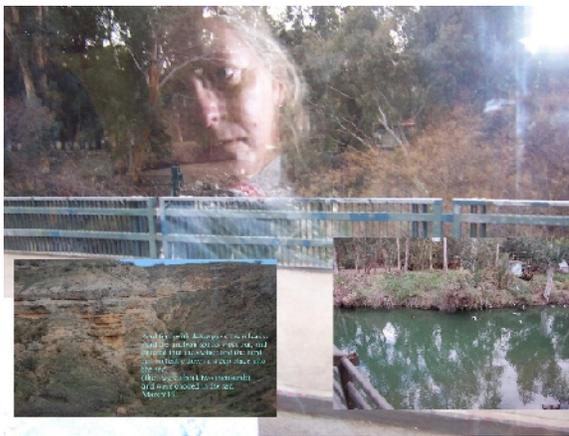




The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol XI Day 5 Sat 31 Jan: Baptist n Baptisms



I did not know where all John the Baptist Baptized in the Jordan River, but this spot, where the river poured from the Sea of Galilee was as likely as any. Several were 'baptizing themselves' in the Jordan River as we approached a rounded ramped area that sloped down into the water. I was not sure what I thought of this practice. Coming from a 1,900 year historic line of believers who had been burned, drowned and martyred over baptizing believers by immersion, and understanding that baptism was an ordinance for the local Bible believing Church caused me to approach such trivializing of baptism with skeptical care. Others seemed to carry none of this concern or question. The errant teachings of the Presbyterian Church, and all Protestants came to mind. Error on infant baptism, baptismal regeneration, election of souls by TULIPs, separation of Church and State, and the idea that Knox or any other Protestant 'spawned' any Baptists, AnaBaptist, Waldensians, Albigenses, Arnoldists, Henricians, Donatists, Paulicians, or Montanists, who long preceded any of these 'Protesters' to Catholicism, and represent the 1,978 year old perpetuity of Baptist doctrine, especially that of salvation by grace alone and certainly that of believers baptism by immersion. Baptist ancestors who had been drowned by Presbyterians because of their practice of baptism of believers by immersion looked without humor upon such trivializing of Baptism done here. They mourned my silence as well. It was such a rich opportunity to teach about the Baptist distinctive that gave us our name, to clarify this keen error of Catholic, Episcopal, Presbyterian and Methodist faith, to point out that baptismal water may have here washed leprosy off of one Naaman, (2Kings 5) but had never washed off a single sin, original or otherwise. The thing done here before us was more than a ceremonial lifetime experience, it was a singular issue of the doctrinal error that had cost us blood and name.



Twelve Baptist Preachers watched the Presbyterian Minister baptize himself in the Jordan River. Pictures were taken, Preach was set aside, martyred ancestors wept, and I took no opportunity to correct the error. At our first meal together, supposing him a baptist, I had openly rebuked this brother for his stand in the error of Calvinism. The next morning, when I found he was a Presbyterian Minister, not a Baptist, I openly apologized for rebuking him, but not for attacking his doctrinal error. Some of my drive to clarify Presbyterian error on baptism was thereby

kept in check, but inexcusable just the same. A Baptist should not take lightly the re-baptisms, baptisms or self baptisms of people in the Jordan River for recreational entertainment or 'emotional experience' or even 'once in a lifetime experience'. Baptism is an ordinance given to the local church and should never be trivialized, especially by Baptists on the banks of the Jordan River. When Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and Knox finally made their protest against Catholicism and affirmed that salvation is by faith without works or indulgence, they got the grace of God into the proper perspective, ... the perspective that Baptists, by various names previous, had then been preaching for 1,400

years! But these 'protesters' never got the doctrine of baptism even close to the Biblical doctrine. The whole glorification of baptism in the Jordan River was herein a missed opportunity to preach the message "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! Oh, precious is the flow that washes white as snow. No other fount I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus." In hindsight, again, all the Baptists preachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ should have united their voices and sang it from the baptismal steps at the Jordan River. Twelve Baptist preachers, only spectators, some clicking cameras, some jesting where baby sprinkling Protestants now baptize by immersion without understanding. There was ample meaninglessness unchecked and unmentioned. What a shame. What a silence.

Driving through the little towns on our way back up to Kibbutz Ginossar was delightfully relaxing as our long day drew to its close. Even in Israel we detected our coffee and donut stop by the two police cars in the lot. Starbucks Coffee had attempted a go in Israel but Jews were accustomed to a richer roasted coffee than they offered.



'Aroma' coffee shops had taken over the market. Their prices didn't rival Starbucks. The stop, the coffee, the donut, and the Christian fellowship topped off a very busy, but superb day in Israel.

In our new room at the Kibbutz of Ginossar, Bev and I discussed what we had seen. I revisited my own baptism in Ford's pond by Faith Baptist Church in Gang Mills NY, 47 years ago, Bev's 35 years ago. It would be folly and error to be re-baptized in the Jordan River. I had opportunity to

clarify Baptist baptism today but I denied him thrice. It is only his blood that can wash away sin. No water from a Jordan River could. After an exceptional supper and exhausting day our talk with our Lord and reading of His word together closed day 5 of our tour with a peace that passes all understanding. Tomorrow was the the Lord's day, the first day of the week, the day God raised his son from the grave, and we would get to worship him here in Israel. Expectation remained peaked as we crossed the half way point of our time here.

Day 6 Sun 1 Feb: Kibbutz Ginossar on the shore of Galilee was just too nice a place to spend only one night. Supper was an especially fancy buffet meal in a packed dining room. Ron and Brian had intended that we all sit together for a formal dinner but some of us arrived early and the overwhelming crowds for dinner had foiled the plan. The meal was exceptional just the same. We awoke at the edge of dawn intent on walking on the sea shore before breakfast. Armed with these intentions a New Testament and a harmonica we started on our quest for the path that would get us to the sea. We met Greg and Janise Johnson on the same quest and eventually the four of us met with success. The sun rose to find us worshipping on the Lord's day, on the Sea of Galilee.

