

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH ~ MAKING DISCIPLES ~ EQUIPPING THE SAINTS FOR MINISTRY

REDEMPTION Part 9 IDENTITY By Rayola Kelley

We have been considering redemption. It is amazing to realize how redemption is at the core of what we, as believers have in Christ. Without redemption, we would have no right or claim to a spiritual inheritance. Without redemption, we could not approach the throne of God or hope for any real future. Without redemption, we would have no purpose, no sense of belonging, and no future home awaiting us. We would remain lost to everything of importance and significance.

As I watch and observe people, especially many in the younger generation, I see that the prevailing mood seems to indicate they have no real sense of purpose or meaning. They remind me of angry waves



on the ocean being tossed to and fro by events and circumstances that seem insane.

They have no sense of belonging or order. In some ways, they are victims of a society that has run amuck because of lawlessness, homes that have no moral fiber in which to anchor them, churches that promote social causes rather than the reality of a holy God, and a nation where leaders have gone mad with power as they strive to bring about a godless, wicked and destructive ideology and agenda that has no regard for anyone.

In some instances, our youth have been sacrificed on altars of vanity as parents have chased after the "American Dream" or the "almighty dollar" in the name of "stuff." They have been dulled down by a godless educational system that advocates lawlessness and revolution based on socialistic and Marxist

ideas. They have been indoctrinated into the lie of "collective salvation," which is preparing them to be swept away like sheep being led to the slaughter, and they have been marked to be chewed up and spit out by those who have absolutely no regard for them.

As Jeannette pointed out in her article last month, no doubt we live in the last of the end days. The age of grace is winding down into a climatic event that will usher in the millennial age. The implications of the fruits that are coming forth in the present day are unnerving and despairing to say the least. However, even in the midst of the darkness there is great hope. The tribulation that is coming upon the face of the earth will not last forever. It will usher in a new season, and a new age or dispensation. There will be a time where the memory of the wicked of the world will be forever erased from those who are righteous. They will never again be vexed over sin, despair over compromise, be repulsed at immorality, and lament over the condition of the professing Church. All things will be put into order for the glory of God.

Meanwhile, what do we, as believers, need to ever keep before us to maintain our perspective and balance in these trying times? It is simple: we have been redeemed. Like Noah, an ark has been provided and like the children of Israel, a place has been promised and is being prepared for us to enter into. We have been clearly identified as belonging to our Lord by the seal of His Spirit. He has redeemed us, and we have an inheritance awaiting us and a place of safety where we will be able to hide. However, we must be prepared to recognize when the door is open and ready to enter into such a place when the time comes. We must not be like the five foolish virgins in *Matthew 25* who waited until the last minute to be ready, only to discover they lacked the necessary oil to see them through the dark night, while waiting for the

bridegroom to come and bid them join Him in the place prepared for them.

From all appearances, the dark night is upon us. Do we have the necessary measure of oil (Holy Spirit) to see us through the dark night? Yes, a price has been paid for us, but have we become true servants in our Lord's household or are we still coming in and out as we so please as far as our commitment and devotion? Will we know or recognize Jesus' voice as our Shepherd to ensure that we will respond when we hear His invitation to come into the place that has been prepared for us?

One of the realities of redemption that we must keep in mind is that it is a point of identity. It will identify people in various ways. This is why redemption is more than just a concept we sing about occasionally, it must be a reality in our lives. Let us now understand how redemption identifies us as a ransomed people.

Marked: Those who are redeemed have been marked as such. This mark is obvious as shown us by the example of a servant in Deuteronomy 15. Every seventh year Hebrews had to release any servant that was Jewish from any debt that had occurred, allowing the Hebrew to return home or back to his or her inheritance. They were not to send their brethren away empty handed. This was to help them remember that God once redeemed them from slavery in Egypt.

Occasionally, the Hebrew servant would decide that he or she would indenture her or himself to serve the owner of the house the rest of his or her life. Apparently, the servant knew that being indentured to the owner would ensure a greater quality of life. Perhaps, the owner was loving and fair, gaining the confidence and love of the servant. Such love would inspire the servant to count it a pleasure to serve in such a household. When a servant decided to indenture him or herself in such a way, the owner would take an aul, and thrust it through his or her ear unto the door as a mark that this individual had made a lifetime commitment to the household

as a bond-servant.

We also can see where Abraham also marked himself and his male descendants as belonging to the promises of God with circumcision. The children of Israel marked their doorposts with the blood of an innocent lamb. Christians are marked by the presence of the Holy Spirit in and upon their lives. We know that the Holy Spirit also spiritually circumcises our hearts. Clearly, there must be some mark of identification when it comes to those who have been redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we are also left with an example of the truest form of service in Deuteronomy 15. Many Christians want to decide how and when they serve the Lord, but there are a few that become bond-servants, marked by endearing love that is committed to the task of serving the Lord the rest of their lives in His household.

Ownership: Why is it important to be identified in some way to redemption? Once again, redemption stipulates ownership. We know there must be some relationship in order to claim and buy back an inheritance that was somehow taken captive by debt or enslavement. We cannot claim what is not rightfully our own. In spite of the environment we live in, God has never, nor will He ever, promote the idea that those who have failed to possess, maintain and hold on to their inheritance will automatically retain it. After all, in *Matthew 7:21-23*, Jesus did not recognize everyone who perceived themselves to be His servants.

For example, Esau sold his birthright. The children of Israel failed to enter into their inheritance the first time and maintain or hold on to their inheritance through obedience to their high calling. The rich young ruler sorrowfully walked away from eternal life, and the prodigal son squandered his inheritance. We are given different examples that reveal even though Jesus Christ secured our inheritance, we have to possess it by faith, maintain it by giving way to the Spirit and keep it by clinging to the Rock of ages. Once again, we are reminded of the Apostle Paul's exhortation to work out our salvation

with fear and trembling (*Philippians 2:12*).

Belonging: Many people have lost their way because they do not sense that they belong anywhere. They are looking for an anchor that will not only give them a sense of why they are here, but that they belong in the scheme of things. They perceive themselves as being like corks on the ocean of life, aimlessly driven by every wind or wave that comes their way.

As Christians, we have been told we have been bought with a price and that we do not belong to ourselves (*1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:19-24*). As His redeemed people, we have great assurance as to our identity. Since Jesus owns us, we are anchored to a Rock that will not be moved by the waves and winds of this world. For this reason, the Apostle Paul made this statement in *Ephesians 4:14*: "*That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*"

We belong to a heavenly family and are citizens of an eternal kingdom. We may be strangers and pilgrims in this present world, but we have a home that is awaiting us and a kingdom that will welcome us. We may be weary with the journey, but we must not take our eyes off of the destination. We must finish our course to benefit as God's people.

Position: Identity also stipulates position in the kingdom of heaven. Many people, including Christians, do not really understand their position. Position gives us a sense of where we fit in God's kingdom. It will stipulate our place at His dinner table of communion and fellowship, our responsibility in regard to our calling in His Body, and our function as to how we will be part of ensuring the function and health of His Body in a world that constantly threatens its well-being.

Position also determines our vantage point. Because of His redemption, we are seated in high places with Jesus (*Ephesians 2:6*). Such a position places us above the world. We are hidden in a fortress that is not subject to the present age. We have an eternal perspective that will keep us from being consumed by the lies that are engulfing this world. Even though the bat-

tle rages on the different fronts of the world, regardless of what happens in the physical arena of our lives, we can be assured that our place in the future world to come is completely secured.

Purpose: It is from the vantage point of Jesus that we can begin to understand our real purpose for being here. Have you ever regarded the insanity around you and tried to figure out why you are here? What purpose does your life really serve in a world that hates the truth, rages against righteousness, mocks purity, encourages lawlessness, and strives to destroy any reality of God?

As believers, we know that we are commissioned to preach the Gospel and make disciples of Christ out of new converts to the faith. However, there is another aspect to the reason why we are here: to bring glory to God in a world that is designed to forever try to change His glory in the minds and hearts of people (*Romans 1:23*). We are to be the salt that revives a despairing heart, the light that leads a wandering heart and living epistles that can be seen and read by those with a seeking heart. We are here to point people to Jesus.

Potential: Redemption is about restoration. It is because of redemption that all things can be restored to us. The main reason Jesus came is so we can be restored back into a relationship with God. It is by being restored that we can reach our potential of once again reflecting His glory in this lost world. This is the reason man was created. He was created with the ability to reflect the very image of God to creation. Sin clearly robbed, tarnished and effectively shrouded such an image. However, the Holy Spirit knows how to restore such an image in a person with a humble, contrite spirit.

This brings us to the end of this series on redemption. Even though I have taken nine newsletters to explain the wonder of this incredible work of God, be assured I have only touched the surface. There is no way that I could even begin to give this subject the justice it deserves. However, my prayer and hope is that instead of the members of Jesus' Body simply singing, "Let the redeemed say so," that they will be able to say in their hearts, "Let the redeemed know so." We need

FORM AND DENIAL By Jeannette Haley

In my recent article "The Most Dangerous People in the World," based on 2 *Timothy* 3:1-5, we learned that we are living in perilous times due to people who are "lovers of their own selves" and are filled with evil. The decisive factor is verse 5, which states, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." In other words, do not keep company with such people for they are dangerous. They may appear to be godly, but they have their own religious cause or agenda, religious spirit, religious pride or religious indoctrination. In denying the "power" of true godliness, such people are denying the Holy Spirit, the "dunamis" (miraculous power, miracles, might, ability, power, and strength).

Concerning the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" *John* 16:8-11. Religious sinners (as I call them) want to be accepted in religious circles, play the religious game or either become leaders within an established church, or found their own "church." They reject the Holy Spirit because He brings reproof, conviction, and judgment. Such people do not believe on the real Jesus of the Bible because they cannot accept the fact that He is God incarnate, and that He is "the way, the truth, and the life." There is, therefore, no other way, no other truth, and no other life. You cannot have Jesus as "a" way, or Jesus as "a" truth, or Jesus as "a" life. He is who He is, and those who do not believe in who He is, but who "preach another Jesus, receive another spirit, or receive another gospel" are damned. (See 2 *Corinthians* 11:2-4.)

Those who deny the Holy Spirit have never received a love for the truth, but they are more than willing to open themselves up to the spiritual realm dominated by the angel of light (Satan). Such people eagerly embrace a counterfeit, or antichrist, spirit

because it gives them a false feeling of power and importance by feeding their pride. In addition, they feel superior to others because of the "spiritual mysteries and secrets" that are fed to them by these unseen entities. Furthermore, there is no conviction of their sins and wickedness as outlined in 2 *Timothy* 3, and all the while, they give an outward appearance of godliness (or Christianity), having opened themselves up to familiar spirits, spirit guides, or demons. We have met such people—who claim to be "saved," but their lack of true repentance, and the fruit of the Spirit, is frightening. There is no point at which you can make them accountable or call them to repentance because of their religious pride and love for themselves in their sins. Such people also lack the fear of God and love for the truth.

The word "form" in this verse ("Having a form of godliness...") according to Strong's Concordance, is "morphosis" in Greek and it means "formation, appearance, semblance or formula." This helps us gain a clearer picture of the different subtle "forms of godliness" or "holiness" that need to be discerned by Christians. For obvious reasons no discernment is necessary for well-known cults, the Papacy, Muslims, Black Liberation Theology, the New Age, or other religious groups who may wear a thin veneer of phony "godliness."

Taking a closer look at the word "formation," my Webster's Dictionary defines it as "an act of giving form or shape to something or of taking form: development: the manner in which a thing is formed: structure." People with a religious cause, or agenda, can be found everywhere. They naturally gravitate to churches and religious movements. Such people are fully committed to their cause, or agenda, and work hard to develop a structure in which they can realize their ambitious goals. The manner in which they strive to form this structure may involve various approaches, but the one thing they need in order to achieve or accomplish it is people's involvement. Three of the most powerful methods of enlisting others to further one's religious agenda are through fear, guilt and an appeal to their pride. It is easy for a charismatic leader to brainwash people who have religious sensibilities, but who are

weak in the Word of God, and who lack knowledge of and experience with the Spirit of God. Thus, they are easily manipulated into believing that the "form of godliness" to which they are being exposed is the real deal. One example of this is the Kingdom Dominion, or Kingdom Now movements, which maintain an outward "form" of godliness, but deny the "power thereof." Their goal is to bring about the literal Kingdom of God on earth themselves, while ignoring what Scripture plainly teaches us. Jesus is the One who will establish His earthly Kingdom when He returns in power and great glory.

Religious agendas and personal causes are not of the Holy Spirit. While personal agendas, personal causes and personal platforms may appear to have a "form of godliness" outwardly, their motivation is fleshly and self-glorifying. Whenever the motivation is wrong, it gives opportunities for Satan and his demons to gain entrance into a person's life, deceiving him or her into believing that what he or she is experiencing is of God. Such people truly believe that what they are obsessed with is akin to true service for God.

Satan is subtle, as are those who serve him. The Apostle Paul warned, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" 2 *Corinthians* 11:13-15. Furthermore, people who seek after signs and wonders may very well encounter "the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" 2 *Thessalonians* 2:9b because they are wide open to deception.

Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" *Matthew* 7:7, 8. The question is, which door is being knocked on? Satan is the "prince of the power of the air," and his demons are everywhere, ready to answer any "knock"

on the wrong door. The mystical world of the occult is readily available to any who are naive, curious, or foolish enough to desire it. There is a very fine line between believing, seeking and receiving from the Holy Spirit, and seeking another spirit for answers through an altered state of consciousness, trance state, (including semi-trance), or concentration (centering), transcendental meditation, drugs, or hypnotic music. It takes fear of God, and genuine integrity not to go into that arena for "spiritual power." We read the fate of such people in *Matthew 7:21-23*, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Because most church people today have never been properly disciplined, taught, trained, and tested, they learn how to develop an outward form of godliness through playing church, and subsequently conveniently continue living in sin, or live under the burden of sin that they have never repented of or confessed.

The next definition of "form of godliness" that denies the true power (the Holy Spirit) is "appearance." According to Webster, "appearance" means "the act, action, or process of appearing; outward aspect: external show: outward indications: a sense impression or thing that appears". This is what we can expect from a religious spirit. People with a religious spirit come across as "the expert" in all spiritual matters. Such persons are generally good actors, because they believe their own "intelligence." They have an answer for everything, and work to make themselves indispensable in their group. This often causes people to go into mass confusion trying to decide whether such a person truly "has the goods" and needs to be taken seriously, or if it is all a show to gain recognition, power, control and prestige while hiding a multitude of unresolved issues and unrepentant sins. Eventually, however, their fruit

will tell on them.

People with religious spirits come across as superior in all spiritual matters. If allowed, they appoint themselves into leadership roles, which feed their pride. They are usually quick to seize any opportunity that may present itself to be the pastor's "helper," or to become the indispensable "worship leader," or "prayer warrior." People with religious spirits are quick to attach themselves to people with emotional, mental or spiritual problems so they can be their "great counselor." Unfortunately, they love to lay hands on people who need or ask for prayer, which can do a lot of spiritual and emotional damage to unsuspecting victims.

Religious spirits are a very real problem in churches and Christian groups. They are "wise in their own conceits." When confronted in the manner of Paul's admonition in *2 Timothy 3:16, 17*, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good work," they can become offended or angry, or both.

The next definition of "form" is "semblance," which is very interesting. It means, "countenance, aspect: phantasmal form: apparition: image, likeness: actual or apparent resemblance: specious appearance: slightest appearance." Thus, a person with a semblance of godliness is one who is adept at looking the part. It is all a cleverly planned, seductive façade, which is designed to give the appearance of that which is real. Sometimes an actual spirit of light can mask the countenance of this type of person, giving the impression that he or she is truly godly. Religious pride hides behind charisma that is attractive to people who are seeking for extra-biblical spiritual experiences and metaphysical interpretations of the Word of God.

The seduction of such people can be powerful. Unlike the "in-your-face" religious spirit, the seductive image of this individual is cool, quiet and calculating. The detached demeanor of such a person gives the impression that he or she possesses an ethereal spirituality that others lack. This sets the stage for an inordi-

nate attraction that can digress into soul ties, idolatry and bondage.

At last, we come to the final definition, "formula." This word means, "a set form of words for use in a ceremony or ritual: a conventionalized statement intended to express some fundamental truth or principle." It is quite clear that a set form of religious ceremony or ritual can, and does, appeal to multitudes of people who want to be part of a regular religious experience without becoming personally, or intimately, involved. People also love formulas because it excuses them from being accountable for their own spiritual life; thus, they can ignore such Scriptures as *Philippians 2:12b*, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Formulas are powerful agents of religious indoctrination that leave no room for the Holy Spirit to bring personal conviction. Ceremonies and rituals are man-made and man-centered; therefore, they are dead and powerless. The sad fact is people who have been indoctrinated through religious formulas and ceremonies believe that these outward works are spiritually beneficial to them even though they remain dead in their sins.

The Lord has given a clear warning to "turn away" from all who have a "form of godliness," but who deny the power thereof. People want the "power," but they do not want to pay the price of righteousness, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. (See *Hebrews 12:14*.) Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" *Matthew 5:8*. The power of the Holy Spirit will not rest upon, nor abide in, a defiled heart and life; neither will He, who is the light, have communion with darkness. "And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel" *2 Corinthians 6:15*. The problem is, so many Christians insist on "casting their pearls" before swine in the hope of converting them. However, those who live in a pigpen of sin, carnality, and worldliness, yet we are commanded to "turn away" from those who are religious enough to have a "form of godliness," yet who "deny the power thereof." What we have learned in over two decades of ministry is this: People

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to know that we have indeed been redeemed—ransomed from the throws of captivity and certain death by a loving God. This loving God was willing to pay the incredible price of His Son to restore us back to what had become completely lost to each of us. Let us praise His holy Name!

who think they are saved, and who profess to being Christians, yet who are not truly born again of the Spirit of God, are some of the hardest people in the world to convert. It takes much fasting and prayer, and a mighty move of the Spirit of God plus a powerfully anointed evangelist like Charles Finney to secure the true conversion of religious, or semi-religious, people. The hardest mission field in the world is America.

up. There was always sin, but there was a love of family and truth and values—there are none today. Anything goes and there is no decency regarding the sanctity of sex and marriage, and there's such a loss in all of this. Thanks for ALL your support. I pray that the Lord bless all of you—you work so hard and are so on fire for the Lord! - FL

COMMENTS & EMAILS

“Billy Graham's crusades in Australia had tremendous impact and many fine Christians here can trace their beginnings to that time. However, there have been reports for some time that he has become a 33rd degree Freemason and the reports seem to be credible. The fact the God uses someone mightily does not ensure that they will not be deceived. How watchful we all must be.” - Australia

Paul warned the Corinthians, *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God”* 1 Corinthians 6: 9, 10. Some might ask, “What is the kingdom of God, and how does one serve Christ?” Romans 14:17, 18 sums it up, *“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.”*

“Wow, her [Rayola's] “Principles of The Abundant Life” is SPOT on. I don't know if I just never got it, but now I do. The First Principle is the first fruits, which is Jesus. He is the way, the truth and the life. When we receive Him into our lives and our hearts are circumcised, He will begin to unveil the truth and our conduct and attitude will reflect as we walk in the liberty and Spirit of Life bringing forth fruit in our lives. The Holy Spirit can only sanctify a heart that is receptive and obedient to that which the Holy Spirit can land and work in our lives. That which has not been sanctified does not belong to God. We have to separate or consecrate (set our lives apart) from the entanglements of the world. The Holy Spirit lifts or calls us to the real standard of righteousness. He leads us into all truth and instructs believers to walk in the Spirit. We are called to become overcomers. He lets His presence be known and then it is up to each person to follow His leading. We have to be willing to shake the areas of self-sufficiency where there is flesh and pride.

“I'm getting it now. This is why the Word of God tells, commands us to pray for our leaders and people in high places who make decisions for us in our stay. It's not to protect them but that God would have his hand/say in the decision making process too. He needs a voice. He's our strong tower of refuge and strength, but we too, as Christians, have pushed out God in our lives and government not just the ungodly. We still can pray no one can take that away except oneself. If we believe God can move mountains, then we better get serious about our faith...Jesus warned ‘when I return will I find faith?’ Need to ponder that question in our own life.” - AK

Where is the power in the Church? Where are the powerful men and women of God? Where are anointed, powerful sermons, ignited by holy fire from Heaven that can save sinners, and set them ablaze for God? Where are hearts agonizing over lost souls? Have we become so brainwashed by humanism and the social gospel that we have forgotten our roots? What are our roots anyway? I'll tell you what our roots are—our roots are in the cross of Christ. That is where the power is—the cross! You want power? You want to shake the world you live in? You want to make an eternal difference? Then repent of your sins and your pride. Shake off the shackles of forms, appearances, semblances and formulas and get right with God! Go back to the cross, then pick up your cross, deny yourself, and follow Christ. Obey the Word, be filled with the Holy Spirit, and walk in righteousness. Never be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, *“for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth”!* †

“You know Jeannette you have been a tremendous inspiration and help to her books as well. You may not be the one, who actually wrote the Volumes, but your revelations the Lord gives you and inspiration Rayola, I know, has incorporated in the books. Without you, His work through the books and Newsletters would not be possible. I just wanted you to know that your work may be behind the scenes most of the time, but it is not unnoticed by God. He will reward you richly.” - ID

“Things are a mess over here in every church. That cd by Dave Wilkerson [Youtube “Anguish”] hit the nail on the head. The church is very sick. A laughing stock to the world. The Holy Spirit has left the church, but no one seems to notice He left. However, retreating and saving just self is not the answer either. We must seek Him in prayer and fasting. Jesus still loves the people, but He wants to be Lord and King.” - WA

I keep thinking about how different life was when I was growing

“It [August newsletter] was a really good article [‘The Most Dangerous People in the World’] how you described each word of 2 Tim 3:2 and even went into the Greek meaning. Very descriptive. Rayola's Q & A was super good and the whole newsletter was excellent as always.” - ID



Continued Column 3

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

WATER BAPTISM

Q: *I have come across a camp here, "Jesus Only" people, who teach that water baptism should be in the name of Jesus only, not as ascribed in Matthew 28:19-20. Can you tell me what their foundation is for advocating such a belief?*

A: I have encountered both this question before as well as the people who maintain this teaching. You can find this teaching in two camps: Those who deny the trinity of the Godhead and those who literally consider a few teachings and examples in the book of Acts as the ultimate authority as to how a matter must be done. For example, it is mentioned in four places in Acts that people were baptized in the name of Jesus. Such people believe that these examples abrogate the instructions our Lord clearly left in Matthew 28:19-20.

I approach this subject from three perspectives: The final instruction left by the One who serves as our example, head, Savior, and Lord of the Church, the cultural history of the day, and the creed that was clearly established by the apostles.

When it comes to Jesus, we have example along with teaching as to the proper and acceptable way it must be done. At Jesus' baptismal, He was physically present, but so was the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Father spoke and the Holy Spirit came down in the form of a dove. Since baptism points to salvation and a new life in Christ, we must recognize that all three Persons of the Godhead are actively involved in our salvation and bringing forth a new life. Why would they not be acknowledged in water baptism as well?

Jesus set forth the instruction as to how water baptism was to be carried out before He ascended into heaven. He is the head, Savior and Lord of the Church. His words are to be the final authority to any matter. There may be explanations for why something appeared to have changed, but such changes would not prove contrary to His instructions. Jesus' words are eternal and will remain our final authority and ultimate judge

when all has been said and done regardless of what appears to be discrepancies.

On an historical note, baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost has been traced back to the very days of the apostles. Our early fathers made mention of it in their writings and it can be found in the Apostles' Creed dating as far back as 100 A.D. According to the information I have, the rite established by Christ was also written in a document called the "Didache," which also dates back to 100, A.D. It speaks of baptisms in Jesus' name, but was referring to the ordinance in detail saying that it was actually performed in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost

There could be a couple of explanations as to why it was stated that people were baptized in the name of Jesus in Acts. To do something in the name of Jesus, whether it be prayer or baptism, is to do it with His authority. Without the proper authority of the One who is the head or Lord of something, there will be no real merit behind what we do.

Another reason Jesus' name could have been emphasized at that time is that the Jewish people were quite familiar with the Father and the Holy Ghost, but needed to recognize the authority Jesus was to have in their life as their Messiah. Therefore, there was more emphasis put on Jesus to ensure these people understood the significance of the ordinance of water baptism. However, when it was actually carried out, it was in all likelihood done in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

I do hope this sufficiently answers your question. †

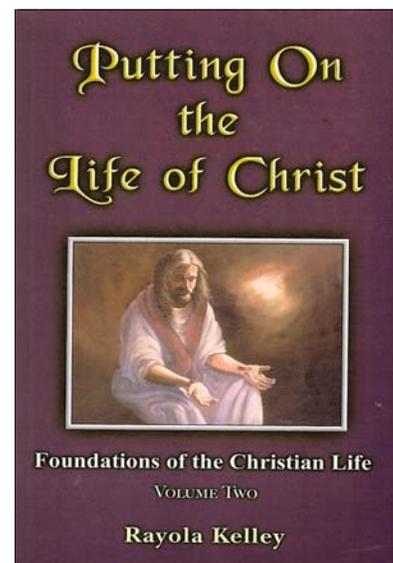
QUOTABLES

"Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers." — Sidlow Baxter

"When we depend on man, we get what man can do; when we depend on prayer, we get what God can do. — unknown

"A revival of real praying would produce a spiritual revolution." — E.M. Bounds

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Think on These Things
Follow the Pattern***

Each book in Volume Two reveals the different aspects of Jesus in His deity, humanity, example, and work of redemption. This second volume will inspire you to consider the heights of His deity, explore the depths to which He humbled Himself in His humanity, the mind He displayed in His meekness, and the pattern He left. This pattern enables His people through unfeigned faith to become identified with Him by following Him into the incredible life He has made available.

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