

BORN FROM WATER

In the Gospel of the Apostle John, in chapter 3: 1 to 5, it is written: "Among the Pharisees there was a man named Nicodemus, one of the leaders of the Jews.

He went to Jesus at night and said to him: Rabbi, we know that the Master has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

To this Jesus replied: Truly, truly, I say to you, unless anyone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus asked him: How can a man be born when he is old? Can he, perhaps, return to his mother's womb and be born a second time?

Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Christians unanimously understand that being born from water is related to water baptism.

However, even in the early days of the church, people began to question whether baptism should only be performed on people who were already fully aware of the act they were carrying out, who repented of their sins or also on newborn children.

Those who understood that baptism should not be performed on children argued that, in addition to them not knowing what they were doing, the children were innocent, without sin.

Others claimed that if children died when they were still small without being baptized, they would not be saved; because children are born condemned due to original sin and, therefore, should be baptized.

Currently, some Protestant churches only baptize those who are already aware of the act they are carrying out; and others, also Protestants, together with the Catholic church, also baptize newborns.

Once, a few years ago, I asked a Catholic brother I worked with, what was the biblical basis that the Catholic church used to baptize children? He asked me for time to respond.

I expected him to bring me some article by Saint Augustine, some writing by Calvin, some instruction from the Church Fathers, until, after a few days, he said to me: The Bible says that the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter baptized all from the homes of those who, through their word, were converted; they did not only baptize those who were already aware of what baptism was or who were already adults; they baptized everyone.

Even though that wasn't the kind of answer I was expecting, I paid attention to what he told me.

Then, as the years went by, I realized that the answer the brother gave me, in a simple and direct way, couldn't be better.

The reality is that if the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter, men who gave their lives for the cause of Christ, who wrote part of the new testament, who had wonderful experiences with the Holy Spirit, who suffered for the love of Christ and, in this case of the Apostle Peter, who, by grace, had the HONOR and PRIVILEGE of walking, living with and being taught by the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, the Master; both were martyred, one being decapitated and the other crucified upside down; If these men baptized children, who would I be to even think about questioning?

It would only be up to me, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to try to understand and learn why the Apostles carried out such an act.

In the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, in chapter 7: 12 to 14, the Apostle Paul already makes his understanding very clear regarding children, daughters of Christians, as follows: "To the rest I say, not the Lord: if any brother has unbelieving woman, and she consents to live with him, do not abandon her; and the woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, must not leave her husband.

Because the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the company of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the company of her believing husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean; but now they are saints."

Therefore, for the Apostle, the children of Christians, or the child of a Christian with an unbeliever, or of a Christian with an unbeliever, were saints.

But, after all, what is baptism, the new birth of water?

It is not the stripping away of the old nature, of the imperfect body that, after losing innocence there in Adam, eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, became a sinner, and because he was a sinner, mortal, so that a new man may be born. , and that this new man, united with Christ, justified by the death of Christ, is able to become perfect, holy, as Perfect and Holy is our Father?

So water baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is for us to become new creatures.

As the Apostle Paul teaches us, in his Epistle to the Romans, in chapter 6: 1 to 7: "What shall we say then? Will we remain in sin, so that grace may be more abundant?

Not at all! How shall we live in sin, we who died to it?

Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

We were therefore buried with him into death through baptism; so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly be united with him in the likeness of his resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, and that we might not serve the sin as slaves; for he who has died is justified from sin."

Thus, "our old man was crucified with him, so that the body of sin might be destroyed."

In the Book of Acts, in chapter 18: 24 and 25, there is an account about a man called Apollo, which we will transcribe below: "In the meantime, there arrived in Ephesus a Jew, a native of Alexandria, named Apollo, an eloquent and powerful man in Scriptures.

He was instructed in the way of the Lord; and, being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught precisely about Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John."

Afterwards, the Apostle Paul also arrived in this same city and went to talk to the people who had been taught by Apollo.

Continuing, in the same Book, in chapter 19: 2 to 5: "he asked them: Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? To which they replied: On the contrary, we have not even heard that the Holy Spirit exists.

Then Paul asked: In what then were you baptized? They answered: At the baptism of John.

Paul said to them: John performed a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who came after Him, that is, in Jesus.

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

So, John's baptism was for repentance, and baptism in the name of Jesus is for the birth of a new creature?

Below for reflection is what the Apostle Peter responded to the Israelites, Jews, after preaching the first sermon in Jerusalem, which is reported in the Book of Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2: 37 and 38: "When they heard these things, it was grieved to them their hearts and asked Peter and the rest of the apostles, What shall we do, brethren?

Peter answered them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

What does this baptism guided by the Apostle Peter, at the beginning of the church, and the baptism of John have in common?

Both emphasize repentance and the remission of sins.

Both the baptism of John and the baptism of the Apostle Peter were preached to Israelites, Jews, to be practiced by them.

In verses 14 and 36, of chapter 2, still in the Book of Acts, we have the beginning and end of this first preaching by the Apostle Peter.

14: "Then Peter stood up with the eleven; and, raising his voice, he warned them in these terms: Men of Jews and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, take note of this and pay attention to my words."

36: "Let the whole house of Israel be absolutely certain that God made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

There would be no way for the Apostle Peter to preach to the Israelites right after they killed Jesus, at the hands of wicked people, not to mention repentance and remission of sins.

The Apostle Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, in relation to baptism, speaks of death and resurrection, newness of life.

Regarding the innocence of children, if we do not need to baptize them because they do not yet have sins, and baptism is essentially for the remission of sins of those who repent, then we should all be baptized only on the last day of our lives. For, after being baptized, we do not become perfect; we still remain flawed until our death.

Thus, like the Apostle Paul, those who baptize their children believe that they are saints, that they will live as Christians; later, the children themselves make their first communion, which is the confirmation of baptism.

To conclude, let us recall Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians, in his second Epistle addressed to them, which, speaking of the coming of the Lord, the revelation of apostasy, the antichrist, the man of lawlessness and the operation of error, deception said: "So therefore, brothers, stand firm and keep the tradition that you were taught, whether by word or by our epistle" (2nd Thessalonians, chapter 2: 15).

Word (oral, spoken, spoken), and epistle (written).

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