The Truth About Dedication of Children

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The majority of those who profess to follow the Bible reject infant baptism because it is not found in the Bible. What they do instead is to dedicate their children to the Lord. They also gather some sponsors just like those who practice infant baptism. Because of this, some people asked me, "Why do members of some Christian denominations practice dedication of children, but members of the churches of Christ do not?" I wrote this article hoping that this would enlighten those who asked why they did not practice such, and those who practiced such without investigating the Scriptures.

Some religious leaders of some denominations teach the dedication of children. As a result, their members practice the dedication of children without knowing the truth about such a practice. As a rule, in every religious practice that we do, we need to examine the Scriptures if such a practice is ordained by God or just a teaching of man in order to avoid the judgment of God. Remember that if a certain practice is just taught by men, **the worship of man is vain or useless** (Matthew 15:9) and God hates such a practice. Besides, this will mean that the one who practices such is no longer remaining in the doctrines of Christ. Why? It is because it is not taught in the Bible. It is not Christ's teaching anymore but the teaching of the pastor or any religious leader. What will happen to a man who practices the teaching of man? **He does not have God** (2 John 9-11). Beware!

Let us examine the Bible carefully about this religious practice. Is it really found in the Bible? Did Jesus teach it? Did the apostles teach and practice it? Read the entire New Testament, and you will find out that the early Christians did not practice it. There is only one reference to it, and it is found in Luke 2:22-24. It was **not even called dedication**, but it was called **presentation**. Jesus Christ was presented to the temple after the days of Mary's purification were over – 33 days after the circumcision of Christ (Luke 2:22; Leviticus 12:4, 6). Note that Jesus was presented to the temple in accordance with God's old law concerning **firstborn male child** (Luke 2:23; Exodus 13:11-16). In Luke 2:23, it is very specific that the law applies **ONLY to firstborn male child** and does not apply to any male who is not firstborn nor to any female child. Leviticus 12:6 does not urge the woman to present the son or daughter to the temple. But rather it urges the woman who has finished her days of purification to bring a lamb of the first year to the priest as a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for sin offering. This is done to cleanse herself from the flow of her blood (Leviticus 12:7). The days of purification are over if 33 days have passed after the circumcision – for a son or 66 days have passed after the two weeks of ceremonial uncleanness – for a daughter. That is exactly what Mary and Joseph did 33 days after the circumcision of Christ (Luke 2:21-24). They just fulfilled the **law concerning firstborn male child** because Christ was born under the old law (Galatians 4:4), and He was the **firstborn** Son of Mary (Matthew 1:25).

We cannot use this practice of dedicating the child to the Lord to replace circumcision because **circumcision is for male child ONLY**. Females are not circumcised. Besides, **it must be done on the eighth day after birth** (Luke 2:21). The presentation of Jesus in the temple was **done 33 days after His circumcision** (Luke 2:22). Moreover, if you practice it, you need to offer the required offerings (Luke 2:24). Neither can it replace baptism because **baptism** is for **adult individuals ONLY** and not for children (Mark 16:15-16).

It may be possible that you reason in your hearts that it is all right to practice dedication of children because they practiced it in the Old Testament. There are many reasons for rejecting it. First, it was **intended for the Israelite people** to keep but **not for Christians**. Second, the practice today is **very much different** from the old practice because **every child is dedicated regardless of sex whether or not it is the firstborn**. This is **adding** to His words which is **prohibited** (Deuteronomy 4:2, Proverbs 30:6). Third, the Bible gives us a lesson from the mistake that Moses committed. Remember that Moses was the man chosen by God to deliver His people out of Egypt. As Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt to the land that God promised them, he committed a mistake that would teach us about the strictness of God when it comes to **obedience** to His words. In Exodus 17:1-7, we can find that Moses faced with water problem. The people murmured against him and were about to stone him. God intervened by telling Moses to stand before the rock and ***strike the rock*** with his rod. Water came out of the rock after Moses struck it (Exodus 17:6). Later in their journey, they met the same water problem again. In Numbers 20:1-13, we can read the situation and the mistake that Moses committed. God intervened again and told Moses to ***speak to rock*** to yield water for them (Numbers 20:8). But Moses **struck the rock twice** and water still came out from it (Numbers 20:11). But was God happy with Moses? **God was not happy with Moses** (Numbers 20:12).

This sin is the reason for not allowing Moses to enter the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 32:48-52). Take note that Moses used the **old command** of God, i.e., **to strike the rock**, but God had a **new command** that Moses should follow, i.e., **to speak to the rock**. He followed the old command rather than the new, which barred him from entering the Promised Land. It can happen to us also if we insist on following the old commands from the Old Testament rather than the new commands as we can read in the New Testament. If we do so, we would not be allowed to enter heaven, which is our Promised Land today. Always remember that **heaven is open ONLY to those who do God's will** (Matthew 7:21), and it is not the will God that we keep the traditions of men (Matthew 15:3-9). It makes our **worship useless** (Matthew 15:9), and **we do not have God** in our lives if we do not remain in the teachings of Christ (2 John 9-11).

Dear reader, let us strive to **follow the teachings of God ONLY**. Let us reject the teachings of men even if they sound good. God is **strict to the disobedient** but **merciful to the obedient**. It is a test whether or not we love Him. If we love Him, **let us keep His commands ONLY** as we can read in the New Testament (John 14:15, 21, 23-24). With this, **we can be sure that we find favor in the eyes of God, and He will open heaven for us.**

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