

IT IS SETTLED!

"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13b)

By Howell Lasseter

Grievous Wolves

Acts 20:28-30: *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."* Last week, we noticed the departure from God's Will in the organization of local, self-governing congregations and the realm of bishops. Paul, speaking to the Ephesian elders in the passage of Scripture above, predicted a falling-away would arise from among them. Again in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, Paul warns: *"Now, we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?"* Has this falling-away come? If so, from what was the departure? It was, and is, from God's Word.

The New Testament is clear that baptism is a burial (Romans 6:3-5); the burial is in water (Acts 8:38 - *"went down into the water ...came up out of the water"*). For over 200 years, this clear teaching was understood, taught, and practiced. In 251 A.D., a departure in the mode of baptism occurred. "Clinical baptism" consisted of sprinkling or pouring water on the person who was being "baptized." The excuse for this departure was that the person being baptized was so ill he could not be immersed. At first, this practice caused division in the church, but gradually, the exception ("clinical baptism") became the rule. To quote from Catholic Dictionary, Addis and Arnold, p. 60; and from Question Box, p. 366: "Affusion, or sprinkling is sufficient for Baptism, as well as immersion." There may be readers who are in religious groups which practice sprinkling or pouring for baptism. Perhaps some of you were not aware of the historical origin of that practice. Research into church history shows that "clinical baptism" arose over 200 years after the New Testament was given, and is clearly a departure from the original plan.

Readers, please study the New Testament carefully to learn what God requires. Reject any departure from God's plan.