were baptized by John. Later many more were baptized by the disciples of Jesus who had even larger crowds hearing him preach.

Writing to the Galatian *ekklesia*, Paul gave a reason to term himself an apostle:

“Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) ...”

• **Galatians 1:1**

Paul, defending his apostolic credentials, wrote to the Corinthian *ekklesia*:

“Am I not an apostle? have I not seen the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are you in the Lord.”

• **1 Corinthians 9:1–2**

Paul in the same epistle later wrote a list of proofs about Christ’s resurrection: **“And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time”** (1 Corinthians 15:8).

And this he elsewhere mentions as one of his apostolic qualifications: ‘Am I not an apostle? have I not seen the Lord?’ ([1Co 9:1](#)). So that his seeing that Just One and hearing the word of his mouth was necessary to his being ‘**a witness of what he thus saw and heard**’ ([Act 22:14-15](#)).

A Different Apostleship?

“To those who object that Paul was [or should have been] the twelfth apostle ... it is but necessary to point to the words of Scripture, ‘the lot falls on Matthias; and he is enumerated with the eleven apostles’ (Acts 1:26). Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, Andronicus, Junias and others, who are also spoken of as apostles, belong to the order of church apostles (1 Cor.12:28).

The twelve apostles are the apostles of the kingdom. These two groups of apostles must be kept separate, as a different line of truth was revealed to each,

and a different line of work was allotted to them. The kingdom apostles had to do with the earthly sphere of blessing, the hope of Israel, while the church apostles had to do with the formation of the body of Christ, and the heavenly sphere of blessing."

• H.W. Martin, "The Tripartite Ministry of the Twelve," pp. 114–115³

What H.W. Martin proposes is interesting, because none of those who Paul considered to be apostles according to 1 Corinthians 12:28:

"And God hath set some in the church [*ekklesia*], first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."

• 1 Corinthians 12:28

We know that Apollos received the baptism of John, but there was not a reception of God's Holy Spirit to him until

Acts 18:24–19:

CLV Ac 22:1 - Ac 22:30

1 "Men! Brethren and fathers! Hear my •defense tod you now!"

2 Now -hearing that he shouted to them in the Hebrew vernacular, they °tendered rmore quietness, and he is averring,

3 "I/ am a man, a Jew, °born~ in Tarsus of •Cilicia, yet °reared~ in this •city bat the feet of Gamaliel, °trained~ according to the strictness of the hereditary law, being inherently zealous for •God according as all of you/ are today,

4 I, who persecute this •way up to death, binding and giving over bsboth men and women ioto jail,

5 as the chief priest also was testifying to me, and the entire eldership, bfrom whom, - receiving~ letters also tod the brethren, I went~ into Damascus, to be leading also •those being there, °bound~, ioto Jerusalem, that they may be |punished.

6 "Now it occurred~, at my going~ and drawing near to •Damascus, about midday, suddenly out of •heaven a considerable light flashes about me.

7 Besides, I fall io •flat, and I hear a voice saying to me, `Saul! Saul! aWhy are you persecuting Me?'

8 Yet I/ answered and said, `aWho art Thou, Lord?' Besides, He said tod me, `I/ am Jesus, the Nazarene, Whom you/ are persecuting.'

³ H.W. Martin, "The Tripartite Ministry of the Twelve, Preparatory Interlude" Series: "Studies in Acts," in *Unsearchable Riches*, Vol. 14, No. 3, February 1923, pp 114–115.

9 Now •those who |are *tg*with me gaze~, indeed, at the light, yet they hear not the voice of Him •Who is speaking to me.

10 Now I said, `aWhat shall I be doing, Lord?' Now the Lord said *to d* me, `Rise. |Go~ into Damascus, and there you will be |spoken to concerning all which has been set~ for you to do.'

11 "Now, as I observed nothing *f*for the glory of that •light, being led~ by the hand by •those who |are *tg*with me, I came into Damascus.

12 Now a *a*certain Ananias, a pious man according to the law, being attested~ by all the Jews dwelling there,

13 coming *to d* me and -standing by, said to me, `Saul! Brother! Receive your sight!' And I/, in the same hour, look up *i*to him.

14 Now •he said. `The God of our •fathers fixes~ upon you beforehand to know His •will, and to be |acquainted with the Just One, and to hear the voice *o* of His •mouth,

15 that you shall be His witness *to d* all *h*men of what you have seen and hear.

16 And now, *a*why do you |defer? Rise, be baptized~, and bathe~ off your •sins, -invoking~ His •name.'

17 "Now it occurred~, at my -returning *i*to Jerusalem and while I am praying~ in the sanctuary, I |come~ to be in an ecstasy

18 and to |perceive Him saying to me, `Hurry, and |come *i* quickly *o* out of Jerusalem, because they will not be assenting~ to your testimony concerning Me.'

19 And I/ said, `Lord, they/ are |versed~ in the fact that I/ was jailing and lashing those *a*at the synagogues •who are believing on Thee.

20 And when the blood of Stephen, Thy •witness, was shed~, I *s*myself also was °standing by, endorsing it, as well as guarding the garments of •those who are assassinating him.'

21 And He said *to d* me, `|Go! *t*For I/ shall be delegating you *a*far *i*to the nations.'"

22 Now they heard him until this •word, and they lift up their •voice, saying, "|Away from the earth with •such a one, for it is not befitting for him to |live!"

23 Besides, at their clamoring, and tossing •their garments, and casting dust into the air,

24 the captain orders him to be |led~ *i*o into the citadel, -telling them to |interrogate~ him by =scourging, that he may |recognize *bc*for what cause they retorted thus at him.

25 Now, as they stretch him before them with the thongs, •Paul said *to d* the centurion °standing by, "*i*f Is it allowed you to |scourge a Roman *h*man, and uncondemned?"

26 Now, -hearing it, the centurion, coming to the captain, reports, saying, "What are you about to be doing? For this man is a Roman."

27 Now, approaching, the captain said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" Now he averred, "Yes."

28 Now the captain answered, "I will with a vast sum acquire this citizenship." Yet Paul averred, "Yet I have been so born also."

29 Immediately then, those about to be interrogating him withdraw from him. Now the captain also was afraid, recognizing that he is a Roman and that he was bound by him.

30 Now on the morrow, resolved to know the certainty of that of which he is being accused by the Jews, he looses him and orders the chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin to come together. And, leading Paul down, he stands him among them.

(KJV) Lk 6:13

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

“And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, ‘Have you received the Holy Ghost [Spirit] since you believed?’ And they said unto him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost [Spirit]’.

And he said unto them, ‘Unto what then were you baptized?’ And they said, ‘Unto John’s baptism.’

Then said Paul, ‘John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.’

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost [Spirit] came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve.”

• Acts 19:1-7

The bottom line is, I do not see evidence that Paul ever received the baptism of John. If he did, there is no evidence of him speaking about it. That may have been because if he was baptized by John, he may have lied about his repentance at that time. The *ekklesia* did not need to know that, hence the silence. I feel it is highly likely Paul was in Jerusalem during the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus. If Paul was not baptized by John, it is likely he knew about John’s call for repentance and rejected it because of his Pharisaical beliefs, until he encountered the living Lord Christ Jesus on the road to Damascus.

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