

You may have heard those in the church of Christ referred to as “Campbellites”. While I believe that this would be true of those in the “Christian Church,” I do not believe it to be true of some churches of Christ.

We talked last week of the origin of the New Testament church in the United States. Barton W. Stone and those in the Springfield Presbytery certainly determined to do what the Scriptures said, especially in regard to throwing off the laws of man.

Both Alexander and his father, Thomas, Secession Presbyterians, came to this country in 1809 and 1807, respectively. He and his father came up with the slogan, “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.”

Upon thinking about the requirements of this slogan, the Campbells began to examine every religious doctrine that they had been taught.

At the birth of one of his children, Alexander sought to know whether he should baptize infants and whether the church should find people “not worthy” to receive holy communion.

The need for infant baptism lay in the Presbyterian idea of original sin and the necessity that Adam's sin be wiped away in baptism.

The Scriptures disagree with  
infant baptism and the idea of  
original sin.

Acts 8:36 And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 37 [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] 38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him.

Acts 2:41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

An infant is never baptized in the Scriptures and in the two cases where households were baptized, one household is said to have believed – Acts 16.31 and in the other the household ministered to the saints – 1Cor 16.15. Both acts impossible for an infant.

Campbell immediately concluded that although his child did not need to be baptized, he did!

Why?

He found that baptism saves from sin 1Pet 3.20-21, puts one into a covenant relationship with God Col 2.11-12 and makes one a child of God Gal 3.27

1Pe 3:20-21 to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, (21) and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Col 2:11-13 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; (12) having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (13) When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

Gal 3:25-27 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. (26) So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, (27) for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

As Campbell examined the idea of original sin, he found the Scriptures continually call for each man to be judged on the things he has done 2Co 5.10 not on what others had done Rev 20.12.

2 Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead,  
the great and the small, standing  
before the throne, and books  
were opened; and another book  
was opened, which is {the book}  
of life; and the dead were judged  
from the things which were  
written in the books, according to  
their deeds.

The Campbells found a Baptist Minister, Matthias Luce, to immerse them, and Alexander allied himself with the Baptist church until 1826 when he wrote, “I labor to see sectarianism abolished and all Christians of every name united upon the one foundation upon which the apostolic church was founded. To bring Baptists and Pedobaptists to this is my supreme end.”

Like Barton Stone, Campbell called on all men to unite on the New Testament as their guide and the church of the New Testament as the only one authorized by God's word. Neither Campbell or Stone wanted to form a church to be called by their name or by some practice they instituted.

Luke 6:46 "And why do you call  
Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do  
what I say?"

Upon what would the Lord's  
church be founded?

1 Cor 3:11 For no man can lay a  
foundation other than the one  
which is laid, which is Jesus  
Christ.

Not on the teachings of either  
Campbell or Stone!

The willingness to depart from God's word is seen in men who form themselves into denominations. All denominations are based, not on the Scriptures, but on some man's view of a particular subject; perhaps touched upon in the Scriptures, more often not.

“Why did Campbell leave the Baptists after seventeen years of ministry among them? ... Campbells’ stark Biblical literalism led to disagreements over many aspects of church life and ministerial order. Campbell opposed, for instance, the use of instrumental music in worship and refused to call ministers by officious-sounding titles such as ‘Reverend’ or ‘Doctor’.”

Eph 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Mat 23:8-10 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. (9) And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. (10) Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

Campbell (and we) had to decide whether he would “speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent” or not.

Just so, we have to decide whether we will follow the same motto.

The idea of baptismal  
regeneration is completely  
rejected by the Baptists and yet  
the Scriptures declare it.

1 Pet 3:21 And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you - not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience - through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Acts 22:16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.' (NIV)

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "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. (NIV)

Reading these verses literally,  
one would find it difficult to deny  
that baptism now saves you,  
washes your sins away and is for  
the forgiveness of sins.

The “stark literalism” found in these passages declares the doctrines of men to be just that. One cannot reject baptism and appeal to God for a “good conscience.”

The most serious problem in any departure from God's word is a lack of knowledge and a lack of humility in caring for self more than Jesus.

2 Tim 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

Finding the time to study God's word is the most pressing problem facing believers today. I have always found that since I became an adult, the only time I study is when I want to know the answer to a question. Campbell was no different, looking at infant baptism as his children arrived.

What holds you back in your  
study?

Is it the lack of perceived  
application of God's word to  
your life or your unwillingness to  
appear to have been wrong up to  
this point?

Do you need rest from the burden of sin?  
Why not do what Jesus says and stop there?

Matt 11:28 "Come to Me, all who are weary  
and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29  
"Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me,  
for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you  
shall find rest for your souls. 30 "For My  
yoke is easy, and My load is light."