

A dramatic coastal scene featuring a large, powerful wave crashing against dark, rounded rocks. The sky is a clear, bright blue, and the ocean is a deep blue with white foam from the breaking wave. The rocks are dark and wet, with some white foam splashing around them.

# GOD'S COVENANTS

*Biblical Research Library*

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# GOD'S COVENANTS

Throughout the history of man, God has worked with man through covenant relationships. He has worked through covenants for the purpose of bringing to man a guarantee that He will fulfill His promises to those who come to Him through obedient faith. However, since He is the one who will bring about the promises that result from His covenants, it is His privilege to determine the conditions upon which His covenants are established. It is His choice to determine the conditions by which the covenant is maintained. It is man's responsibility to take the initiative through obedient faith to accept God's covenants, and subsequently, to maintain the covenant by obediently conforming to God's conditions. When men submit to a covenant relationship with God, eternal blessings are the result. It is the responsibility of all men, therefore, to seek a covenant relationship with God who will bring into eternity only those who have established a covenant with Him. The new covenant that God now offers to all men is established with God at the time of the new birth when one is born of the water and the Spirit by obedience to the gospel. The promise that comes with this covenant is the opportunity to dwell with God in His presence for eternity.

## INTRODUCTION

This discussion is based on the foundation of a profound need of every individual on earth. That need is deliverance from separation from our God. Since the fall of Adam, sin has separated people from God. We all live with the curse of spiritual death that is brought on by our own sins. *"Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death passed to all men because all sinned"* (Rm 5:12). Spiritual death followed sin because sin and separation from God always come together. Isaiah proclaimed, *"But your iniquities have separated you from your*

*God"* (Is 59:2). When one is separated from God, he or she is eternally lost, eternally doomed to hopelessness in a destruction that has eternal consequences. Because of this separation from God, all people must seek reconciliation. All men must be reconciled to God if they would enjoy the promised blessing of eternal life.

Before the sin of Adam, God predetermined a plan of reconciliation. He knew that man was subject to his own fallibility. After He had created all men with the gift of free-moral choice, God knew that sooner or later men would

rebel against His will. The rebellion came sooner than later, and thus, the eternal plan of redemption was activated. Man's fallibility resulted in sin. Sin resulted in separation. As a result of separation from God, spiritual death and eternal doom came into the lives of Adam and Eve. The fall of man activated the need for reconciliation. Before the creation of the world, God had planned the way of reconciliation because He knew that sin would enter into the world.

God's plan for reconciliation was first announced to Adam and Eve. *"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and Her Seed; He will bruise your head, and you will bruise His heel"* (Gn 3:15). This announcement of the coming Savior of the world was vague, though Adam and Eve knew that God would do something to rectify the sin problem they had introduced into the world.

Throughout the generations of man, indications of salvation were sprinkled throughout God's revelations to the prophets before the cross. Prophets were inspired to prophesy of the Seed to come, but they did not understand the significance of the prophecies of God that something was coming. Peter spoke of their anxiety of what was to come. *"Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently... searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit... did signify when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ..."* (1 Pt 1:10-12). The prophets knew that all men were dead in sin, and could not through keeping of law, save themselves from con-

demnation.

But eventually the greatest announcement of all time was repeated to some shepherds of Israel over two thousand years ago. *"Do not fear, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy that will be to all people. For to you a Savior is born this day in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord"* (Lk 2:10,11). John proclaimed, *"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (Jn 1:29). Thus Jesus came. He came to go to the cross for our sins, for our reconciliation. He *"bore our sins in His own body on the tree, so that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness..."* (1 Pt 2:24). The Father *"made Him who knew no sin to be sin on behalf of us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Co 5:21). Atonement, justification, reconciliation, redemption, and thus, salvation, were all made possible at the cross by the suffering Servant.

Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me"* (Jn 14:6). Peter reaffirmed, *"And there is salvation in no other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"* (At 4:12). Jesus is the medium through whom repentant believers can save themselves from sin. He is the solution to man's greatest problem which is the problem of sin. Jesus is the only escape from the eternal destruction that awaits those who have not been reconciled to God.

There is, therefore, only one way to life. That way is through Jesus and His

atonement blood on the cross. The most important questions for every individual to ask and answer are: How can one apply to his or her own life the saving plan of God through the blood of Jesus? How can one be saved? Jesus saves, but how can one come into contact with the saving blood of Jesus?

This brings us to the subject of this discussion. From John the Baptist to Jesus, and from Jesus to this day, baptism has played a significant part in man's salvation. The word "baptism" is mentioned over one hundred times in our English New Testaments. The action of baptism in water is specifically mentioned in case after case in the conversions recorded in the New Testament. With such great emphasis on immersion, any serious student of God's word would conclude that there is something very significant about the action of baptism in relation to one's salvation. That significance is the subject of this discussion, for it is our belief that baptism is inseparably linked to one's salvation. God established it as such. And because He did the alien sinner must follow through with obedience to what God has commanded.

It is not that baptism is some meritorious work or a church sacrament. It is simply that God has made baptism a response of faith in Jesus and a point of reference at which He forgives us our sins. It is a point of reference to which the obedient believer can always look back and say that God saved him at that point by bringing him into a covenant relationship with Him.

With this purpose in mind we must

launch into this study. If baptism is inseparably linked to our salvation, then it is absolutely necessary that we understand its significance. Traditions and "church doctrines" will not help us in this study. Our only source of information must come from God's revelation on the matter, and thus, the Bible can be our only textbook.

**We must never forget that what is most important for man to do in order to be saved is where Satan will certainly do his best work to deceive men.** Since the subject of baptism has been a highly controversial subject in religious circles for centuries, then we would assume that Satan is at work. If baptism is necessary for salvation, then we would assume that Satan would be doing some of his greatest deceptive work with man's understanding of this subject.

Some would question why we should devote such a lengthy discussion to this subject. There are two reasons for this. The first reason is because of the preceding work of Satan. Since Satan has worked so well in confusing religious people concerning the importance of baptism, every Christian should thoroughly understand the Bible's teaching on the subject.

Secondly, in Ephesians 4:4-6 Paul listed baptism with seven fundamental teachings that must be maintained as one. If baptism is listed as a fundamental doctrine, then certainly it is not a subject to be avoided. It seems that the Holy Spirit knew that misguided theologians would allow Satan to deceive them concerning the importance of baptism. For this rea-

son the Holy Spirit listed it with such fundamental beliefs as “one God,” “one Spirit” and “one Lord.” Therefore, anyone who would assume that this subject is inconsequential to Christian belief and salvation has allowed himself to believe a deception of Satan concerning the importance of baptism.

In the year A.D. 62 it is believed that the apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians from a prison in Rome. In this letter he stated that there was at that time only **one baptism** (Ep 4:4-6). Taking into consideration the book of Acts and the history of the church after Acts 2, that one baptism was the baptism obeyed by the Ephesians (At 19:1-6), the Corinthians (At 18:8), the Samaritans (At 8:5-13), and thousands of others who responded to the gospel of Jesus in the first century. This one baptism was **immersion in water for remission of sins**.

Baptism for remission of sins was first mentioned in Mark 1:4 in the preaching of John the Baptist. “*John came in the wilderness baptizing and preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*” This baptism was not in the “name of Jesus,” for Jesus had not yet come upon the scene preaching the coming of the kingdom of God.

The second time we encounter a baptism for the remission of sins is in Acts 2:38. Peter proclaimed to a Pentecost audience, “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ....*” By the time Peter had made the statement of Acts 2:38, Jesus had died on the cross. He had been resurrected. He had ascended

into heaven. Acts 2:38 is the one baptism about which Paul wrote in Ephesians 4. This is the baptism that supersedes all other baptisms that are mentioned in the New Testament.

The mode or manner of the one baptism is by immersion. In fact, baptism is immersion. This is the true meaning of the Greek word from which we construct the transliterated word “baptize.” Nevertheless, there has always been great debate in the religious world concerning the mode or manner of baptism. (In this book we will use the words “immerse” and “baptism” interchangeably. However, we do this only to accommodate present religious discussion. The word baptism is so common in religious discussion that it is difficult to ignore it when talking about the subject.)

Many religious groups have made unbiblical changes concerning the manner of baptism. Some have stated that baptism may be “performed” in any one of three ways: by sprinkling, pouring or immersion. It is claimed by some that one manner is just as good as another. As long as one has some type of a “conversion experience,” it is assumed that the manner by which he or she is baptized is not relevant. It is thus affirmed that one has the right to choose the manner by which he or she will be baptized.

There are many religious leaders today who have totally rejected the practice of immersion. In the religious world there has developed the belief that baptism in any form is not linked to one’s salvation. The new birth can be either a conversion experience or an emotional



euphoria. If one wants to be baptized, then such is optional.

With many religious groups there is no longer any debate over either the manner of baptism or the necessity thereof. Baptism has simply dropped out of the discussions of many religious groups. Preachers have become indifferent to discussion surrounding the subject, believing that because baptism is supposedly not necessary for salvation, there is no need for debate.

There is also the host of religious groups that practice infant baptism. This practice originated out of an unfortunate belief that babies are inherent sinners because of a supposed “original sin” with which one is born as a result of the sin of Adam. It is believed that at birth babies inherit the supposed sin of Adam. They are thus in need of baptism for the remission of sins.

We do not pretend to write a complete study of the subject on baptism. However, we do want to present some of the most important aspects of the subject as they are stated in the Scriptures. Since the word “baptism” in either a noun or verb form is mentioned over one hundred times in the New Testament, we must assume that this is a very important subject for discussion. We cannot simply pass over this subject if we claim allegiance to the Bible as a standard for faith and obedience. The movement to relegate baptism to some practice of ancient religious sacraments is not acceptable. We must deal with this subject that has been a point of confrontation in the past and present because it is mentioned

so many times in the New Testament.

It will be noticed from the material of this discussion that immersion in water is necessary in order to establish a covenant relationship with God. Without this relationship, there is no salvation. It is our prayer that each reader will consider the main points of each of the following chapters with a desire to fully understand the nature and purpose of baptism.

Some wonder why we need to continually discuss the matter of baptism. The fact that they wonder about discussions on baptism is part of the problem. We live in a generation of Christendom that has gone in two directions on the subject. There is a legal oriented group that views baptism as some kind of “church sacrament.” Such is evidenced in how we approach our youth. Some say, “Isn’t it time, young man, that you get baptized?” The problem is that we often do not focus on commitment to Jesus. There is no call to commit one’s life to Jesus. Only perform an immersion act and one is accepted. Some have digressed to the point of simply “making sure someone knows what he or she is doing” before they are baptized. So we sit down and go through the facts. As long as one knows the facts, then we assume the one is ready to be baptized. Dedicated commitment from the heart to live the sacrificial life for Jesus is only incidental. Understanding the covenant relationship one is establishing with God in baptism is secondary. Some have, therefore, encouraged people to just “get baptized” in order to fulfill a requirement, and then take one’s seat in a pew. Is this the only sig-

nificance we should place on baptism?

The second group that is in trouble are those who have run through Jerusalem in search of unity with anyone who would mention Jesus. This group has sacrificed baptism for fellowship with anyone who shows up at the church assembly. As long as one claims to have some kind of conversion experience and manifests some type of commitment, then he or she is accepted into fellowship. Obedience to the gospel in immersion is

not important. We seriously do not believe that the New Testament teaches such universal salvation.

In this discussion we would challenge the preceding misconceptions. We believe there are too many people who are missing the point of a most important New Testament teaching. For this reason it is time for another look at the subject, always remembering that we must be willing to submit to any teaching of the word of God on the subject.

## Chapter 1

### Definition of *Baptizo*

Much of the confusion that arises out of discussions over religious matters results from a misunderstanding concerning the definition of words. In our study of the subject of baptism, much of the controversy would be eliminated if just one word in the New Testament had been properly translated in 1611 by the *King James Version*. This one word is the Greek word “*baptizo*.”

There are two things to understand concerning the word *baptizo*. First, the English word “baptize” is a **transliteration** of the Greek word *baptizo*. Second, this Greek word was used in the first century to express the action of immersion, dipping, plunging or overwhelming. All Greek lexicons (dictionaries) and church historians agree on this definition.

#### A. **Transliteration of *baptizo*:**

Transliteration is the practice of writ-

ing in alphabetical characters the sound of the words of one language into the same sound of alphabetical characters of another language. This is what took place when the Greek word *baptizo* was transliterated in 1611 by the translators of the *King James Version*.

When the King James translators translated the *King James Version* of the New Testament in 1611, they chose to **transliterate** the Greek word *baptizo* instead of translating it. They did this because there were many religious groups of that day who were sprinkling people and calling it baptism. Therefore, by transliteration, the Greek word *baptizo* became “baptize” in the English language. We thus live today with this unfortunate action of past translators. The unfortunate transliteration has caused much confusion in the study and practice of baptism. In fact, if this word had been properly translated, there would be



no need for this discussion on what the word means.

## **B. Lexicon definition of *baptizo*:**

In studying the Greek word *baptizo* there is no misunderstanding of the actual meaning of the word as it is defined by Greek lexicons. In the Greek lexicon of Arndt and Gingrich, *baptizo* is defined as “dip,” or “immerse.” In Thayer’s lexicon the word is defined “to dip repeatedly,” “to immerse,” or “submerge.” The Abbott-Smith lexicon says, “to dip, immerse, sink, or to overwhelm.” In his comprehensive book on New Testament words, W. E. Vine said that baptism is “the process of immersion, submersion and emergence.” There are no Greek lexicons that define *baptizo* in any other way than the definition that is given by accepted Greek lexicons. Therefore, when reading the New Testament, Bible students should almost always read the word “immerse” when they see the word “baptize” in the text.

The well known church historian, Philip Schaff, wrote, “Unquestionably, immersion expresses the idea of baptism ....” The world accepted *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states, “It is noteworthy that here [Mark 7:4] *rhantizo* [the Greek word for “sprinkle”] is used in contrast with *baptizo* showing that baptize did not mean sprinkle.” All church historians will agree with these statements.

Anyone who defines *baptizo* to mean “sprinkle” or “pouring” is arguing against the best scholarship of the biblical world.

All accepted Greek lexicons and church historians affirm that the primary meaning of the word *baptizo* is immersion. This fact cannot be denied. Therefore, no matter what one has been taught previously on the matter, he or she must accept this definition of the word. This is the correct definition and the one that must be understood when the word “baptize” is read in the text of the Scriptures.

The fact is that defining the word “baptism” should never have to be included in a book on the subject of baptism. If the word was translated correctly in Bibles throughout the world there would be no need to define the word. It would be like defining the word “immersion” by trying to convince people that immersion means “immersion.” However, Satan has done his work well. Millions of people throughout Christendom today are confused concerning the definition of baptism. They are confused because religious leaders who know the truth on this matter are not teaching the truth that the meaning of the word *baptizo* is immersion, not sprinkling or pouring.

## **C. Textual definition of *baptizo*:**

The final “dictionary” on determining the meaning of any word is the context in which it is used. When we turn to the pages of the New Testament, there is a very clear definition of the word *baptizo*. There are two key passages in the New Testament that clearly demonstrate that baptism is a burial, and not sprinkling or pouring.

**1. Colossians 2:12:** To the Colossians, Paul wrote that they were *“buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead.”* The action of baptism could not be stated more clearly. One is **buried** in baptism, after which he is **raised** from the grave of water just as Jesus was **raised** from the grave by the Father.

In order for one to be raised, he or she must first be buried. The phrase “raised with Him” assumes a burial. There can be no resurrection with Jesus unless there is first a burial with Him.

**2. Romans 6:3-5:** In Romans 6:3-5 Paul gives a very descriptive account of the relationship between baptism and the gospel. The gospel is the death of Jesus on the cross for our sins. It is His burial and resurrection to give us hope of a future resurrection. Baptism in water is obedience to the gospel. (More on this later.)

In Romans 6:3-5 Paul explained what happened to Jesus in His redemption for man. Jesus **died** on the cross. He was **buried** in a tomb. On the third day after His death on the cross, He was **resurrected** from the tomb. However, Paul’s emphasis in Romans 6:3-5 is on what Christians have done in obedience to the gospel event.

Paul is saying that as Jesus was **buried** in the tomb, so we are **buried** by baptism in a tomb of water. As Jesus was **resurrected** from the tomb, so we are also **resurrected** from the waters of baptism. In order to be in the likeness of Jesus’ burial, we must be buried in wa-

ter. Jesus was not sprinkled into the tomb. Neither is one sprinkled with water for burial today. Water cannot be sprinkled on the candidate and it be called baptism.

In conjunction with Colossians 2:12 and Romans 6:3-6, there is an important rule of Bible study to consider. This rule is, **the true meaning or synonym of a word can be put in the place of the word in the text or sentence without changing the meaning of that text or sentence in which the original word is used.** If baptism means “sprinkling” or “pouring,” then these definitions can be substituted in the text where the word “baptism” is used without any change in the textual meaning. If we substitute the meaning “sprinkling” or “pouring” in the text of Romans 6:3-5 and Colossians 2:12 for the word “baptism,” then the meaning of the text **changes** because the meaning of baptism is not sprinkling or pouring. Notice how this substitution would change the meaning of the text of Romans 6:3-5.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were [**sprinkled**] into Christ Jesus were [**sprinkled**] into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through [**sprinkling**] into death ....

The reason Romans 6:3-5 and Colossians 2:12 sound contradictory with the above substitution is because baptism does not mean “sprinkling” or “pouring.” The word means “immerse.” This synonym can be substituted in the texts of

Romans 6:3-5 and Colossians 2:12 without any change in the meaning of what the inspired writer is trying to convey. And what the writer is trying to convey is that we are immersed in obedience to the gospel.

#### D. Circumstances surrounding baptism:

The events that took place during various cases of baptism in the New Testament show that only immersion could have been the correct action of baptism.

1. ***Much water is needed in order to accomplish the action of baptism.*** In John 3:23 we read that John the Baptist “was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was ***much water there*** ....” Why would John be baptizing in a location where there was ***much water*** if baptism required only a little water? If baptism were by sprinkling or pouring, then he could have brought the water in a jug or jar to the ones who were to be baptized. But the fact that John had to take the ones who were to be baptized to a place of much water assumes that baptism was by immersion, and much water is needed for immersion.

2. ***“Going down into the water” is required in order to accomplish the action of baptism.*** In Acts 8:26-40 the Ethiopian eunuch was taught of Jesus and baptized by Philip, the evangelist. As he and Philip went on their way in a chariot, the eunuch “commanded the chariot to stand still. ***And they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eu-***

***nuch, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away ...***” (vss 38,39). We would wonder why both Philip and the eunuch had to go down into the water in order for the eunuch to be baptized if only sprinkling was involved in the baptism. Why get completely wet when one could just stand on the bank of a river, dip out a little water, and then sprinkle it on the subject’s head? The fact that Philip had to dip or immerse the eunuch completely under water made it necessary to take the eunuch down into the water.

This same example for immersion is also seen in the baptism of Jesus. Matthew 3:16 reads, “***And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up immediately out the water ....***” John and Jesus had gone down into the water in order that Jesus might be immersed by John in much water. The action of immersion necessitates that one go down into the water.

The historical evidence that defines *baptizo* to mean immersion is consistent and in agreement with all Greek lexicons. There is no evidence to the contrary. It would seem, therefore, that in this area of study of baptism there can be no debate. Baptism is by immersion. To ignore this fact is to become very unbiblical in one’s studies because one has refused to accept the scholarship of the world with reference to the definition of the word *baptizo*.

The English words “baptize” and “baptism” have now become so accepted in the world of theology and translation

that there are few publishing houses who have the courage to translate the words properly in published translations of the New Testament. We have found that the intimidation of the religious world is so strong, that book publishing houses have rejected a literal translation of *baptizo* for the sake of many religious groups who continue to sprinkle people and call it baptism. What is encouraging, however, is that the religious world to a great extent is accepting the fact that baptism is by immersion. The exception are those groups who continue to cling to their traditional practice of sprinkling. However, most of the evangelical religious groups have given up sprinkling in order to restore the original action of immersion.

Please be reminded again that what is most important for one to do in order

to be saved is where Satan will do his best work. In the area surrounding baptism in obedience to the gospel, Satan has done well to confuse many people by leading them to believe that they have been baptized when they have only been sprinkled with water. There are still many religious groups throughout the world who have substituted sprinkling for the action of baptism. However, this situation is rapidly changing, and thus we welcome the discussion concerning baptism by immersion. It is a discussion that is bringing forth a great deal of fruit as people throughout the world are being immersed for the remission of sins. It has now become the exception that people are sprinkled. The general practice today among religious people is immersion.

## Chapter 2

### Baptism And Church History

There is actually little discussion in the theological world today that centers around the practice of baptism in the early church. Anyone who has studied church history has discovered at least one common fact concerning discussions on baptism by the Christian writers of the second and third centuries. That one fact is that the early church **immersed** people. There is no history of sprinkling or pouring for baptism in the first, second and third centuries, and thus, present day liberal theologians ignore the fact that their teaching that baptism is by sprinkling or pouring has no evidence of early church history. Therefore, if we are to restore

the ancient order of baptism, then we must go all the way back to the first century. In doing this, the only valid book for research on this subject is the New Testament. Though the documents of ancient church historians after the writing of the New Testament are valuable resources, the New Testament must always be our final authority.

As one studies church history, those who have identified themselves with Christianity today in some form have progressed from a true emphasis on baptism in the first century to a total indifference toward it today. In many churches today the subject is not even on

the agenda for discussion. This seems to be the normal drift of those religious groups who have ceased having the Bible as their standard of authority in matters of faith. The result of this lack of emphasis on the Bible as our final authority in religious matters today has led to some interesting admissions on the part of different theologians. They have researched the mode of baptism in the early church writings and have confessed that the early church practiced immersion.

The following are a few brief statements of some religious groups concerning the historical practice of baptism. These statements indicate both the change of the mode and the purpose of baptism in various religious groups.

#### **A. Ancient religious documents affirm immersion for baptism:**

Baptism was by immersion in the first century. However, many years after the first century men started the practice of baptism by sprinkling or pouring. The first recorded case of sprinkling for baptism was that of **Novatian** who was sprinkled in bed no earlier than A.D. 250. When it was certain that Mr. Novatian would soon die, his friends hastened to perform some rite over him and call it baptism. Eusebius (260 - 340) wrote concerning this case,

Novatian, being relieved thereof by the exorcists, fell into a grievous distemper: and it being supposed that he would die immediately, he received baptism, being sprinkled with water, on the bed whereon

he lay, (if that can be termed baptism).

In this first recorded case of sprinkling, it seems that Eusebius was apprehensive about calling sprinkling baptism. From this earliest recorded case of sprinkling, not only is the manner of baptism being changed, but also the approach by which some use the Bible. A religious practice was carried out on Novatian. Water was sprinkled on him. In order to make the practice “biblically” oriented, those who carried out the deed stole the Bible word “baptism” in order to justify their act. They applied a Bible word to an invented action of man.

This is still a common practice among religions today. Religious plagiarists are still stealing words from the Bible and applying them to their religious practices that they have invented after their own desires or traditions. In an effort to make their religious practices appear to be biblical, they have used Bible names in reference to practices that have been developed by man. This is one of Satan’s greatest tools to deceive and confuse people concerning the truth about baptism.

The *Didache*, an ancient document that was written in the second century, also states a time when sprinkling or pouring was substituted for immersion.

Concerning baptism, you baptize thus, having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living [running] water. But if you cannot in cold, in warm. But if you do not have either, pour

out water three times upon the head into the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

Here again is another substitution that has led to erroneous religious dogma today on the subject of baptism. In the above statement of the *Didache*, a religious act is again being called baptism. In this case, if what God requires is not convenient, then it is believed that one is justified to change God's will. This is not an uncommon practice among religious groups today. This is probably one of the greatest forces among religious people concerning the changing of immersion to sprinkling. If immersion is not convenient, it is believed that we have a right to change to sprinkling. In the book, *Faith of Our Fathers*, James Cardinal Gibbons, a Catholic Church authority admitted,

For several centuries after the establishment of Christianity Baptism was usually conferred by immersion; but since the twelfth century the practice of baptizing by infusion has prevailed in the Catholic Church, **as this manner is attended with less inconvenience than Baptism by immersion** [emphasis mine, R.E.D.].

Do religious counsels of men have the right to change the meaning of the Greek word *baptizo*? Such seems to be what has happened with those who produce religious writings for their churches.

What has happened among some religious groups is that the word "baptism" has moved so far away from the original

meaning of *baptizo* that it has assumed a different meaning. In order to solve this confusion, men have taken it upon themselves to determine their own meaning for the word. They have determined the meaning of *baptizo* by their traditional practice of sprinkling. Today, when people read their Bibles, many people understand the word "baptism" to mean sprinkling because their particular religion practices sprinkling for baptism.

Most religious leaders today and all ancient church historians agree that first century baptism was by immersion. However, after the first century, an apostasy led people to believe that sprinkling was the right manner of baptism. Recognition of this historical digression poses a challenge to those today who have been practicing either sprinkling or pouring and calling it baptism. Either they restore the New Testament practice of immersion, or they continue after the tradition of men who have counterfeited a most sacred teaching of Jesus. "*He who believes and is baptized [immersed], will be saved ...*" (Mk 16:16). What men often do in cases as this is what the Jews did. Jesus said of them, "*All too well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your own tradition*" (Mk 7:9).

## **B. Religious leaders agree that baptism was by immersion.**

Reference is made to important religious leaders here, not as an authority to establish biblical truth, but to show that many leaders of the past have contended



that the manner of baptism is by immersion. These and many other religious historians unanimously contend that baptism was by immersion in the first century.

**Martin Luther** said,

The name baptism is Greek; in Latin it can be rendered immersion, ... we immerse anything in water, that it may be all covered with water. And although that custom has now grown out of use ... **yet they ought to be entirely immersed, and immediately drawn out.**

**John Calvin** said,

**The very word baptize signified to immerse;** and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the primitive church.

**John Wesley** said,

We are buried with Him, alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion.

The religious groups today who practice sprinkling and pouring and call such baptism, are faced with a challenge. They have no authority of the first century church, nor one Greek scholar on biblical languages to support their present practice. They must make a decision. Either they take the position that man has a right to arbitrarily change Bible teach-

ings and practices, or they must discard those religious practices that conflict with Bible teaching.

The power of traditional thought in the minds of men is very strong. Traditional patterns of belief and behavior are strong in the realm of religion. It is so strong that men will reject God's word in order to maintain a traditional belief or practice. Again, we must remember Jesus' words to the Jewish religious leaders. *"All too well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your own tradition"* (Mk 7:9).

Men are no different today than when Jesus spoke these words. For this reason, the vast majority of people who practice sprinkling and pouring will continue to do so. They are unfortunately caught in a religious scenario that is not biblically oriented. They have created a religion after their own traditions. They are in bondage to their history and to the majority of those of their faith. Nevertheless, it is the duty of all to know the truth on the subject and to teach the truth. We do so to set men free from traditional religion that has been created after the desires of men. In reference to baptism, these traditions have now become the validation to identify particular religious groups. Once traditional teaching becomes the standard upon which a particular religious group determines its identity, then it is very difficult to return to the word of God as our final authority in matters of faith.

## Chapter 3

# Baptism And Obedience To The Gospel

In the world of Christendom throughout history there has probably been more discussion concerning the purpose and importance of baptism than any other New Testament teaching. By a casual reading of the New Testament one can clearly see that the subject of baptism is very important. In many passages of the New Testament, baptism is simply mentioned as a statement of fact. No detail is usually given concerning its purpose simply because it is understood that we should gather from other contexts the full significance of baptism. And indeed, the full significance of what transpires in immersion is very important to understand from the entire New Testament teaching on the subject.

For many centuries in the religious world there have been those who have believed that remission of sins, regeneration, and consequently, salvation, **preceded** one's obedience to the gospel in immersion. It is believed by some that there is an actual and real remission of sins at the point one believes in Jesus as his personal Savior, or goes through some "conversion experience." It is affirmed that when one truly repents and believes in Jesus that he or she is born again. Baptism is only a confirmation of one's salvation. However, the New Testament clearly teaches that this belief is contrary to God's plan for man's part in his salvation.

Another doctrine that seems to be prevalent today is the "salvation experience" doctrine. In other words, as long as one has had some type of salvation experience in his or her life, such is an indication of one's acceptance by God. Baptism is only one in a selected catalog of optional experiences in which one may participate after a supposedly salvation experience. The result of this teaching is the same as all teachings that do not emphasize the importance of immersion in reference to salvation, or a consideration of all that the New Testament teaches concerning what is required for salvation. Baptism is often relegated to a simple legal work. It is claimed to have little or no importance in reference to one's salvation. For this reason, in the following material we want to emphasize the purpose of baptism in relation to the salvation of one's soul. Baptism is not a church sacrament. It is not some meritorious work for salvation. It is not an inconsequential work that follows remission of sins.

Contrary to the host of religious groups who deny the fact that baptism is essential to salvation, the New Testament clearly connects immersion in water to obedience of the gospel. If one concludes that this is true, then there can be no argument against the teaching that at the point of baptism, that is obedience to the gospel, one is saved.

What one must understand that “obedience to the gospel” is the action of immersion. But obedience to the gospel is more than a legal action of immersion in water. This thought is introduced by Paul in **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9**. Paul wrote,

*... rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God **and who do not obey the gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ. These will be punished with everlasting destruction away from the presence of the Lord and away from the glory of His power.*

This statement teaches some encouraging things if one is a believer. **Jesus is coming again.** He is coming with His angels. If one is not a Christian, however, the teaching of 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 may be quite disturbing. Jesus is coming to take vengeance on those who have not **obeyed the gospel.**

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 clearly teaches that **one must obey the gospel** in order to escape the coming judgment and destruction. This biblical concept is also stated as a question by Peter in 1 Peter 4:17. Peter asks, “*For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God. And if it first begins with us, **what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?***” Both Peter and Paul revealed a most important truth concerning the gospel and our obedience. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 and 1 Peter 4:17 were written in order to deliver themselves from the coming destruction. It is at the

point of baptism that our deliverance from destruction was made. Our obedience of the gospel connected us with the gospel when we were immersed into the saving death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

We must ask and answer two questions that arise from 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 and 1 Peter 4:17. We must ask: “**What is the gospel?**” and “**How can one obey the gospel?**” Answering these two questions answers all questions in reference to the importance of immersion in relation to one’s salvation.

All agree that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rm 1:16). We would also agree that the verb “obey” in the phrase “obey the gospel” refers to action on the part of man. The gospel is God’s work in reference to our salvation. Obedience is our response to God’s work. Therefore, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 and 1 Peter 4:17 connect the work of God through the gospel with the obedience of man in order to be delivered from the coming judgment. Once we determine the answers to the two preceding questions, therefore, we will determine the necessity of baptism in reference to one’s salvation. Since both Paul and Peter connected God’s work through the gospel and man’s response through obedience, we cannot separate the gospel from our obedience in reference to our salvation. Baptism is not an option. It is a necessity in reference to salvation, for by baptism one obeys the gospel. The following points will clearly manifest that man must obey the gospel by immersion in water for remission of sins in order to be saved:

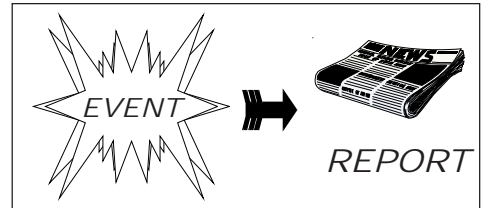
## A. What is the gospel?

There are some very important points here to review concerning the definition of the gospel. The question is often asked concerning what the gospel is. The most common response is, “The gospel is the good news.” This is partially right but partially wrong. “Good news” is actually the meaning of the New Testament Greek word that we translate with the English word “gospel.” It might be better to ask, “What is the good news?” This question will often bring mixed responses. At least, it gets us closer to understanding the gospel.

Unfortunately, many people affirm that the gospel (good news) is the teaching of Jesus or the Bible. Others affirm that Jesus is the gospel. This would be a correct answer if we understand that Jesus was more than a man, more than a good teacher, and that His coming to earth was for a salvational purpose. But we must determine how Jesus is good news in our relationship with God, with life, and with the judgment to come.

We once stood before approximately seventy-five preachers at a seminar on personal evangelism. We held up a copy of the Bible and asked, “Is this the gospel?” Almost everyone held up his hand. We then said, “This is not the gospel.” The preachers uncomfortably squirmed and thought that we were certainly missing a commonly accepted truth. However, after less than ten minutes of explanation, every preacher agreed that the gospel was **an historical event** that took place over two thousand years ago.

In the first century, men and women **heard** the gospel. They **believed** the gospel. They **repented** because of the gospel. They **confessed** Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. And finally, they were **baptized** in obedience to the gospel. In order to clarify this, consider the fact that the gospel is an **event** that happened in history and is reported to us today in the inspired New Testament. We thus read the New Testament as an inspired report from the Holy Spirit concerning the gospel event.



The gospel was an event that happened in history. It happened almost two thousand years ago and was recorded as a report in the pages of the New Testament. As in any newspaper, the event happens **before** the report is written. Such is the case with the gospel and the report of its historical occurrence.

The report is not the event. We believe the events because we trust the reliability of the reporter. By affirming that the gospel is an event we are simply saying that it took place in history. People personally experienced its occurrence. Matthew personally experienced the gospel event and wrote an inspired letter about it. Luke did not personally experience the gospel event. However, he interviewed eyewitnesses who had (Lk 1:1-

4), and then, he wrote a narrative of the events surrounding the gospel event. Therefore, the records we have concerning the gospel event are inspired **reports**. They are reports of the greatest news-breaking story that has happened in the history of the world. When we read the New Testament we are reading about this great historical event that has changed the lives of millions.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 Paul explained, *“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”* Jesus died for our sins. He was buried and rose again in order to give us hope of eternal life. **The gospel event, therefore, is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.** This is the good news that solves the problems of both spiritual and physical death.

We must remember that the gospel is good news. But how is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus good news for us today? The answer is simple. *“... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rm 3:23). The result of sin against God is death. Isaiah wrote, *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God”* (Is 59:2). Therefore, when we think about sin, **we must think about separation from God.** And when we think about separation from God, we must think about spiritual death. Paul stated, *“For the wages of sin is death”* (Rm 6:23).

Sin, separation and death always go together. When we think about death,

we must recognize our two greatest problems for which we need good news. Both problems involve death. The following are these two problems for which every man must find good news:



**1. Spiritual death:** Sin separates one from God, and thus, the alien sinner is spiritually dead in sin. This is what Paul meant in Romans 5:12. *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world and death through sin, and so death passed to all men because all sinned.”* When Adam personally sinned against God, he was personally separated from God by his sin. We do not inherit the **guilt** of Adam’s sin. Adam was responsible for his own sin before God. However, God says that every man has sinned. Spiritual death passes to all men because *“there is none righteous, no, not one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rm 3:10,23). Without the good news of the cross one is *“dead in trespasses and sins”* (Ep 2:1). This is man’s first and greatest problem! This problem means that we must be **reconciled** to God. We must be brought back to a saved relationship with our Creator. The gospel event answers this problem, **for Jesus died for our sins on the cross** (1 Co 15:3). Jesus died for the purpose of reconciling man to God. The gospel is good news, therefore, because it gives every man an opportunity to be reconciled to God through the cross.

**2. Physical death:** Physical death

entered into the world when Adam was separated from the tree of life. After Adam sinned, God stated, “*Behold, the man has become as one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, he must not be allowed to put forth his hand and take of the tree of life and eat, and live forever.*” Therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden” (See Gn 3:22-24). All humanity was thus separated from the tree of life. As a result, it is appointed unto all of us that we must physically die (Hb 9:27). The Bible says, “*For as in Adam all die ...*” (1 Co 15:22). All of us suffer from the **consequences** of Adam’s sin. But again, the gospel is good news concerning this second greatest problem of man, the problem of physical death. Paul continued, “*... even so in Christ all will be made alive*” (1 Co 15:22). Therefore, **in Christ** the obedient will be made alive. They will live forever. **This is good news!**

We must remember that our first great problem is our **spiritual separation from God** that has resulted from our personal sins against God. Without Christ and the cross we are “*dead in our trespasses and sins*” (Ep 2:1). The gospel is good news because Jesus came to die for our personal sins against God. Man’s second greatest problem is that each one of us will eventually physically die. We needed good news for this problem. Jesus was raised to never die again. He was raised with an eternal, incorruptible body. Those who are in Christ will also be raised when He comes again (See 1 Th 4:13-18).

Since the gospel event is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, this definition of the gospel must be applied to what Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. The application of this definition emphasizes the necessity of baptism in reference to one’s salvation.

## **B. How can one obey the gospel?**

Romans 6:3-6 answers this question. One must first believe the gospel event. Jesus came preaching, “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel*” (Mk 1:15). In order to be saved by the good news one must believe in the cross, Jesus’ burial and His resurrection. John came preaching that Jesus was the Savior of the world, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29). Men must believe in who Jesus is before they will respond to the work of Jesus on the cross and His hope-giving resurrection.

In Romans 6:3 Paul asked the Roman brethren a question. “*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?*” We must keep in mind that the theme of Romans 6 is our **death to sin**. Read through the chapter and count how many times the words “death,” “die,” “died” and “dead” are used in reference to the Christian’s life in relation to the past life of sin.

In the phrase “baptized into His death,” the English word “into” is from the Greek word *eis*. In the context reference must be to a metaphorical use of *eis*. In Matthew 28:19 one is baptized



**into** (*eis*) “*the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*” In both texts (Rm 6:3; Mt 28:19) the meaning is related by the use of the Greek word *eis*. When one is baptized, he or she is baptized into a **relationship** with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Romans 6, Paul’s emphasis is on being baptized into a relationship with the death of Jesus on the cross. Herein, therefore, is the theme of Romans 6. “*How will we who died to sin live any longer therein?*” (Rm 6:2). In this chapter, Paul’s argument is clear. Christians have come into a relationship with Jesus by putting to death the old man. And, “*he who has died has been freed from sin*” (Rm 6:7). But when did the old man die? When was the old man buried? When was the new man resurrected?

Jesus died in Jerusalem. He died almost two thousand years ago. Nevertheless, today one can be “baptized into His death.” Paul explains this in Romans 6:4. “*Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also might walk in newness of life.*” Thus the answer to the question of Romans 6:3 is verse 4.

It would be hard to miss Paul’s explanation of how to be baptized into the death of Jesus in obedience to the gospel. Notice the preposition “with.” By immersion in water one goes to the grave **with** Jesus.

Something great, something spiritual happens in baptism. Jesus was buried. In obedience to the gospel event, **we are also buried with Him**. In baptism, the

alien sinner comes into a spiritual union with Jesus. A covenant is being formed. A relationship with God is established when one comes into contact with the cleansing blood of Jesus. Because of the seriousness of this teaching, Paul repeats the answer to the question of Romans 6:3 again in verse 5, but with different words and phrases. “*For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also will be in the likeness of His resurrection.*”

By immersion into Jesus one is **united together** in the likeness of Jesus’ death. As Jesus went to the tomb almost two thousand years ago, so we can also go to the tomb of water together with Him today. Subsequently, we are raised with Him in order to walk in newness of life. This is great news! In Colossians 2:12 Paul stated that the Colossians were “... **buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead.**”

In immersion, therefore, one is buried with Jesus. He or she is also raised with Jesus. In baptism one obeys the gospel, which is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. However, before one goes to the grave with Jesus, he or she must also go to the cross. Paul explains this in verse 6.

*... knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be the bondservants of sin.*

Here again is the preposition “with.” Jesus was crucified. We must also be crucified with Him. The old man of sin died with Jesus on the cross. Our old man of greed, selfishness, drunkenness, worldliness or pride died on a cross with Jesus. Paul wrote concerning his personal crucifixion, *“I have been crucified with Christ. And it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me ...”* (Gl 2:20). Everyone must be crucified with Jesus before they can be buried with Him in the waters of baptism. Peter said it thus, *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (At 2:38). When Jesus died on the cross, He took with Him the sins of all men. Our old man of sin died with Jesus on the cross. It is dead. But in order for one to live, there must be a burial and resurrection. There is no life, therefore, without burial in water for remission of sins.

Now the second question that 2 Thesalonians 1:7-9 poses has been answered. How can one obey the gospel in order to escape the coming destruction? The answer is simple. By immersing the old man of sin into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

The gospel *“is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes”* and joins with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection (Rm 1:16). The gospel can be the power of God unto salvation only to those who connect with Jesus through obedience to the gospel. Obedience to the gospel by immersion explains why and how the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The gospel is the death of Jesus for our sin problem. This is great news! The gospel is the resurrection of Jesus for our physical death problem. This is great news! When one is immersed into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, then he or she has obeyed the gospel, and thus, is saved by being connected with the saving blood of Jesus. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus is the power of God unto salvation to all those who are baptized. Because the gospel is the medium through which all men must come to God in order to be saved, it is imperative that we accept God’s command on how to connect with the event of the cross. If we try to establish our own conditions for salvation, then certainly we are ignoring God and all that He has accomplished through His Son on the cross in order to bring us into eternity.

## Chapter 4

### Baptism And The Blood Of Jesus

God has always ordained that *“without shedding of blood there is no remission”* (Hb 9:22). He required a blood sacrifice of Abel and of all who lived before the giving of the Old Testament law

on Mount Sinai (Gn 4:4,5). The Old Testament law itself was dedicated with the *“blood of calves and goats”* (Hb 9:19). God established a covenant with Israel that demanded a continual offering of

blood sacrifices because *“it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins”* (Hb 10:4). The priests, therefore, had to offer animal sacrifices that could never take away sins either temporarily or on a continual basis (See Hb 10:1-4). Fortunately, these sacrifices were *“a shadow of the good things to come ...”* (Hb 10:1). They had to be offered in obedience to God’s commandments and in preparation for the outpouring of the blood of Jesus that was to come (See Rm 3:25; Hb 9:15).

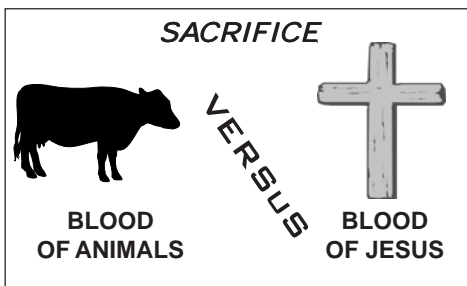
The “good things” of which the Old Testament sacrifices were a shadow of Jesus and the cross. The cross was a good thing because Jesus *“offered one sacrifice for sins forever”* (Hb 10:12). By that *“one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified”* (Hb 10:14). Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb of God who *“takes away the sin of the world”* (Jn 1:29). He did this act of sanctification by bearing *“our sins in His body on the tree ...”* (1 Pt 2:24). Thus, Jesus’ blood was the *“blood of the new covenant”* (Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20). He made a new covenant with those who submitted to His lordship through their obedience of the gospel. Those who submitted were called the church. The

church is thus sanctified and purchased by His blood which all the saints contacted upon their baptism into Christ (At 20:28).

It is essential to understand that the church, the fellowship of the submitted, **is a blood-purchased group of God’s people**. All those who are a part of this body have been redeemed *“through His blood”* (Ep 1:7). The church has been *“justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be an atoning sacrifice by His blood”* (Rm 3:24,25). Christians have *“now been justified by His blood”* (Rm 5:9). They *“have been brought near by the blood of Jesus”* (Ep 2:13).

Not only does the blood of Jesus offer a one-time cleansing when one comes into a covenant relationship with Jesus, it functions as a continual cleansing of sins as we walk in the light of God’s will. John wrote, *“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 Jn 1:7). It is imperative to understand, therefore, that those who are **in Christ** are in a relationship with God, and thus, continually cleansed by the blood of Jesus. These are those who have *“washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”* (Rv 7:14). It is only the church that is sanctified by the blood of Jesus. Only Christians have the privilege of the continual cleansing by the blood of Jesus.

The important question to ask here is: **How does one come into the church of the sanctified, and thus, into con-**



**tact with the cleansing blood of the Lamb?** It is obvious that Jesus' cleansing blood does not **unconditionally** cleanse everyone in the world of sin. If everyone were unconditionally cleansed of sin, then the entire world would not be lost. Everyone would be saved. Therefore, there must be something that people **must do** in order to contact the saving blood of Jesus. There must be something that will bring one into this relationship with Jesus whereby he or she contacts the saving and sanctifying blood of Jesus. There must also be a specific point in time at which Jesus' cleansing blood is made applicable in the regeneration of the individual's soul. The New Testament affirms here that at the point of baptism this regeneration takes place.

God knew that people needed a specific time to which they could refer and confidently affirm that they were saved. This point in time could not be a subjective emotional experience. Such "experiences" would occur throughout the life of the Christian. Each experience would be based on greater knowledge and spirituality than previous experiences. Therefore, with the occurrence of each "experience," the individual would question previous self-proclaimed experiences of his or her supposed salvation. For this reason, God knew that we needed an exact point in time for our salvation when He declared us saved. Concerning the Christian's salvation, that specific time is baptism. This is that time in the life of a person when he or she comes into contact with the blood of Jesus by obedience to the gospel.

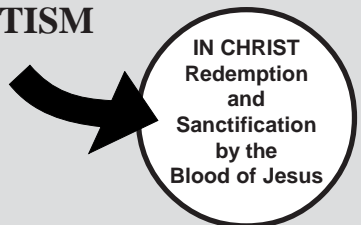
## A. One contacts the blood of Jesus at baptism.

Everyone would agree that contact with the blood of Christ is absolutely necessary for the forgiveness of sins. There are two points which must be considered here that introduce us to the conclusion that baptism into Christ brings one into contact with the blood of Jesus.

**1. Redemption by Jesus' blood is "in Christ."** John wrote in Revelation 5:9 that Jesus redeemed us **by His blood**. Notice in Ephesians 1:7 that it is **in Christ** that "*we have our redemption through His blood.*" It is in Christ that "*we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins*" (Cl 1:14). Keep in mind that **redemption is in Christ** and that **redemption is by the blood of Christ**. One must be in Christ, therefore, in order to be redeemed by the blood of Jesus. One must establish an "in Christ" covenant relationship with Jesus in order to benefit from the sanctifying power of His blood. Without this "in Christ" relationship with our Redeemer, there can be no sanctification by the blood of Jesus.

**2. Sanctification is by Jesus' blood**

## BAPTISM



**“in Christ.”** Hebrews 13:12 reads, *“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.”* John wrote, *“... the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 Jn 1:7). Christians have *“washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”* (Rv 7:14). We cannot question the fact that sanctification is accomplished by the blood of Jesus. It is also necessary to recognize that sanctification is in Christ. Paul wrote to the *“church of God that is at Corinth, to those that are sanctified in Christ Jesus”* (1 Co 1:2). These same Christians in Corinth had been washed and sanctified *“in the name of the Lord Jesus ...”* (1 Co 6:11). Can anyone question the fact that **one must be in Christ in order to be sanctified by the blood of Jesus?** Certainly not! For this reason we strongly affirm that one must be in Christ—in the body of Christ—in order to have the privilege of the sanctifying power of the blood of Jesus.

From the above two points anyone would obviously conclude that redemption is accomplished by the blood of Jesus and that **redemption is in Christ.** Sanctification is accomplished by the blood of Christ and **sanctification is in Christ.** Therefore, it is necessary to determine how one comes into Christ.

Romans 6:3 clearly answers the question concerning how one comes into a covenant relationship with Jesus and His cleansing blood. *“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into*

*Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?”* Paul said the same thing in Galatians 3:27. *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”* **One must therefore be baptized into Christ in order to come into contact with the redemption and sanctification that is provided by the blood of Jesus in Christ.** We can conclude that sinners come into contact with the blood of Christ when they are baptized.

**If one is saved by the blood of Jesus on the basis of a self-proclaimed “salvation experience,” then the condition for one’s salvation would be proclaimed by man, not God. However, if one is saved at the point where God says he has remission of sins through the blood of His Son, then it is God who proclaims our salvation.** Therefore, one has the choice of basing his salvation on his own self-proclamation or on the fact that God has stated in Scripture that those who have obeyed the gospel for remission of sins are redeemed and sanctified.

## **B. Washing by the blood of Jesus takes place at baptism.**

Christians have *“washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”* (Rv 7:14). To the Corinthians Paul wrote, *“... you were washed ... you were sanctified ...”* (1 Co 6:11). This is the same as the *“washing of regeneration”* that Paul discussed in Titus 3:5. Jesus has *“washed us from our sins in His own blood”* (Rv 1:5). The “washing of regeneration” is the result of sanctification by the blood. When one is

cleansed (sanctified) of sin, he or she is regenerated into a new life.

Acts 22:16 connects baptism with the washing of sins by the blood of Jesus. Ananias said to Paul, “*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*” It would be right to conclude that one’s washing by the blood of Jesus is accomplished at the point of baptism. Past sins are washed away when one is baptized because it is at the point of baptism that the blood of Jesus comes into contact with our souls. John taught that this washing (cleansing) by the blood continues throughout the life of the faithful Christian. He said that if we walk in the light “*the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin*” (1 Jn 1:7). It is at the point of immersion that the application of this continual cleansing begins. Therefore, in order for one to have the cleansing blood of Jesus in his life, he must be immersed into Christ.

### C. Baptism produces a good conscience through the blood.

The Hebrew writer contended that “*the blood of Christ*” would “*purge your conscience from dead works ...*” (Hb 9:14). We are created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ep 2:10). These works of obedience are made profitable by the blood of Jesus. One may do good works outside a covenant relationship with Jesus. However, these works are in vain; they are useless in reference to their following with us into eternal heaven. John recorded, “*Then I heard a voice from*

*heaven saying to me, ‘Write: blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘so that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them’*” (Rv 14:13). Compare this thought with what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:58, “*... your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*” Our works are not dead or useless when we are in a covenant relationship with the Lord. We can conscientiously know that our works are not useless **in the Lord**. Baptism brings one into this realm of “useful” works that will follow one into eternity, for baptism brings one **into the Lord**.

Everyone realizes that he or she must obey the Lord. We must “*keep His commandments*” (Jn 15:14). We must also “*do good to all*” (Gl 6:10). He who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin (Js 4:17). If we do not do good, our conscience hurts us. We know when we are not being obedient. And, we know we can never do enough good works in order to be justified by our good works, for by works no one can be justified before God (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). We therefore have a conscience problem. We know we must be obedient. Our conscience is disturbed when we are not obedient. We know that we cannot do enough good works in order to atone for one sin. Our conscience is thus laden with guilt before God. Therefore, how can one deal with this conscience problem before God? The answer is in the blood of Jesus.

In obedience to Jesus we purify our souls and cleanse our conscience before God (1 Pt 1:22). Jesus commanded, “*He*



*who believes and is baptized will be saved ...*” (Mk 16:16). Baptism is an action of submission that Jesus asked all those who believe on Him to do. In conjunction with this command, Peter stated, *“The like figure whereunto even baptism now saves us, namely baptism—not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the appeal of a good conscience toward God—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1 Pt 3:21).

In submitting to Jesus’ command to be immersed, one cleanses his or her conscience before God, for he or she knows that baptism is commanded by God. One cannot have a good conscience toward the commandments of God unless he has submitted to the will of God. At the point of immersion one can intellectually and biblically recognize that he has completed everything that is necessary to that point in his life to have his sins washed away.

However, there is still the problem of sin the Christian will commit while struggling to live the obedient life. Good works do not atone for this sin. The blood of Jesus does. Therefore, *“if we walk in the light”* the blood of Jesus keeps on cleansing us of **all** sin (1 Jn 1:7-9). We can have a good conscience toward God through the blood of Jesus, for it is His blood that cleanses all our sins.

#### **D. We contact the blood in the body of Christ.**

We contact the blood of Jesus by being immersed into the blood-bought body of Christ. In Acts 20:28 Paul said that

elders should feed *“the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”* Jesus is the *“Savior of the body,”* having given *“Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it ...”* (Ep 5:23,24,26). He accomplished such by pouring out His blood upon the cross. But notice carefully what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:13. *“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ....”* The church is the blood-bought body of Christ. **In order to come into this body one must be baptized.** One must be baptized into Christ, into the body of Christ (Rm 6:3; Gl 3:27). Therefore, **in order to come into contact with the blood-bought body of Christ one must be immersed.**

Because of their obedience, Christians have come into a covenant relationship with Jesus. The first covenant, the Old Testament covenant, was dedicated with blood (See Hb 9:18). By this dedication it was assumed that the second covenant, the covenant of Jesus, would also be dedicated by blood. But this dedication would be by a better sacrifice. It would be the sacrifice of Jesus, the Son of God (Hb 9:18-27).

Only the sacrifice of God can take away sins. Jesus used the fruit of the vine in the Lord’s Supper to represent the **blood of His covenant** (Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20). When one is in a covenant relationship with Christ, he is sanctified by the blood of Christ. The Hebrew writer stated that the apostate Christian *“counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing”* (Hb 10:29). Faithful Christians are in a

covenant relationship with God. The blood of the covenant was made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus. To reject or turn away from this blood is to consider the divine atonement of the blood of Jesus an unholy thing.

One must purify himself in order to come into a covenant relationship with Deity. One must have his or her sins

washed away by coming into contact with the blood of Christ in immersion (At 22:16). Immersion, therefore, is necessary in order to contact the blood of the covenant. It is also necessary to be continually sanctified while in the covenant relationship with Christ (1 Jn 1:7). We cannot, therefore, separate the blood of Christ from baptism.

## Chapter 5

# Baptism And Remission Of Sins

One of the most important scriptures concerning baptism for remission of sins is the text of Acts 2:38. The message of this passage was stated by the apostle Peter in A.D. 30 at the conclusion of his preaching the gospel for the first time in history. It is a statement that has been discussed for many years, and rightly so, for if Peter's statement is taken for what it says, then many people have been deceived into believing many false teachings concerning baptism. It is the purpose of this chapter, therefore, to examine in some detail this statement of Peter and the concept that he wanted to convey concerning remission of sins.

*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

One cannot be saved with the sins of his past life standing between him and God, for sin separates one from God (Is 59:1,2). One is dead to God as a result

of sin (Rm 5:12). Therefore, every man must take care of his sin problem before he can be reconciled to God. Sin must be forgiven in order that the individual be brought back to a saved relationship with God. This is a clear biblical teaching that few people will reject or question.

In Acts 2:38 Peter states that one's sins are remitted (forgiven) by God at the point of immersion. This is that specific time where God says that the old man of sin is buried and the new man comes alive (Rm 6:3-6). The conclusion is that baptism is necessary for the remission of sins. This is the concept Peter wants us to understand from his inspired statement of Acts 2:38.

However, every effort has been made to deny the fact that at the point of baptism one's sins are forgiven. For this reason, it is necessary here that we study some of the principal arguments used against the teaching that at the point of obedience to the gospel by immersion God forgives all our past sins. One of

these arguments involves the interpretation of the Greek word *eis*. A misunderstanding of this word has led to some confusion on the part of those who do not believe that baptism is necessary for salvation. However, when we understand the proper meaning of the word as it is used in Acts 2:38, we understand that baptism is inseparably linked with remission of sins.

### A. The Greek word *eis* means “for,” “unto,” “toward,” or “into.”

Some have argued that the Greek word *eis*, which is translated “for” (or, “unto,” depending on your translation) in Acts 2:38 in the *King James Version*, actually means “because of.” Hence, Peter would have been saying, “Repent and be baptized **because of** the remission of sins.” But this assumption is not correct. The Greek word *eis* in this passage does not mean “because of.”

All accepted Greek dictionaries (lexicons) define the Greek word *eis* as used in Acts 2:38 to mean “for, unto, towards, into, among, or, in order to.” Thayer’s Greek lexicon states that *eis* means “into,” “to,” “towards,” “for,” or “among.” The Abbott-Smith lexicon says it means “into,” “unto,” “to,” “upon,” “towards,” “for,” or “among.” The Arndt and Gingrich Greek lexicon states that *eis* means “in order to,” or “to.” In reference to Acts 2:38, Arndt and Gingrich state that *eis*, in conjunction with the forgiveness of sins in Acts 2:38, should be translated “for forgiveness of sin” or “so that sins might be forgiven.” **There are**

**no Greek lexicons or translations that use the meaning “because of” in Acts 2:38 as a translation of the Greek word *eis*.** Therefore, if one takes the position that *eis* means “because of,” then he must take a position that is against all accepted translations of Acts 2:38.

### B. All accepted translations correctly translate Acts 2:38.

It would be good here to note some major versions of the English New Testament and how the translators have translated Acts 2:38. All accepted translations of this passage render the Greek word *eis* according to the preceding accurate lexical definitions. Note the following examples:

#### Translations of Acts 2:38

1. **King James Version:** “Repent and be baptized ... **for** the remission of sins.”
2. **English Revised Version:** “Repent ye, and be baptized ... **unto** the remission of sins.”
3. **American Standard Version:** “Repent ye, and be baptized ... **unto** the remission of sins.”
4. **New English Bible:** “‘Repent,’ said Peter, ‘repent and be baptized ... **for** the forgiveness of your sins’.”
5. **New International Version:** “Repent and be baptized ... **so that your sins may be forgiven.**”
6. **International King James Version:** “Repent and be baptized ... **for** the remission of sins.”

One could also refer to other English versions as the *Twentieth Century New Testament*, *Knox's Translation*, *The Riverside New Testament*, *The American Bible Union Translation*, *Moffatt's Translation*, *Philips' New Testament*, *The Amplified New Testament* and a host of others. Such is a great testimony of modern-day scholarship behind the translation of *eis* to mean that one is immersed in order to reap the benefit of remission of sins.

The best Greek scholarship in the world stands behind these translations and their correct translation of Acts 2:38. This scholarship states that in Acts 2:38 *eis* means either “to,” “for,” “unto,” or “toward.” Therefore, according to Acts 2:38 one must be immersed in order to have the remission of sins. Without immersion one cannot have the remission of sins. And without the remission of sins there is no salvation. One cannot stand before God in judgment with the stain of his own sins. God has provided the sacrifice for sins, and all men must submit to the conditions of accepting His sacrifice. This means that one must be immersed in water in the name of Jesus in order to have the remission of sins.

### C. **Matthew 12:41 does not define *eis* to mean “because of.”**

In conjunction with Acts 2:38, there are two important passages that must be considered. They are Matthew 12:41 and Matthew 26:28. The context of Matthew 12:41 is often misunderstood by those who are prejudiced against the subject

of baptism for remission of sins. This misunderstanding has led some to maintain an incorrect definition of the word *eis*. This incorrect meaning is then applied to Acts 2:38. The result is an incorrect interpretation of Acts 2:38.

**1. Matthew 12:41:** This passage is often used to prove that *eis* should, or could, be translated “because of” in Acts 2:38. Jesus said to the Jews, “*The men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it, because they repented unto (eis) the preaching of Jonah ...*” (*International King James Version*).

The word translated “unto” here is the Greek word *eis*. A misunderstanding of this passage has led some to believe that Jesus was emphasizing that the people of Nineveh repented **because of** the preaching of Jonah. The Ninevites did truly repent because of Jonah’s preaching. **However, the emphasis of Matthew 12:41 is that the Ninevites turned unto the way of life that Jonah was preaching.**

Jonah preached in Nineveh what God wanted the city to do in order to avert their coming punishment. He preached a body of truth to which they had to conform their lives. When they repented, they turned to this behavioral pattern of life that Jonah preached. In this sense, therefore, they repented **unto (eis) or at** that which Jonah preached.

**2. Matthew 26:28:** Compare Matthew 12:41 with what Jesus said in Matthew 26:28. Jesus said, “*For this is My blood of the new covenant that is shed*

for many **for** (eis) the remission of sins.” Here is the exact phrase (“for remission of sins”) that is used in Acts 2:38. The Greek word that is translated “for” in this scripture is the same Greek word that is used in Acts 2:38 and Matthew 12:41. It is the word *eis*. Was Jesus’ blood poured out “because of” the remission of sins? Or, was it poured out in order that men might have the forgiveness of all sins? We believe the latter question focuses on the correct answer.

If one contends that *eis* means “because of,” then we can claim that men had the remission of sins **without the death of Jesus on the cross**. If this is true, then we would naturally ask, Why did Jesus even have to die on the cross in the first place?

This is not to say that the blood of Jesus did not cover the sins of those who lived before the cross. Sins before the cross were forgiven through the offering of Jesus (Rm 3:25). However, they were forgiven in view of the coming death of

Jesus on the cross. All sin has been forgiven because of Jesus’ death on the cross. But Jesus had to die on the cross in order that all sin be forgiven at the cross.

The correct meaning of Matthew 26:28 is that Jesus died on the cross in order that men might have the remission of sins. Therefore, men are immersed according to Acts 2:38 in order to have remission of sins, for without remission of sins one cannot be saved. In immersion one comes into contact with that which produces the remission of sins. One comes into contact with the blood of Jesus. It is the blood of Jesus that produces the remission of sins, not the act of immersion or the water. It is at the time of immersion that God applies the blood of Jesus to one’s life. It is for this reason that the blood is directly connected with baptism. And without the blood of Jesus, there is no remission of sins. And without remission of sins, there is no salvation.

## Chapter 6

### Baptism And Being In Christ

The New Testament uses many metaphors when discussion is centered around one’s relationship with God. In contexts of the Scriptures that deal with our salvation, the Spirit has used metaphors in order to exemplify the nature of the believer’s covenant with God. The reason for this is simple. When discussing relationships between that which is of this world to that which is of God, there are

no human words that can adequately explain these relationships. Therefore, the Holy Spirit had to use human words with human definitions in order to take our minds beyond human experiences. In metaphor, therefore, we must think beyond the literal and earthly definition of the actual words. The Spirit wants us to stretch our imagination to a realm of relationship that is beyond this world.

One of the important metaphors of the New Testament is a phrase that is commonly used by Paul. This metaphor is his use of the Greek word *en* in reference to one's relationship with Christ. The metaphor is used in the phrase "in Christ." The literal or actual meaning of the word *en* is not meant when the phrase "in Christ" is used. In other words, we are not physically inside the literal body of Jesus. Something **greater** than the literal and actual physical meaning is being emphasized when Paul used the phrase "in Christ." Therefore, we must look for a greater, or spiritual meaning when studying contexts in which the phrase "in Christ" is used. In other words, when Paul is talking about being "in Christ," he is not saying that we are literally and actually inside the actual physical body of Jesus, whatever that body may now be. He wants us to understand that we are in a spiritual body relationship with the Lord Jesus.

In the New Testament the phrase "in Christ" refers to a **relationship** one has with Christ. It is a Master-slave relationship, a Head-body union. Jesus is the Master. Christians are the slaves (See Rm 6:17-20). He is the controlling head (Cl 1:18). We are the controlled body (1 Co 12:27). Jesus commands; we obey. He speaks; we follow. Those who are in Christ have Jesus as the center of reference of their lives.

In this relationship with Christ, Christians have the benefit of many spiritual blessings that come from God concerning their salvation. In order for one to receive these spiritual blessings, how-

ever, he or she must come into an "in Christ" relationship with God.

### A. One has access to all spiritual blessings "in Christ."

Paul wrote, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*" (Ep 1:3). This passage teaches that all spiritual blessings that God has for every man concerning salvation are "in Christ." It is assumed, therefore, **that "outside" Christ one does not have these blessings.** Outside Christ there are no blessings that one would have in relation to that which is necessary for his salvation.



In order for one to reap spiritual blessings that relate to salvation, he must establish a relationship with God. Specifically, this relationship must be established with Jesus who made our salvation possible.

We must emphasize the point that for one to establish this relationship, **conditions** must be fulfilled. If spiritual blessings concerning one's salvation are unconditional, then all would be saved by the sufficient sacrifice of Jesus. However, God has determined that men must act upon His free gift of grace. Men must respond by obedience. Our obedience is the condition for our relationship with God.



Being “in Christ” focuses on a spiritual covenant relationship with Christ. We come into this relationship through our commitment to the conditions that are God-determined and given through His word. Because Jesus took our old man of sin with Him to the cross, we repent. We are then buried with him in the waters of baptism. When we have been baptized into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we come into Christ in a covenant with God. The following are spiritual blessings that result in the life of those who respond in a positive manner to the grace of God:

### SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST

Forgiveness of sins (Ep 1:7)

Redemption (Cl 1:14; Rm 3:24)

A new creature (2 Co 5:17)

All sons of God (Gl 3:26,27)

Eternal life (1 Jn 5:11)

The seal of the Spirit (Ep 1:13)

A state of no condemnation (Rm 8:1)

Sanctification from sin (1 Co 1:2; 6:9-11)

SALVATION (2 Tm 2:10)

All these blessings are “in Christ.” Therefore, in order for one to have access to these blessings he or she must be in Christ. We must clearly understand that one cannot be saved without having these blessings of God. In fact, the summation of all these blessings is salvation. This is why Paul wrote, “*Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, so that they also may obtain the salva-*

*tion that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory*” (2 Tm 2:10). In order to receive the blessings that are in Christ, one must be immersed into Christ.

Satan will do his best to keep people outside Christ. Since one is redeemed by the blood of Jesus when he is in Christ, then certainly we must assume that Satan will deceive people into believing that they are redeemed outside Christ. Since one is not in a state of condemnation in Christ, then we must also assume that Satan will deceive people into believing that they are not in a state of condemnation outside Christ. In order for Satan to accomplish this great deception, he must work with religious people who do not have a love of the truth (See 2 Th 2:10-12). God will allow such people to be deceived. He will allow them to be deceived because all men must be held accountable for their own conduct and unwillingness to obey the word of God.

### B. One is baptized into Christ.

The questions now are, How does one come into Christ? How does one come into this spiritual relationship where he or she has all spiritual blessings? The answer to these questions is simple. Romans 6:3 answers, “*Or do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ Jesus** were baptized into His death?*” Paul also stated in Galatians 3:27, “*For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ.*” Therefore, if one desires to be in Christ where lie all spiritual blessings concerning his salvation, **he must obey the gos-**

### pel by immersion in water.

According to 2 Timothy 2:10, salvation, and thus all spiritual blessings, are in Christ. Galatians 3:27 and Romans 6:3 teach that one is baptized into Christ. Therefore, one is baptized into Christ in order to be saved. This one thought is true of all the spiritual blessings of the preceding point that are mentioned to be in Christ. The final conclusion would be that immersion is absolutely necessary in order to bring one into a saving relationship with Jesus.

The metaphor “in Christ” conveys a very fundamental teaching of the New Testament. One must have a spiritual relationship with Jesus in order to enjoy the spiritual blessings that result from the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. In order to come into this relationship, we must be crucified **with** Christ (Rm 6:6; see Gl 2:20; Cl 3:3). We must die **with** Christ (Cl 3:3; 2 Tm 2:11). We must be buried **with** Christ (Rm 6:4,5; Cl 2:12). We must be raised **with** Christ (Rm 6:4,5; Cl 3:1). In other words, we must obey the gospel by immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins in order to come into a saved relationship with Jesus. In this “in Christ” relationship we are within the realm of God’s saving grace.

Since all spiritual blessings are in Christ, and one is baptized into Christ, then we can understand why the New Testament places so much emphasis on immersion into Christ. We can understand why the “one baptism” is listed in Ephesians 4:4-6 among other fundamental teachings as “one God,” “one Lord,” “one body,” “one faith,” “one Spirit” and “one hope.” The “one baptism” brings us into a covenant relationship with God in the body of Christ, and thus, brings to life the “one hope” of being resurrected to eternal life when Jesus comes again. Therefore, anyone who would deny the fact that baptism is essential to one’s salvation has played into the hand of Satan, and thus, accomplished Satan’s work to keep men and women outside Christ. The truly unfortunate thing about this is the fact that thousands of religiously sincere people are being deceived by uninformed religious leaders into believing that one does not have to join with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection. We must remember that Satan is working “*with all deception of wickedness among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved*” (2 Th 2:10).

## Chapter 7

### Baptism And Divine Relationships

There is a connection made in God’s plan of salvation between Himself and the baptized. This connection will result in eternal salvation for the obedient. It is this connective relationship that is es-

tablished in a covenant that must form the bond between God and man. In order to initiate this covenant relationship, immersion is God’s condition that people demonstrate their faith. People must re-

spond to God's desire to connect with all those who seek to covenant with Him. The very fact that we must respond to God negates the thought that salvation is unconditional. In order to connect with God we must take the initiative to act on what God has said we must do in order to be brought into a saving covenant relationship with Him.

God has revealed the conditions by which we establish a covenant relationship with Him. He has revealed the gospel which is His power to make this connection. Therefore, men and women must be obedient to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus in order to establish a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jesus responded to our sin problem through the cross. We must respond to the cross by our own death and burial **with Him** (Rm 6:3-6). Jesus brought a solution to our physical death problem. He was resurrected in order to give us hope (Hb 2:14,15). His resurrection resulted from His death and burial. Our resurrection from the grave of water is the result of death and burial. If there is no death and burial, then there can be no resurrection to a covenant relationship with God. Subsequently, there can be no physical resurrection to life when Jesus comes again, for only those in Christ will be raised to life (1 Co 15:22).

Baptism brings us into this relationship of hope with Christ. To be "of Christ" means to belong to Him. It means to be of His heritage and to be in a relationship with Jesus as the Son of God. Those who are not "of Christ" cannot be

in a saved relationship with God. In order to belong to Jesus one must obey the gospel. And one obeys the gospel by immersion into Christ.

### A. We are baptized to be "of Christ."

In 1 Corinthians 1:12,13 Paul stated, "*Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I am of Apollos,' and 'I am of Cephas,' and 'I am of Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?'*" Paul asked the Corinthians these questions in order to draw from them that which they already knew. What he was asking was that two things must happen before one can be either of Paul, Apollos, Cephas or Christ.

1. The one to whom allegiance is given must have been **crucified** on behalf of the individual who is giving the allegiance (vs 13).
2. The individual who is giving allegiance **must be baptized into the name** of the one who was crucified on his behalf (vs 13).

In reference to the first point, the New Testament teaches that Jesus is the One who has been crucified for us (Rm 5:6-8; 2 Co 5:14; 1 Th 5:10). He was crucified for all who would give allegiance to Him. Neither Paul, Apollos nor Cephas have been crucified for alien sinners. Therefore, this first act that is necessary for one to be **of Christ** (that is, "Chris-

tian”) has already been accomplished. Jesus has been crucified. He has been crucified for us. This was God’s part to bring us into a covenant relationship with Him. The first part of what is necessary for us to be of Christ, and thus Christian, was accomplished by God when He poured out His grace on the cross through Jesus (Ti 2:11).

The second point of 1 Corinthians 1:13 must be accomplished by those who believe on Jesus. They must respond to the cross. Alien sinners are not baptized in the name of either Paul, Apollos or Cephas. **They are baptized in the name of Jesus** (See At 2:38; 19:1-6). Therefore, in order for one to be “of Christ,” **he or she must be baptized in the name of Christ**. One cannot be of the heritage of Christ without being baptized. This conclusion brings us again to an irrefutable conclusion. This conclusion is that baptism is absolutely necessary in order to be “of Christ.” Without immersion in the name of Christ, one cannot be “of Christ,” and thus, be considered “Christian.”

### **B. One must be baptized in the “name of Christ.”**

When those on Pentecost in Acts 2, who were cut to the heart by their sinful behavior asked Peter what to do to be saved, Peter responded that they must “... *be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ* ...” (At 2:38). After Paul had discovered that some disciples in Ephesus had been baptized for the wrong reasons, these disciples were “*baptized in the name of the*

*Lord Jesus*” (At 19:5).

The phrase “in the name of” refers to being associated with the authority of the one with whom one identifies himself by name. If someone sent you on a mission “in his name,” then you would go by the authority of his name. If someone sent you to the bank with the endorsement of his name in order to draw money on his account, then the money comes from the account of the one whose name is on the bank account. If we are to go forth with the great commission of Jesus, then we must go forth with the authority of His name. In fact, our entire Christian life is based on our association with the name of Jesus. Paul wrote, “*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus ...*” (Cl 3:17).

In order for one to carry the name of Jesus, he must be baptized into the name of Jesus. In order for one to identify himself with the authority of Jesus, **he or she must be baptized**. In order for one’s works to be sanctioned by Christ, one must have been baptized into the name of Christ. One cannot claim the name of Jesus unless he has submitted to the gospel by immersion into the name of Jesus. All those who are claiming the name of Jesus without being baptized into his name are actually plagiarizing the name of Jesus in order to justify their own unwillingness to do what Jesus commanded concerning baptism.

At the time one is baptized in the name of Jesus, he is at the same time baptized into a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus emphasized this when He gave the great commission

to the apostles in Matthew 28:19.

When the New Testament states that one is to be baptized **in** the name of Jesus, a different Greek word is used than the one that is used in Matthew 28:19 where Jesus said, "... *baptizing them in (eis) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" The Greek word *eis* in Matthew 28:19 refers to being baptized into a **relationship** with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is what happens when people are baptized in (*eis*) the name of Jesus. However, when one is baptized in (*en*) the name of Jesus, a different Greek word is used. It is the word *en*. This word refers to one being baptized upon the authority or sanction of Jesus. When one is baptized in (*en*) the name of Jesus, reference is to **the authority of Jesus**. When one is baptized into (*eis*) the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reference is to one coming into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In either situation, **one must be baptized**. Without baptism, therefore, one cannot come into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that is sanctioned by the Son of God.

We must mention in this context that Jesus is not commanding in Matthew 28:19 that something be said at the time one is baptized. In other words, He is not saying that the one baptizing should state, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." What Jesus means in Matthew 28:19 is that **something is happening** at the time of baptism. When one is baptized, he or she is being baptized into a

covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The one who is being baptized should know this **before** he or she is baptized. In other words, being baptized into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is something that must be taught to disciples who would be baptized. They must be taught before the point of baptism. This is not something that is pronounced immediately before one goes down into the grave of water. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus is not giving a command for some formal statement that is to be made by the one assisting in the baptizing. What he is stating is something that the one being baptized should already know by the time he or she is baptized. In fact, the one who is baptized is actually doing such because he or she seeks to be baptized into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### C. We are baptized into the body of Christ.

Being "of Christ" refers to belonging to Jesus. Those who belong to Jesus have submitted to His headship in their lives. Jesus is the head of the body, and as the head of the body, He controls the lives of men through His word (Jn 12:48; Ep 5:23; Cl 1:18).

In order to become a part of the body of Christ, one must be immersed into the body. When Jesus comes again, He will save out of the world for heaven only His body. Therefore, it is necessary that one be a part of His body at the time of His final coming.

### 1. *Jesus is the Savior of the body.*

The New Testament teaches that Jesus is the Savior of the body, the church. He *“is the head of the church; and He is the savior of the body”* (Ep 5:23). He gave Himself up for His body *“that He might sanctify it ... that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing ...”* (Ep 5:26,27). Jesus purchased the church *“with His own blood”* (At 20:28). He will eternally save only this blood-bought body when He comes again.

2. *We are baptized into the body of Christ.* The New Testament teaches that the body is the church. Paul wrote, *“He [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church ...”* (Cl 1:18). Paul even emphasized that Jesus is the *“head over all things to the church”* (Ep 1:22). One comes into this body by immersion. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:13, *“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondservants or free, and were all made to drink of one Spirit”* (See At 2:41,47).

It must be concluded from the above two points that only those who have been immersed into the body of Christ will be delivered from this world when Jesus comes again. This corresponds with what Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:10 and Galatians 3:27. It was in these two passages

that Paul said that salvation is *“in Christ.”* Salvation is in the body. One is baptized into Christ, that is, he is baptized into the body of Christ. It is necessary, therefore, that everyone be immersed in order to come into the body of Christ that will be saved out of this world when Jesus comes again.

In order for one to be of Christ, he or she must be baptized in the name of Jesus. Without baptism in the name of Jesus, no one can truly represent the authority of Jesus in his life. Those who are not baptized in the name of Christ are only counterfeiting the name *“Christian”* when they claim to be of Christ. How can one preach by the authority of Jesus if he has not first submitted to the authority of Jesus to be baptized? Religious people may do good deeds in the name of Christ, but if they have not obeyed the gospel by immersion in the name of Christ, then they fall short of what the Bible defines as being *“of Christ.”* Some have thus stolen from the Bible the name *“Christian,”* and gone forth to represent Christ with whom they have not been crucified, buried and resurrected through baptism. In order to claim allegiance to Jesus, and thus, represent Him in the world, one must be *“of Christ.”* And to be *“of Christ,”* Paul says that we must be immersed in the name of Christ who was crucified for us.

## Chapter 8

### Baptism And Our Covenant Relationship With God

Throughout history God has maintained a covenant relationship with His

people. He established a covenant with Noah after the flood of Noah's day (Gn



6:18). He established a covenant with Abraham (Gn 15:18). He established a covenant with the nation of Israel (Rm 9:4). God works through covenant relationships with man in order to bring about His eternal purpose to bring the obedient into eternal dwelling with Him.

Those with whom God establishes a covenant relationship will be saved for eternal dwelling if they maintain the conditions of the covenant. In establishing salvational covenant relationships, God has always placed conditions on the continuation of the covenant that men must keep. In other words, a covenant relationship is not unconditional. God is not a respecter of persons, and thus, He does not establish a covenant relationship apart from the faith of man. It must also be noted that He has never established a covenant relationship with an unbeliever.

Baptism in the name of Jesus for remission of sins is part of the new covenant. As a result of our faith, we indicate by immersion that we desire to join in a covenant relationship with God. All who would come into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, therefore, must be immersed in water for remission of sins as an expression of faith. Baptism washes away sins that separate one from God. It brings us into contact with the continual cleansing of sins by the blood of Jesus which is the primary blessing of our covenant with God (1 Jn 1:7).

Before the cross of Jesus, God had a covenant relationship with Israel. Jews were physically born into this covenant relationship. As they grew up after birth,

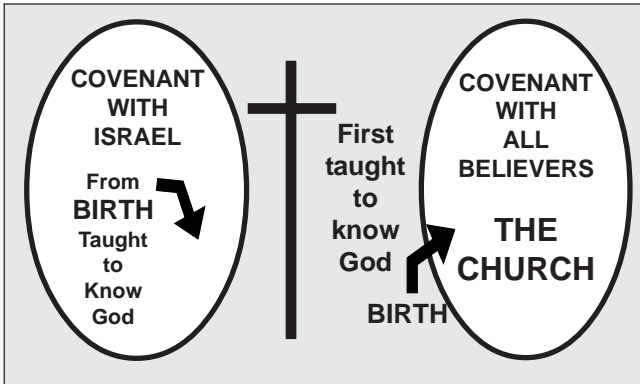
Jewish children were instructed concerning the covenant that God had with the nation of Israel. However, this covenant would eventually change to a new covenant that would demand a different means by which one would covenant with God.

In Jeremiah 31:31-34 God stated that He would establish a **new covenant** with the houses of Israel and Judah, which covenant would include all nations. Conditions for entering this new covenant would be different from the old covenant. Notice carefully how Jeremiah stated the nature of this new covenant relationship between God and man.

<sup>31</sup>*Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,* <sup>32</sup>*not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they broke, although I was a husband to them, says the Lord.*

<sup>33</sup>*But this will be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts. And I will be their God and they will be My people.* <sup>34</sup>*And they will no longer teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.*

In verse 33 God explained that the new covenant would be different in the sense that God would put His law in their hearts. In other



God. When the small child grew up, he or she had to be taught to “know God,” that is, the child had to be taught what to do in order to

words, when one would come into a covenant relationship with God under the new covenant, the law of God would already be in one’s heart in the sense that he or she would be an obedient subject. **One would already have been taught to know God before coming into a covenant relationship with God.**

Here is the point. Before one is born again, He is taught to “know God” and that which is necessary to come into a covenant relationship with God. He is taught what he must do to remain faithful to his covenant with God (See Jn 6:45). One is taught these conditions for the covenant relationship **before** he or she comes into that covenant relationship. This is what Jesus meant when He instructed the apostles to first disciple a person before baptizing them (See Mt 28:19,20).

Under the old covenant, when a Jewish baby was born, he or she was automatically in a covenant relationship with God. Physical birth of Jewish parents brought one into a covenant relationship with God because the nation of Israel as a whole was already in a covenant with

maintain a covenant relationship with God. However, under the new covenant, one would know God from “birth.”

Under the new covenant one must first be taught before the covenant is established with the individual. This is certainly the thought behind Jesus’ statement of John 6:45. *“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Therefore, everyone who has **heard and learned** from the Father comes to Me.”* When one is taught the lordship of Jesus and the gospel, his response should be the same as those in Acts 2 who heard, *“God has made this same Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ”* (At 2:36). *“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart”* (At 2:37). These on Pentecost were taught of God by the inspired preaching of the apostles. They responded to what they had been taught. Peter instructed them, *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you...”* (At 2:38). About three thousand people came into a covenant relationship with the Father on this day of Pentecost when they were immersed for the remission of their sins (At 2:41). Therefore, they were first

taught by God, and then, they came into a covenant relationship with God through obedience to the gospel.

Both in the covenant God had with Israel before the cross and in His covenant with all believers today, there has been remission of sins. When one is in a covenant relationship with God there is always remission. Remission of sins under both the old and new covenants was accomplished through the same thing, the blood of Jesus. The Hebrew writer stated, *“And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance”* (Hb 9:15; see Rm 3:25). Since it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin under the old covenant, the sacrifices of the old covenant were only a shadow of the cross that was to come (Hb 10:1-4). Therefore, when Jesus offered Himself on the cross, He became the blood offering for all men who have been in a covenant relationship with God throughout all history.

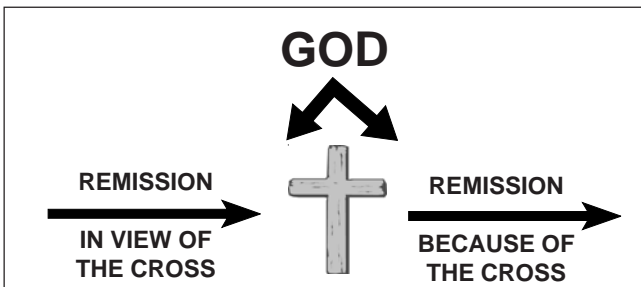
With the above in mind, review again some of the following concepts that are taught in the New Testament. Understanding the nature of the covenant relationship that God’s people now

have with Him helps us understand New Testament teachings concerning covenant relationships:

**A. Remission of sins before the cross of Jesus:**

Before the cross, remission of sins through the sacrifices of bulls and goats did occur in the life of the obedient. However, remission took place only in view of the coming sacrifice of Jesus. The primary conditions for salvation that were established by God for man have always been the same throughout history. On God’s part salvation has been grace, for no man can keep God’s laws perfectly in order to save himself (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16); neither can good works atone for sin. On man’s part the condition has been faith (Hb 4:2; Rm 1:17). However, this faith must be expressed in some way, for the demons also believe and tremble, and yet, they are not saved (Js 2:19). Therefore, under the Old Testament covenant God’s part in man’s salvation was the same as it is today. Salvation was and is by grace. Our part is also the same. We must believe. But this belief must manifest itself in obedience to the conditions that God has established in order for one

to establish and maintain a covenant relationship with Him. Our response by faith to God’s conditions for re-



mission of sins is different today than under the Old Testament law.

**1. Remission of sins came from the cross under the Old Testament law:** Under the Old Testament covenant man's response to God was obedience to His will. It was His will in relation to forgiveness that the obedient believer offered animal sacrifices. However, since the days God instituted blood sacrifices it was *"not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins"* (Hb 10:4). Animal sacrifices could not make perfect the Jews who lived under the law (Hb 10:1). Nevertheless, they had to offer the sacrifices. Such sacrifices were a shadow of the sacrifice of Jesus that was to come. Of the sacrifice of Jesus, Paul wrote in Romans 3:25, *"Whom [Jesus] God set forth to be an atoning sacrifice by His blood, through faith in order to declare His righteousness for the remission of sin in the past because of the forbearance of God."* (Rm 3:25; see Hb 9:15).

When Jesus died on the cross, therefore, He completed the Father's plan of forgiveness for those under the old covenant. Romans 3:25 is not teaching that the sins committed before the cross were "rolled forward" in order to be forgiven at the cross. **Before the cross, sins were forgiven in view of the cross.**

Because God is timeless and not confined to time as men, He sees or deals with history as a whole. The sacrifice of Jesus had to be an historical event that had to take place at a specific time in history. In other words, Jesus could not have

been offered continually upon the cross throughout history. Because God entered into the confinement of time through the incarnation, a specific time in man's history had to be chosen when the one-time sacrifice would be made. That time was in A.D. 30 in Jerusalem of Palestine.

Since Jesus was incarnate Deity in the flesh of man, He was confined to man's time while on earth (Ph 2:5-8). Therefore, His crucifixion had to be an historical event according to the calendar of man. However, the sacrificial blood of the cross was not something that was confined to time. Though the cross had to happen at a specific time in history, the application of the blood of Jesus did not. For this reason, God can easily apply the blood of Jesus to those who lived before this historical event, as well as to those who live after the event. Just because the faithful in the Old Testament era did not have knowledge of the coming sacrifice of Jesus, does not mean that Jesus' blood was not working in their lives. We must remember that the forgiveness of sins through the blood of the sacrificial Servant is God's work, not man's. And God is not confined to time. He sees and works in history on a timeless basis.

God has forgiven all sin of the faithful obedient of all history through the cross. He sees all the sins of mankind in all history through the cross. Without the cross, there would have been no forgiveness of sins before or after the cross. At the time Jesus was crucified, God saw all the sins of humanity both **before** and **after** the cross. Paul stated in Romans

1:17, *“The just will live by faith.”* Romans 1:17 is a quotation from Habbakuk 2:4 in the Old Testament. Thus the justified lived by faith **before** the cross as we live by faith **after** the cross. God’s response to forgive sins is conditioned upon man’s faith both before and after the cross.

In some way this may help us to understand why Jesus said on the cross, *“My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”* (Mt 27:46). Jesus took upon Himself on the cross all the sins of all humanity of all history. All the sins of those before the cross and all the sins of all those after the cross were upon Him at the cross. Could it be that it was in the nature of God in whom is no darkness (1 Jn 1:5) to turn away from such darkness of sin? Though we do not understand all that transpired in the heavenly realm at that moment on the cross, we do know that in some way Jesus took it upon Himself to accept the burden of all the sins of those who have obediently responded to God by faith.

For us today, the cross was God’s manifestation of grace for sins in the past that carries forgiveness to us in the present (Ti 2:11). This is why the Hebrew writer made the following statement in Hebrews 9:15 concerning Jesus being our Mediator: *“And for this reason He [Jesus] is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”*

The cross is God’s manifestation of

grace to those who would sin after Jesus died on the cross (Ep 2:6-9). All forgiveness of sins, therefore, centers around and proceeds from Calvary. Forgiveness occurs instantaneously in the life of the believer upon the believer’s compliance to the conditions for forgiveness that God demands at any time in history. Before the cross, the Israelites had to keep the Old Testament law as a manifestation of faith. Today, we must submit to the law of Christ. Our submission to God’s will is our condition for the application of God’s grace to our lives.

We must keep in mind, however, that perfect submission to all of God’s law is not a condition for salvation simply because no man can keep God’s law perfectly. We are not saved by perfect law-keeping (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). And because we are not, God must save us by His grace that was revealed at the cross of Calvary (Ti 2:11).

**2. Remission of sins comes directly from Jesus:** The conditions for the remission of sins were different **before** the ascension of Jesus and establishment of the new covenant, than **after** the establishment of the new covenant. Before the new covenant, and while on this earth, Jesus could say during His personal ministry, *“Your sins are forgiven”* (Lk 7:48,49). Jesus could forgive sin personally while on earth. He said such in Matthew 9:6. *“But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins ....”*

Jesus could forgive sins personally while on this earth because He was God

against whom sin was committed. Therefore, **before** His death, He could say to the thief on the cross, “*Today you will be with Me in Paradise*” (Lk 23:43). While on this earth, Jesus could forgive sins personally, and thus, He could directly save the thief on the cross. His power to forgive sins was evidence that He was God on earth, for only God can forgive sins.

One must also keep in mind that the Old Testament law was still in force during Jesus’ life on earth. The New Testament law was brought into force only after the official announcement of the lordship of Jesus in Acts 2 (See Hb 9:16,17; At 2:36). Under the Old Testament law the conditions for forgiveness of sins were different from the conditions for forgiveness under the New Testament law of Christ. Jesus, as God and originator of the Old Testament law, had authority to forgive sins personally on earth while that law was in force.

**3. Remission of sins was accomplished by John’s baptism:** During the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus, God ordained by commandment that John baptize people **for the forgiveness of sins**. He did this in order to prepare people to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus after the cross. Therefore, John baptized in the wilderness and preached the “*baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*” (Mk 1:4).

John’s baptism was a baptism **for the remission of sins**. The same Greek phrase that is used in Mark 1:4 is also used in Acts 2:38 where Peter told people to be baptized “*for the remission of sins.*”

The difference is that the baptism of Acts 2:38 was to be **in the name of Jesus**, that is, in subjection to Jesus’ lordship for He had already died and ascended by the time of the pronouncement of Acts 2:38. Though John’s baptism was for the forgiveness of sins, his baptism was replaced by the baptism of Acts 2:38 when the new covenant was established in Acts 2 with all those who submitted to baptism in the name of Jesus (At 2:41). If any were baptized by John’s baptism after Acts 2, they needed to be rebaptized. Such happened in Acts 19 when Paul had to rebaptize about twelve disciples in Ephesus (At 19:1-7).

## **B. Remission of sins after the cross:**

**After** His death, Jesus’ new covenant was brought into force, “*for a covenant is ratified upon death...*” (Hb 9:16,17). **After** His death, therefore, when the new covenant was in force, Jesus’ disciples preached **baptism for the remission of sins** (At 2:38; 8:12,13,35-39; 10:48; 22:16). Therefore, the conditions for salvation were different **before** the death of Christ and the establishment of the church than they were after the official announcement of Jesus’ lordship on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. The conditions for remission before the cross differed from what is necessary for remission under the New Testament law of Christ today.

Jesus could personally forgive sins while on earth when He was living under the Old Testament law. Those who lived before the cross were also under the



Old Testament law. But that law was taken away at the cross when the new covenant came into force in Acts 2 with the first official “reading” of the testament of the Testator who was at that time reigning in heaven (See Cl 2:14). Christians are not under the Old Testament law or covenant today (Rm 7:4). They are under a law and covenant today that says everyone must be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19,20) for the remission of sins (At 2:38). In order to come into Christ (Rm 6:3), or be of Christ today (1 Co 1:12-15), we must obey the gospel by immersion. Baptism for remission of sins is necessary in order to establish a covenant with God. If anyone would be sub-

missive to the conditions of the new covenant, he must be baptized into this covenant.

Jesus’ blood has now become the “*blood of the covenant*” (Mt 26:28). His blood is the sacrificial blood of the new covenant that has now been established between God and those who are obedient to the conditions of the covenant. Those who are obedient to the things they have been taught, come into this new covenant relationship of God wherein they have forgiveness through the blood of the new covenant. The sins that would separate God’s covenanted people from Him are continually washed away by the blood of Jesus (1 Jn 1:7).

## Chapter 9

# Baptism And Salvation

For years in the debate centered around baptism, argument was made that immersion stood between one’s state of being lost and a state of salvation. This simple approach to emphasize the importance of immersion has not lost its force. When the New Testament is studied we cannot discount the fact that baptism is portrayed in the New Testament to stand between a condition of being lost or saved. In every case of conversion in the New Testament, immersion stands as the point of reference between being in a state of condemnation and a state of salvation. Bible students who ignore this fact have overlooked a very important fact concerning the conversion records of the Scriptures.

If baptism is not important in reference to one’s salvation, then we would assume that there would be little attention paid to it in the conversion cases recorded in the New Testament. However, if it stands as a place of great importance in reference to one’s salvation, **then we would assume that it would be emphasized in the records of conversion in the New Testament.** What is recorded in the cases of conversion is that all salvational blessings come after one is baptized.


### A. Baptism stands between being saved and being lost.

Paul wrote that “*our old man was*

crucified” with Jesus and that “we are buried with Him through baptism into death” (Rm 6:4-6). After baptism one walks “in newness of life” (Rm 6:4). Jesus said that “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:3-5). Before one comes into Christ, he or she is **outside** Christ. However, Paul wrote, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gl 3:27). Before baptism, one is without Christ, but after baptism one is “of Christ” (1 Co 1:12,13). One is baptized into Christ (Rm 6:3). Before baptism, one is in a state of unregeneration. After baptism, however, one is in a state of regeneration. Paul wrote, “... according to His mercy, **by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit**” (Ti 3:5). **Baptism, therefore, stands between either being in a condition of salvation or in a state of condemnation in relation to God.** One cannot change this fact concerning immersion. Throughout the New Testament this concept is affirmed, and thus, in order to have a good conscience toward God concerning those things that God demands of us, one must be immersed for the remission of sins. This is the right thing to do in obedience to God.

## B. Baptism saves one’s soul.

Those things that result from baptism are those things that pertain to one’s salvation. Peter said that one must “**be baptized for the remission of sins**” (At 2:38). Remission of sins is here stated to come **after** baptism. Ananias commanded Paul to “be baptized, **and wash away your sins ...**” (At 22:16). The washing of sins comes at the point of baptism. Peter adds that baptism “**now saves us ...**” (1 Pt 3:21). Peter is saying that salvation comes at the point of baptism. This is true, not because there is any power in the water, but because this is the point at which one contacts the saving blood of Jesus. Jesus stated that one is saved at the point of baptism. In Mark 16:16 He said, “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*” The *New American Standard Version* translated Mark 16:16 thus, “*He who has believed and has been baptized will be saved.*” Salvation, therefore, comes at the point of baptism, not before. Paul reminded the Christians in Rome that “as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized **into His death**” (Rm 6:3; See Gl 3:27). The “into Christ” and “into

Old Man		New Man	(Romans 6:4,5)
Outside Christ		Inside Christ	(Romans 6:3)
Without Christ		Put on Christ	(Galatians 3:27)
Not of Christ		Of Christ	(1 Corinthians 1:12,13)
Unregenerate		Regenerated	(Titus 3:5)
Unwashed		Washed	(Acts 22:16)
No Remission		Remission of Sins	(Acts 2:38)
Not Saved		Saved	(1 Peter 3:21)
Under Condemnation		No Condemnation	(Mark 16:16)

His death” are things that take place at the point of baptism. One is not in Christ before he is baptized into Christ. One has not been baptized into the death of Christ until he has been baptized.

From the teachings of the passages that have been reviewed in points A and B, notice the following chart. It is obvious that immersion stands between some very important things concerning one’s salvation. If immersion stands between these very important points concerning our salvation, then we must conclude that it is necessary for our salvation.

The things mentioned above that result from immersion are not present in the life of the unbaptized person. It is because these things take place **at the point of baptism** that the eunuch rejoiced **after** he was baptized in Acts 8. The Scriptures say that Philip “*baptized him ... and the eunuch ... went on his way rejoicing*” (At 8:38,39). The eunuch could rejoice because of what happened as a result of his obedience to the gospel. There was no reason to rejoice before he was baptized because remission of sins and salvation were blessings in his life only after obedience in baptism. The same is true of us today. Only after we are baptized is there reason for rejoicing.

It may be that the simplicity of this point is what confuses people. Anyone who studies the cases of conversion in the New Testament can clearly understand the relationship newly immersed believers had with God. The contrast between their behavior before and after immersion is quite evident. It is surprising

to see the lengths to which individuals will go in order to explain away this most obvious fact of the New Testament surrounding baptism. Then on the other hand, we can also understand that if one has traditionally denied the importance of immersion for years, it is hard to change in the face of clear teachings of the Bible and the intimidation of fellow workers. Again, we must not underestimate the power of traditional thought in the minds of men. After all, Jesus said, “*All too well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your own tradition*” (Mk 7:9). Most men will usually consider traditional theology more binding than the law of God.

We must remind ourselves that because baptism stands between condemnation and salvation, it is not a legal act of obedience whereby God is obligated to save the one who is baptized. In other words, one does not put God in debt by obedience to the gospel through the action of immersion. The action of immersion does not save. Immersion is not a work whereby we earn God’s salvation or put God in debt to save us. We must remember that by works of law no one can be saved (Rm 3:20). This is true when alien sinners come to God simply because no one can save himself. However, one cannot be saved without an obedient faith response to the law of God. In other words, **one cannot be saved by ignoring or rejecting what God says one must do in order to wash away sins**. He cannot because obedience is the alien sinner’s response to God’s grace. It is by obedience that law is established (Rm 3:31).

The point of baptism is the time in the alien sinner's life where God says that He will apply the blood of Jesus to one's soul. Baptism is an action of immersion in water on earth that is visible to men. However, the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus is something that takes place in the spiritual realm in our relationship with God through Jesus. Therefore, the action of baptism is more for our benefit in the sense that we have a point of reference where we can affirm that God worked in the spiritual realm in order to forgive our sins. Baptism is our witness before men and God that we accept the conditions of God's covenant. This would answer our questions concerning why God instituted that at the point of baptism we could be assured of our salvation.

God could forgive our sins at any time in our lives. Some have led themselves to believe that an emotional "salvation experience" or an intellectual "receiving of Jesus" is the point at which God forgives sins. However, these are man generated and man conditioned points of reference. Anything that would depend on the emotions or intellect of man would not suffice in order to activate the work of God in the heavenly realm. The work of a "sinner's prayer" is not sufficient because such originates from men and not God. Only God has the right to declare who is saved. **And we can only know His declaration by what we read in the New Testament.**

Baptism is God's declaration of our salvation. From the revelation of the Scriptures we discover that God has said

He will forgive sins at the point of immersion in water. Therefore, when one is baptized, his confidence for his salvation does not originate in some personal emotional experience wherein one claims his own salvation. His confidence is in God who said in His word that He would forgive our sins if we would simply respond to the cross through immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Baptism is thus an action of trusting (faith) in God to unleash the saving blood of Jesus on our souls. It is a manifestation of our faith (trust) in the grace of God.

In concluding this point, it would be good to consider again the case wherein Philip shared the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch. Many people have presumed their own means by which they claim to be saved. In their presumption to claim salvation through a "sinner's prayer," they have not been told the whole story.

When the eunuch asked Philip concerning the meaning of the text of Isaiah 53 which he was reading, Philip began from this text and preached Jesus unto the eunuch (At 8:34,35). However, when they came to a certain water, it was the eunuch who said, "*See, here is water! What hinders me from being baptized?*" (At 8:36). Since this question of the eunuch mentions the subject of baptism, then we could correctly assume that the preaching of Jesus includes the teaching of baptism. Therefore, people today who claim to be saved without immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus have assumed a presumptuous belief.

They have founded their salvation on the presumption of their own feelings and inventions, and not the declaration of the

word of God. They have thus stopped short of the whole teaching of Jesus.

## Chapter 10

# Baptism And Logical Conclusions

Common sense combined with simple logic is sometimes all that is needed to prove a point. When it involves biblical teachings, one's logical approach to form deductions is not the primary foundation upon which fundamental doctrine is established. That which is fundamental for salvation is always stated somewhere in the Bible in simple declarative or imperative statements. In other words, nothing that is fundamental for salvation has to be first deduced through a process of reasoning. When it comes to essential teachings that are necessary for salvation, the Bible simply says what it means and means what it says. However, that which is fundamental to salvation logically follows any deduction of thought that is related to fundamental teachings.

If a clearly stated fundamental teaching is made, then that teaching must be the premise upon which all figurative passages must be interpreted that refer to that teaching. It must be the foundation upon which all passages that refer to the fundamental teaching must be based. This is true simply because the Bible does not contradict itself. Therefore, when we study teachings concerning what God requires on man's part in order to be saved, we must first deter-

mine that which is fundamental in reference to man's obedience. What is clearly stated must be our interpretive guide to understand all passages that refer to salvation concepts.

Baptism is first established as a fundamental teaching in reference to our salvation by declarative or imperative statements. Mark 16:16 is a declarative statement that makes baptism a fundamental teaching that is necessary for salvation. Jesus said, "*He that believes and is baptized will be saved....*" Now when we study other contexts that relate to the salvation of individuals in the first century, we must logically conclude that baptism played an important part in every case of salvation. This is the same with the fundamental teaching on salvation concerning belief and repentance. Though a particular context of a reported case of conversion does not specifically mention all necessary requirements on the part of man for salvation, we must conclude from clear statements in other texts that all that is necessary for salvation is assumed in any one case of conversion. If God had to state in every single case of conversion all that was necessary on man's part for salvation, the New Testament would be a cumbersome volume of redundancy. He has thus kept

it simple, assuming that we can discover all that is necessary for salvation in all passages that deal with salvation.

Since baptism is a fundamental part of one's salvation, then we can make logical deductions from other texts that come to a common conclusion. The following points are logical thoughts which show that baptism is a necessary part of one's salvation. Under each major point there are three statements. Statements 1 and 2 are teachings from key scriptures. The third point is true because of the truth of points 1 and 2.

#### A. **Baptism is necessary for eternal life.**

It is God's eternal plan to bring obedient men into eternal dwelling in a new heavens and earth (2 Pt 3:13). In order to accomplish this, God has required of men certain conditions upon which they would be qualified as candidates for eternal life. In order for any man to come into the eternal presence of God, God requires that we submit to His conditions for eternal dwelling.

1. John states that God has given to us eternal life "*and this life is in His Son*" (1 Jn 5:11). In order to have eternal life, therefore, one must be "in His Son."
2. The New Testament says that the alien sinner is baptized into Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, "*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus*

*were baptized into His death?"* (Rm 6:3; see Gl 3:27).

3. Therefore, we can logically conclude that one must be **baptized into Jesus, "into His Son," in order to have eternal life.**

#### B. **Obedience is necessary for salvation.**

1. Hebrews 5:9 says that Jesus became the author of eternal salvation "*to all those who obey Him.*" Thus, Jesus is the "originator" of salvation to all those who are obedient to His will.
2. Baptism is a command of Jesus. "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved ...*" (Mk 16:15,16). "*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (Jn 3:3).
3. Therefore, we can conclude that one **must obey Jesus' command to be baptized** in order to have "eternal salvation."

#### C. **Washing of sin in baptism is necessary for salvation.**

1. Titus 3:5 says that Christians are saved by the mercy of God "*by the washing of regeneration.*" In salvation, therefore, there is regeneration. In this regeneration



we are washed of all sin.

2. In Acts 22:16 Ananias referred Paul to this washing action by stating to him, “*And now why are you waiting? Arise **and be baptized and wash away your sins** ....*”
3. Therefore, we can conclude that one is saved by the washing away of sins in baptism which is the point in one’s life where one is regenerated. Because of this action at the point of baptism, Peter could say of baptism in 1 Peter 3:21 that it does “*now save us ....*” This is the washing of regeneration.

#### **D. Baptism is necessary in order to become a new creature.**

1. One can be a new creation, or creature, only in Christ. Paul wrote this in 2 Corinthians 5:17. “*Therefore, if any man is in Christ, **he is a new creature** ....*”
2. The New Testament says that we are baptized into Christ (Rm 6:3; Gl 3:27).
3. Therefore, we must be **baptized into Christ in order to become a new creation or new creature.** We must be baptized in order to “*walk in newness of life*” (Rm 6:4).

The necessity to be baptized is a logical conclusion in any New Testament context wherein salvation is discussed after the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. One must be immersed into Christ in order to have the blessing of eternal life. One must obey the commands of Jesus in order to be saved. Baptism is one of those commands. In immersion God washes away sin, and thus, one becomes a new creature only after baptism. Baptism is therefore essential for salvation because of logical deductions from clear statements that are made in the Scriptures.

At the risk of being redundant, we would stress again the point that since the subject of baptism is discussed by the New Testament writers in the context of so many crucial teachings on salvation, that something must be very important about it. Why is immersion discussed in the context of Romans 6 in relation to one being crucified with Christ? Why is immersion discussed in the context of 2 Corinthians 5 when Paul talks about becoming a new creature? These and a host of other salvation contexts contain the subject of baptism. If baptism does not play an important part in one’s salvation, then we would wonder why the subject is so often mentioned in those contexts of the New Testament where discussion is centered around one’s salvation.

Again, we must reemphasize the fact that when a requirement for salvation is mentioned in any text of the New Testament that would apply to man after the establishment of the church in A.D. 30, then we must automatically assume that God intends that we fulfill that require-

ment. Since repentance is mentioned as a necessity on the part of man for salvation in texts wherein neither faith nor baptism are mentioned, then we must assume that repentance is a requirement for salvation even though it is not mentioned in a specific salvation text. If immersion for remission of sins is not mentioned in any passage where repentance or faith are mentioned as requirements for salvation, then we must assume that it is a requirement for salvation because it is clearly stated to be so in other scriptures.

When a requirement for salvation is stated alone in any one passage, that does not negate the necessity of other requirements for salvation that are mentioned in other passages. God does not play guessing games with us throughout the

New Testament. He does not state in one passage that repentance is necessary while negating the requirement of faith when faith is not specifically mentioned in a salvational passage. He does not negate the requirement of faith when only baptism is mentioned. The New Testament must be understood as a whole in determining all that is required by God for the salvation of our souls. No man has a right to extract only that which he likes, for that which he may extract could be that which is necessary for his salvation. And when it comes to extracting things from God's word concerning all those things that are necessary for salvation, then we are doing what Peter warned concerning those who twist the Scriptures. They do so to their own destruction (2 Pt 3:15,16).

## Chapter 11

### Baptism And Response To The Gospel

If immersion is a necessary part of man's response to God in order to be saved, then it would logically follow that we could say that the New Testament connects immersion with other teachings that are fundamental to salvation. All that is necessary on man's part to be saved must be interconnected. No one essential teaching concerning salvation would stand alone. When we study the subject of baptism, therefore, we would assume that if it is necessary for salvation, then it cannot be disconnected from other essentials that are connected with salvation. We say this to emphasize the fact that baptism cannot be disconnected from the

gospel event and all that is necessary to bring forgiveness of sins into one's life.

If we also contend that one can be saved without being immersed into a covenant relationship with God, then we are saying that there are some basic New Testament teachings that are not important that are connected with baptism. But if one says that these basic New Testament teachings are not important, then he is advocating some serious false conclusions. The following are some logical conclusions that manifest some unfortunate exclusions if we hold the position that baptism is not necessary for salvation:

## A. Logical conclusions concerning baptism:

If one can be saved without obedience to the gospel by immersion, then the following are some conclusions that must be faced. These conclusions lead us to affirm that immersion is directly connected to salvation, and thus, a necessary part of God's plan to bring the alien sinner into a saving covenant relationship with Him.

1. If one is saved without baptism, then he or she can be saved **without obeying Jesus**, for Jesus commanded that one be baptized in order to be saved (Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5).
2. If one is saved without baptism, then one can be saved **without obeying the inspired apostles**, for they commanded that one be baptized in order to be saved (At 2:38; 10:47,48).
3. If one is saved without baptism, then one can be saved **without obeying the message of the great commission**, for in commanding His apostles to evangelize the world Jesus commanded them to baptize those who believed (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15,16).
4. If one is saved without baptism, then one can be saved **without believing or obeying one of the fundamental teachings** of Paul

in Ephesians 4:4-6 that there is "one baptism."

5. If one is saved without baptism, then one can be saved **without following the example of those in the first century who responded to the preaching of the gospel by immersion** for the forgiveness of their sins (At 2:38,41).
6. If one is saved without baptism, then one can be saved **without obedience to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus**, for baptism is obedience to the gospel (Rm 6:3-5).
7. If one is saved without baptism, then one is saved **without recognizing the importance of immersion** as a fundamental teaching of the New Testament that is mentioned over one hundred times.

Because of the emphasis that is placed on baptism in obedience to the gospel of Jesus, thousands of people in the first century were immersed into Christ. They were immersed because they knew that such was in obedience to the gospel. All men today must follow their example. If we desire to restore the faith of the early Christians, we must obey the gospel as those who were baptized into the body, the church (1 Co 12:13). This obedience would include our response to the grace of God that was poured out on the cross for our sins. If

there is no obedience, there is no gratitude for what God on Calvary through Jesus.

## B. Examples of response to the gospel:

A subtle departure from emphasis on baptism has occurred in most religious circles concerning the cases of baptism as they are mentioned in the document of Acts. This subtle departure has even affected some who formerly believed that baptism was essential to salvation. One reason for this apostasy has been in understanding the New Testament teaching concerning "obedience to the gospel." The gospel is the good news of Jesus' death for our sins, His burial, and subsequent resurrection for our hope (1 Co 15:1-4). When the gospel was preached in the first century, people **responded** to this message. Their response was recorded in the book of Acts. Their baptisms were in response to the gospel message that was preached. When they heard the preaching of the gospel event, they were touched in their hearts. They responded by immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

In the theology of some, an over-emphasis has been placed on the response to the gospel (baptism) which often led to less emphasis placed on what caused the response, that is, the gospel itself. Some were taught that one had to go through a series of preliminary steps in order to become Christian. The steps were to hear, believe, repent, confess, and then, be baptized. But these responses

are not the gospel. They were recorded in the New Testament and directly connected with obedience to the gospel and salvation. However, these" were responses to the preaching of the cross.

In the first century, multitudes of people responded to the preaching of the cross. Their faith in Jesus moved them to respond obediently to Jesus by being crucified, buried and resurrected with Him. The people heard the gospel. They believed the gospel. They were baptized in order to fulfill all righteousness. When the gospel is preached today, the same response is generated in the hearts of the people. The response is not the gospel. The gospel causes the response in the hearts of the people today just as it caused a response in the first century.

We must not overemphasize the response to the gospel to the exclusion of the gospel. One can teach others to hear, believe, repent, confess and present baptism as a legal act without ever mentioning the event of the cross of Jesus for our sins and resurrection for our hope. One can actually persuade people to hear, believe, repent, confess and be baptized without ever mentioning the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection. In our preaching, therefore, we must continue to focus the minds of the people on the cross.

Paul said to the Corinthians, "*I delivered to you **first of all** that which I also received*" (1 Co 15:3). What he had received was that "*Christ **died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, and that He was **buried**, and that He **rose again** on the third day according to the Scriptures*"

(1 Co 15:3,4). **This is the gospel!** In every major sermon of Acts the gospel was preached to the people. When sincere people heard of the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross for their sins and His resurrection for our hope of eternal living, they listened, they believed, they repented, and finally, they were immersed in order to be saved.

What has often happened is that we have overemphasized the response to the gospel to the point of losing our focus on the gospel itself. But we must never forget that our obsession must always be on the suffering Servant of God on the cross. The Son of God was incarnate to give us an opportunity for eternity. So we must never forget that it was the incarnate Son of God who gave up His being in the form of God in order to bring those of faith into His eternal presence (Ph 2:5-11).

Now when we come to a study of the cases of conversion that are mentioned in the document of Acts, we understand that these recorded responses are the result of men and women who recognized who Jesus was. They subsequently responded to everything that Jesus commanded in order to come into His eternal presence. The message of the cross touched their hearts. It was this gospel message that had the power to bring them into an eternal saved relationship with God.

**1. The Jews on Pentecost** (At 2:31-47): Peter preached the gospel in Acts 2. He proclaimed that the Jews, by lawless hands, crucified and put Jesus to death (At 2:23). However, God raised Him up

(At 2:24). *“This Jesus God has raised up, to which we are all witnesses”* (At 2:32). God has now made Jesus Lord and Christ (At 2:36). *“Now when they heard **this**, they were cut to the heart ...”* (At 2:37). In this context, it was the gospel of the cross that caused a response of belief in the hearts of men. Peter instructed that they must obey the gospel in baptism (At 2:38). Subsequently, *“those who received his word were baptized”* (At 2:41). The point is that at the time the audience of Peter was cut to the heart, Peter had not yet said anything about hearing, believing, repenting, confessing or being baptized. This was not the message that moved the audience to respond in being cut to the heart. What moved the people was the message of the cross. The response of the people was that they heard and believed the message. They subsequently repented and were immersed in response to what Peter said they must do in verse 38.

**2. The Samaritans** (At 8:5-13): *“Philip went down to the city of Samaria and **preached Christ to them**”* (At 8:5). As Paul said, he *“determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified”* (1 Co 2:2). This was what Philip determined to know and preach among the Samaritans. As a result, *“The people with one accord gave attention to those things that were spoken by Philip”* (At 8:6). Those who believed were *“baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus”* (At 8:12,13). Therefore, the gospel was not that the people believed. Believing was in response to what Philip preached. They believed his message

concerning the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope.

**3. *The Ethiopian eunuch*** (At 8:26-39): The eunuch was reading Isaiah 53 when he was approached by Philip on a road from Jerusalem to Gaza. The prophecy of Isaiah 53 spoke of the crucifixion of Jesus (At 8:32,33). Beginning with Isaiah 53, Philip “*preached Jesus to him*” (At 8:35). Philip preached Jesus and His crucifixion. He began from the passage that spoke of the crucifixion and applied the prophecy to Jesus who was crucified and rose again. The result of the teaching was that the eunuch “*commanded the chariot to stand still. And both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him*” (At 8:38). Therefore, immersion in water for remission of sins was the response to the message that Philip preached. Philip preached the good news of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The eunuch responded by believing and being immersed.

The message is not to believe, but Jesus Christ and the cross. Some would preach faith as the center of reference of their message. But this is not what we see in the preaching of the New Testament. The people were told to believe (At 16:31), but their believing was generated by the preaching of Jesus and the cross. Faith, therefore, was the serendipity of Jesus and the cross. Since Jesus and the cross stimulated faith, then Jesus and the cross is our primary message (See 1 Co 1:17,23; 15:3,4).

**4. *Saul of Tarsus*** (At 9:10-19): In Acts 9 the resurrected Jesus personally

appeared to Saul (Paul). After three days of blindness in Damascus, Ananias said to Saul, “*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins*” (At 22:16). The fact is that at this time in Paul’s conversion, he had come to believe that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God. He knew that Jesus had died, and now, he had visual confirmation through the vision that He had been raised from the dead. What Ananias called on him to do was to respond to the event of Jesus’ death and resurrection. The statement of Ananias was that he respond to what he knew.

**5. *Cornelius and his household*** (At 10:24-48): When Peter went to the house of Cornelius he rehearsed the gospel message that had been preached throughout all Judea and Galilee (At 10:36,37). He preached that the Jews had crucified Jesus (At 10:39). However, God raised Jesus from the dead (At 10:40). “*While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word*” (At 10:44). He subsequently “*commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.*” (At 10:48). In other words, Cornelius and his household believed. It was not that Peter commanded them to hear and believe. This they did when the message of the cross was preached. They needed to know how to respond to that which they heard and believed. Therefore, Peter informed them to do the same thing that was stated on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:38.

**6. *Lydia and her household*** (At 16:13-15): Lydia had an open mind, and thus, she responded to the things that



were spoken by Paul. *“She and her household were baptized ...”* (At 16:15). Paul’s message that caused the response was the message of the gospel. Her receptive heart moved her to respond in obedience to the gospel.

**7. *The Philippian jailor*** (At 16:25-34): While in prison in Philippi, Paul and Silas were *“praying and singing hymns to God”* (At 16:25). An earthquake occurred that opened the prison doors. The jailor was evidently “shaken” by the scenario of events, and thus, proceeded to take his own life because he believed that the prisoners had escaped. However, when he was stopped from doing such by Paul, he was moved by the message of what Paul and Silas sang while in prison. He asked Paul and Silas, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* (At 16:30). Their reply was, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ ...”* (At 16:31). This statement was not made in the context of establishing a conclusion to what was necessary for the jailor to do in order to be saved. It was made in the context of what the jailor must do in order to initiate his response to the gospel. The jailor was subsequently baptized in response to the gospel (At 16:33).

**8. *The Corinthians*** (At 18:8): When Paul went to Corinth, he preached Jesus Christ and the cross (1 Co 2:2). He first delivered to the Corinthians that which he first received, *“that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures”* (1 Co 15:3,4). We could assume that wherever Paul went, he first

preached that which he first preached in Corinth. This was the gospel of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. When he preached this gospel, he had the same response as in Corinth. *“Then Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized”* (At 18:8). That which produces the response of hearing, believing and being immersed is the message of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope. When this message is preached, men and women will respond by doing that which must be done in order to come into a covenant relationship with God.

**9. *The Ephesians*** (At 19:1-5): When Paul arrived in Ephesus he found about twelve disciples who had been baptized into John’s baptism. However, Paul said that they must believe on Jesus as John had said (At 19:4). *“When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus”* (At 19:5). Therefore, their response to believing was immersion. We would conclude that anyone who has a sincere heart will do the same when hearing of the death of Jesus for our sins and resurrection for our hope.

The conversion of the Ephesians also emphasizes the fact that sometimes people can be immersed for the wrong reasons. These disciples were baptized unto John’s baptism at a time when John’s baptism was no longer valid. When they heard of the baptism in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, they were immediately rebaptized for the right reasons.

Someone might ask, “How many times must one be baptized?” The answer is, “Until you get it right and for the right reasons.” New Testament baptism is not New Testament baptism until it is a correct response to the right truth. In the cases of conversions that are mentioned in the book of Acts, the right reason for immersion is that it must be in response to the cross of Jesus and for the remission of sins.

It would be difficult for one to miss the emphasis of the preaching of the crucified and resurrected Jesus in Acts. It

was this gospel message that moved men and women to respond by obedience to this good news. That which moved men and women to initially respond to God was not the preaching of church organization, the mission of the church, or its benevolent work. Evangelists did not argue over names and dates, future speculations or present turmoils. They simply moved the hearts of adult men and women by preaching the simple gospel. And when they did this, people were moved to obey all that God required of them to be saved.

## Chapter 12

### Baptism And Proper Candidates

Baptism is not a “church sacrament.” It is not a work or ritual one must perform in order to be rewarded with a merit of religious excellence. Somewhere throughout the years of departure from the New Testament, religious people have lost sight of the spiritual significance of immersion into Christ. With the practice of infant baptism, misguided religious people have completely lost sight of the personal response to God’s will on the part of adults who are to be baptized.

The practice of infant baptism reveals this digression from the true purpose of immersion. Infant baptism manifests in those religions that practice it a loss of personal conviction on the part of the one who is baptized. In infant baptism, response to the grace of God is counted to be of no importance on the part of the

candidate. When babies are baptized, they know and understand nothing concerning the grace of God that appeared on the cross (Ti 2:11). All response to God’s teaching concerning salvation is placed on the shoulders of the parents, not the one being baptized. The “baptism” of the infant is simply the desires of the parents to have water sprinkled on the head of their baby according to their own desires. “Baptism,” therefore is simply a church ritual of parents to have their babies dedicated to the Lord. There is certainly nothing wrong with parents dedicating their babies to the Lord. But we must be careful about wrongfully using Bible names and actions that apply specifically to the obedience of adults to the message of the cross.

There are also those just this side of

infant baptism who would say to a very small child, “Isn’t it about time you get baptized?” It is questionable that a five or six year old can comprehend the nature of our salvation by grace and faith. Baptism in such cases has often been relegated to a type of legal requirement or “church sacrament” that one must perform. Such belief is evident in the statement that is often said to children that they must, “get baptized.”

One must be encouraged to respond to obey the gospel from the heart, not to just “get baptized” in order to fulfill what we might perceive to be a legal work in order to earn salvation. We must understand that when we are baptized we are obeying the good news of the death of Jesus for our sins on the cross and His resurrection for our hope. We are not performing a meritorious work in order to put God in debt to save us.

There have also been those who emphasize that all one must do is simply understand what one must do in order to be baptized. This could be referred to as “intellectual baptism.” When some young boy or girl wants to be immersed, our response is often to make sure that the probable candidate knows what he or she is doing. Emphasis is simply on knowledge and not commitment or response to the cross of Jesus. We often, and correctly, sit down with such prospects and proceed through a host of passages in order that the one who desires to be baptized knows all the right points. In this interview, however, commitment passages in the New Testament are generally not mentioned. Discipleship, ser-

vanthood, prayer life, spiritual commitment, and a disciplined spiritual life are generally not subjects of the discussion. The emphasis is usually on simply understanding Acts 2:38 before one can be baptized. In such cases, we have sought to make one a committed disciple of Jesus **after** he or she is baptized. But such is the reverse of Jesus’ instructions in Matthew 28:19. “... *make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ...*” Jesus wanted us to first disciple people to Him. Once one is committed to be a follower (a disciple) of Jesus, then he or she is ready to obey the gospel by immersion. We must not reverse the order in order to get people to the water.

We must remember that Romans 6:1-6 was written to Christians. Paul instructed the Roman Christians concerning the great spiritual relationship that they had established with God when they were immersed into the death of Jesus. We would assume, therefore, that these brethren did not know all the facts concerning their immersion when they were baptized. Nevertheless, they did know about Jesus and what He had accomplished for their sin problem. Knowledge of what one is doing in baptism is very important. However, personal commitment and a spiritual relationship with the death of Jesus is just as important. It is easy to understand that baptism is “for remission of sins.” It is not so easy to understand that we are “*baptized into His death*” and that we are crucified with Jesus (Rm 6:3-6). One concept deals with something that God takes care of in the heavenly realm. However, the latter

deals with one's commitment in life to no longer live in sin.

In order for one to be immersed into Christ in obedience to the gospel, therefore, he or she must be a proper candidate. By proper candidate we mean that one must respond to the gospel by faith and repentance. One must understand discipleship to the lordship of Jesus. Those in the New Testament who were baptized were adults who heard the preaching and teaching of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. They believed on Jesus, and in submission to His lordship, they repented of sins. These were the basic prerequisites for immersion into Christ. Knowledge of what God required was involved. However, commitment to be a disciple of Jesus was a primary motivating factor.

In the religious world today there is widespread controversy and confusion concerning the proper candidates for immersion. A great number of religious groups baptize babies by sprinkling or pouring water on their heads and calling such baptism. These groups often teach that babies have "original sin," and therefore, they need to be baptized for remission of that sin. It is believed by some that baptism is parallel to the rite of circumcision in the Old Testament. Infants, therefore, should be baptized soon after birth as babies were circumcised soon after birth in the Old Testament.

We must first understand that the simple action of immersion of an individual in water does not remit sins. There is no saving power in the water. There is no remission in the act of baptism. Im-

mersion is a God-ordained action that is required in order for one to obey the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. That which "causes" the remission of sins by God is the blood of Jesus that was poured out on the cross. However, it is at the point of immersion that God says He will apply the blood of Jesus to our sins. Remission of sins through the blood of Jesus takes place in the heavenly realm. On earth, the spiritual aspect of the new birth takes place in the heart of the individual who is immersed. The heart of the believer, therefore, must be spiritually acceptable through obedience in order for God to forgive.

An unbelieving or unrepentant individual will not be forgiven though he or she is immersed. In other words, there is no "spiritual power" in a legal action of immersion to remit sins. One must come to the God-commanded action of immersion with a believing and penitent heart. Upon these prerequisites, God says He will "wash away" our sins.

The New Testament, therefore, teaches that there are certain things one must do before he or she is to be immersed. The point to remember here is that infants can do none of these prerequisites in order to be immersed into Christ. Since they cannot, then they are not proper candidates for immersion.

#### **A. Teaching is necessary before baptism.**

Infants cannot be **taught**, but one must be taught the gospel before he or she can be baptized (See Mt 28:19,20;

Mk 16:15,16; Jn 6:45; At 8:35-38). Knowing what one is doing is important. This was evidently part of the problem in the church at Rome. Some were baptized, but were still “servants of unrighteousness” (Rm 6:13). One cannot live after the flesh when he or she comes into a committed relationship with Jesus.

In way of review, consider again Jeremiah 31:31-34. Jeremiah recorded God’s promise of a new covenant. God had said, “*And they will no longer teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know me*” (Jr 31:34). When one is in a covenant relationship with the Father under the new covenant, he or she **already** knows the Lord. One is taught of the Lord **before** coming into a covenant relationship with God. This is in contrast to Jewish babies who were physically born into a covenant relationship with the Lord, but had to be taught to know the Lord as they grew up. In the new covenant one is taught to know the Lord **before** he or she responds to the gospel and comes into a covenant relationship with the Lord. Therefore, before one is born again in baptism, he or she must first know the Lord.

## **B. Belief is necessary before baptism.**

Infants cannot **believe**, but one must believe on the Lord Jesus before he or she can be baptized. Jesus said, “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved...*” (Mk 16:16). From this statement we would correctly assume that belief is inseparably linked to baptism. One must

first believe on Jesus. One must believe in what he is about to commit his life. When Philip preached in Samaria, the Samaritans “*believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. They were baptized, both men and women.*” (At 8:12). Men and women **believed**. This belief moved these men and women to be baptized (At 8:12). One could certainly go through the motions of baptism without belief. Such a baptism would be of no profit toward one’s salvation. However, it is difficult to see how one could truly believe in Jesus as the Son of God without obedience to Jesus by immersion into a covenant relationship with God.

When the Ethiopian eunuch wanted to be baptized, Philip asked for the obvious prerequisite for him to carry out his desire. “*If you believe with all your heart, you may*” (At 8:37). What Philip was saying was that the eunuch could be immersed if he believed. Philip placed belief as a definite prerequisite for immersion.

The case of the eunuch helps us understand why Paul responded in a similar manner to the Philippian jailor in Acts 16:30-33. The jailor asked, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” (At 16:30). Paul and Silas responded, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved...*” (At 16:31). Belief, therefore, is the foundation upon which one’s response to the gospel is validated. When one truly believes, he or she will do that which is necessary to carry out belief in obedience to God.

In Mark 16:16 Jesus said, “*He who*

*believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*” We could illustrate this statement by saying that he who eats food and digests it, will live. He who does not eat, will die. There is no sense talking about digestion, if one does not eat. The same is true of baptism. *“He who does not believe will be condemned.”* There is no sense talking about baptism if one does not believe. The emphasis of Jesus in Mark 16:16, therefore, is on belief. One must believe. Baptism without belief is useless. It is useless because one has not responded to the gospel by belief in the death, burial and resurrection of the Son of God.

On the other hand, belief without baptism is also useless. If one does not respond to God with obedient faith, then certainly his belief is as that of those rulers who believed on Jesus, but were intimidated by the misguided religious leadership. John wrote of these rulers, *“Nevertheless, even among the chief rulers also many believed on Him. **But because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue**”* (Jn 12:42). These “believers” remained condemned because their belief would not move them to confess Jesus. Jesus said, *“... whoever will deny Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven”* (Mt 10:33). Jesus will not confess before the Father those who believe, and yet, are not baptized in obedience to the gospel. One’s obedience to the gospel in baptism is a living confession that one truly believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

### **C. Repentance is necessary before baptism.**

Infants cannot repent of sins, but one must repent before he or she can be baptized. Peter said, *“Repent, and be baptized ...”* (At 2:38). He also stated, *“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out ...”* (At 3:19). Babies are not sinners. They have no sin of which to repent. If they did, then they could not even say the words to express their repentance. Therefore, they are not proper candidates for immersion because they cannot feel or express their repentance if they had sin of which to repent.

### **D. Obedience to one’s conscience is necessary in baptism.**

In 1 Peter 3:21 Peter wrote, *“The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us—not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, **but the appeal of a good conscience to God ...**”* In this statement Peter is saying that one is baptized **in answer to a good conscience**. It is not as in the case of infant baptism where the parents are working on the basis of their own conscience. It is the conscience of the one who is being baptized that must be considered. Therefore, before one is baptized, his conscience must be stirred by the word of God. He is immersed in order to satisfy his conscience concerning what he knows the Bible tells him to do in order to be obedient to the will of God. This is obviously not something infants can do. Therefore, they cannot be immersed for the purpose of cleans-



ing their conscience before God. Infants are born with a pure conscience, not one filled with a sinful nature.

From the preceding points, we must remember some very important concepts. One must be able to be taught before he can be baptized. He must be able to believe that which he is taught. He must be able to respond with repentance to that which is taught. In answer to his good conscience to do that which is pleasing to God, he must be baptized. The prerequisites for immersion are not for infants. In fact, babies cannot be taught the word of God. They cannot believe or repent. Therefore, infants are not biblical candidates for obedience to the gospel. They are safe with God and have no need of being baptized for remission of sins.

In conjunction with this subject there are usually discussions concerning the time when one should be immersed after hearing about Jesus. Many have taught that one should be immersed “the **same hour** of the night.” This was certainly the response of the jailor in Acts 16:33. Those on Pentecost were baptized the **same day** (At 2:41). Therefore, if one understands the death of Jesus for his sins and that Jesus was raised for his eternal life, then certainly one must be baptized the “same hour of the night.” However, this was not always the case in the New Testament.

The immediacy of one’s immersion depends on the situation. The Scriptures certainly do not teach the concept of delaying one’s baptism until he or she is

taken through a series of lectures on discipleship or whatever. Neither do the Scriptures teach that the time one is baptized is dependent on the judgment of the one who does the teaching. The time when one is to be baptized depends solely on the one who must be baptized.

One must be a committed disciple of Jesus before he or she is immersed. This much we can clearly understand from what Jesus said in Matthew 28:19. Jesus said, “... *make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ...*” Disciples are baptized. We do not baptize and then make disciples. Much of the problem in churches lies in the fact that we have **reversed** the order of what Jesus said in Matthew 28:19. We have baptized unrepentant people who have become a thorn in the flesh to the leadership of churches. Uncommitted people are often baptized, and then have to be continually exhorted to be faithful to the Lord.

Jesus emphasized that the apostles make disciples, and then, baptize the disciples. However, it is each disciple’s choice concerning his obedience to the gospel, not the choice of the one who makes the disciples. It is the responsibility of the disciple to choose to serve the One he has chosen to follow. However, when one realizes that his sins must be washed away in baptism, he will be baptized as soon as possible.

We must consider that God gave Paul **three days** before he sent Ananias to him in order to baptize him. God gave Paul time to think about what he was getting himself into. And then, there is the case of the eunuch. He went to Jerusalem to

worship (At 8:27). Certainly, he showed up at the temple and was encountered by Christians who were **daily in the temple** where they “*did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ*” (At 5:42). When Philip came into contact with the eunuch on the Jerusalem/Gaza road, he asked if he understood the prophecy of Isaiah 53 (At 8:30-33). The Jews had taught that Isaiah was talking about himself in Isaiah 53. However, Christians taught at the temple that Isaiah had prophesied of the crucified Christ. The eunuch seems to indicate in the frustrated question of verse 34 of Acts 8, that he had contacted Christians in the temple of Jerusalem who had taught him that Isaiah was talking about Jesus. Therefore, when Philip met the eunuch, he had already heard and learned of Jesus (See Jn 6:45). Philip only joined with the eunuch to fulfill all righteousness by baptizing the eunuch. We would conclude, therefore, that the eunuch had some time to consider what he must do with this Jesus about whom he had been taught in Jerusalem.

When should one be baptized after hearing the gospel? Again, the answer depends on the individual. The key point to consider is whether one has committed himself or herself to be a disciple of Jesus. To some this would be immediate. Others might need “three days” as God gave Paul. Whatever the case, the important thing to remember is that in obedience to the gospel one is making the most important transition in his or her life. One does not come into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit on a notion. Dying with Jesus and being buried with Him is serious business. Infants cannot do this. This is why the practice of infant baptism degrades New Testament teaching concerning the importance and meaning of baptism in the life of an adult. The practice degrades the New Testament teaching on the subject because the New Testament places much emphasis on the responsibility of those who have been taught that they sacrificially obey the gospel.

## Chapter 13

### Baptism And Household Conversions

Baptism of infants is a widespread practice among several religious groups. This has been a practice that has existed for centuries. It is a practice that has a strong emotional hold on the religious thinking of many parents concerning their newborn infants. It is important, therefore, to study this subject in relation to what the Bible teaches. Our conclusions must not be based on what we

as parents may find to be comforting in our hearts, or what our religious traditions may dictate. If this practice is biblical, then certainly it should be a part of the religious belief and practice of all who seek to obey God. However, if this teaching is simply a traditional practice that has been bound on the consciences of sincere parents, then we must consider it as simply a traditional teaching of men.

## A. The baptism of men and women:

In order to answer those who promote infant baptism, it is imperative to understand first who was baptized in the New Testament. When we study the New Testament cases of immersion, we discover that those who were baptized were adult **men and women**. The emphasis in conversion was on those who **sincerely recognized their accountability to God**. Those who recognized their accountability were those who could discern between right and wrong when they heard the word of God preached concerning their accountability before God. Luke recorded in Acts 5:14 that *“believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.”* In Samaria Philip preached in order to appeal to adults. Luke wrote of what took place after Philip’s preaching in Samaria. *“But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized”* (At 8:12). When Saul persecuted the church, he imprisoned only those who were “of the Way.” This included only **men and women** (At 9:2). No infants were baptized or imprisoned for being “of the Way.” Those baptized in the first century were accountable individuals who had responded to the preaching of the gospel.

Both in Acts 5:14 and Acts 8:12 “men and women” are specifically mentioned as those who were immersed. It is significant that the inspired Scriptures make specific mention of men and women. We

wonder why adults would have been stated specifically if infants were included in these cases of immersion. By simply reading the narrative, the obvious conclusion would be that no infants were included. The Holy Spirit wanted us to understand that only accountable men and women were baptized.

It was somewhat prophetic of the Holy Spirit to mention in these particular cases that only men and women were baptized. He possibly knew that the time would come when infant baptism would be introduced as a substitute for the immersion of believing adults. He thus made it perfectly clear that only men and women were baptized in the first century.

## B. The cases of “household baptisms”:

In the New Testament there were several “household baptisms.” These were baptisms of entire families, including the servants who were included as part of a household. Those who support the practice of infant baptism today believe and teach that there were infants in these household baptisms of the book of Acts. But this is an unjustified deduction. There is no proof that there were babies in the baptisms of these households. A brief survey of what took place in the household baptisms in the New Testament clearly teaches that no infants were involved in the baptisms.

1. *The household of Lydia* (At 16:14,15): This “household baptism” is not justification for the baptism of in-

fants. We cannot assume that there were infants in the household of Lydia for the following reasons:

- a. No infants are mentioned.
- b. Those who were baptized in this passage were those who “gave heed” or attended to the things that Paul preached. Infants cannot give attention to things that are spoken concerning their salvation.
- c. To say that infants were included in this baptism we would have to assume that Lydia was married. There is no indication in the text that she was married. We would also have to assume that she had infant children. And we would have to assume that she had her children with her. (Remember, Lydia was about four hundred kilometers away from her home which was in the city of Thyatira.)

**2. *The household of the Philippian jailor*** (At 16:30-34): We cannot assume that there were infants in this household baptism for the following reasons:

- a. No infants are mentioned.
- b. All who were baptized in this household were able to **hear** and **understand** the “word of the Lord.”
- c. Those of this household were also able to **believe** on the Lord Jesus before their baptism.
- d. Those who were baptized, **re-joyced** greatly after their baptism.

Infants can do none of these things. Therefore, we must rightly conclude that there were no infants in the household of the Philippian jailor when he was baptized.

**3. *The household of Cornelius*** (At 10,11): We cannot assume that there were infants in this household baptism. This is true for the following reasons:

- a. No infants are mentioned.
- b. All of Cornelius’ house **feared** God.
- c. All who were baptized in Cornelius’ house were able to do the following:
  - (1) **Hear** the word (At 10:44)
  - (2) **Speak** with languages (At 10:46)
  - (3) **Magnify** God (At 10:46)

Infants can do none of these things. Therefore, we must conclude that there were no infants baptized when the household of Cornelius was baptized.

**4. *The household of Stephanas*** (1 Co 1:16; 16:15): The following two points will not allow infants to be included in the baptism of the household of Stephanas:

- a. No infants are mentioned.
- b. 1 Corinthians 16:15 states that Stephanas’ household “*dedicated themselves to the ministry of the saints.*” If we assume that infants were included in the household baptism of 1 Corinthians 1:16, then we could also assume that

Corinth had “ministering infants” as stated in 1 Corinthians 16:15. The church in Corinth had no “ministering infants,” and thus, we must conclude that no infants were included in the household baptism of Stephanas in 1 Corinthians 1:16.

In order to make a correct inference from a passage of scripture that does not specifically identify the inference, **that which is inferred must be clearly taught by either declarative or imperative statements in other passages.** For example, Jesus made a declarative statement concerning belief in John 8:24. *“Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”*

In this declarative statement of Jesus, He said nothing concerning repentance. However, we could correctly infer that repentance is required in conjunction with the requirement of belief in order that one not die in his sins. We can make this assumption simply because repentance and baptism are clearly stated in declarative and imperative statements in other contexts. Peter stated that the Lord is “... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pt 3:9). This declarative statement in conjunction with John 8:24 makes repentance a correct inference in Jesus’ requirement that one believe.

This brings us to the practice of infant baptism in reference to the cases of household baptisms in the New Testa-

ment. **The point is that before one can correctly infer that there were infants in the preceding cases of household baptisms, in which cases there is no specific mention of infants, there must be declarative or imperative statements in other contexts that require infants to be baptized.** The difficulty facing the proponents of infant baptism is the complete silence of the Scriptures on this matter. There are absolutely no statements throughout the entire Bible concerning the practice of infant baptism. To practice such is thus an addition to the word of God. If one binds the practice on the consciences of men, then he is adding to that which God requires of one to be saved.

### **C. Infant baptism is not authorized by the Bible.**

It is a serious thing to add to God’s word and bind on the consciences of religious people those things that God does not bind. The principle John stated in Revelation 22:18 is applicable to the subject under discussion here. John warned, *“If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book.”* Infant baptism is an addition to that which God requires of man to obey in order to be saved. It is an addition simply because there is no scripture that binds such on the consciences of men. Since there is no scripture binding such on men, then we must conclude that such is not necessary for salvation, but is simply a religious tradition of men.

The fact that infant baptism is not

found in the Bible is a major argument against its practice as a binding command. As in Revelation 22:18, the New Testament makes several other warnings against adding to the religious practices which God desires that man do. Paul exhorted that we should learn “*not to think above what is written ...*” (1 Co 4:6). In his letter to the Galatians, he warned the Christians not to be turned aside to another gospel. He wrote, “*But even if we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed*” (Gl 1:8). The problem in the Galatian church was that there were those who were binding on the Galatian Christians things that God had not bound. They were making such unbound legal requirements for salvation (See At 15:1,2). But doing this is inventing “another gospel” after the traditions of men.

The message that was first preached two thousand years ago contained absolutely nothing concerning infant baptism. Adding this practice to Christianity as a binding religious law would be going beyond the authority of the Scriptures.

To practice infant baptism is to go beyond the teaching of the New Testament, for the New Testament says nothing about it. The entire Bible says nothing about it. Those who teach infant baptism as a religious practice have no Bible authority for doing such.

#### **D. The testimony of religious scholarship:**

Religious scholarship confirms that

the practice of infant baptism originated after the first century. Concerning this thought, it is interesting to note the early comments of Origen (A.D. 185 - 254) on this subject.

Having occasion given in this place, I will mention a thing that causes frequent inquiries among the brethren. Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins? Or where have they sinned? Or how can any reason of the saved in their case hold good? But according to that sense we mention even now: None is free from pollution, though his life be but the length of one ray upon the earth. And it is for that reason because of the sacrament of baptism that pollution of our birth is taken away, that infants are baptized? (*Works*, Vol. 1).

The above is one of the earliest statements that was made in history on the subject of infant baptism. However, what is important to note in church history is that there is no mention of any kind of infant baptism **that dates to the first century**. Many religious leaders who practice infant baptism are honest in their admission that their practice did not originate in New Testament times. The Catholic religious leader Bertrand Conway wrote that “**there is no express mention of the baptizing of infants in the New Testament ...**” (*The Question Box*, p. 155). In the Catholic book, *Teachings of the Catholic Church*, it is stated, “**The baptism of infants is not positively directed in the Gospel**” (Quoted in *The Question Box*, p. 23). Such an admis-



sion should urge those who practice infant baptism to take another look at what is said in Galatians 1:6-9 and Revelation 22:18,19 concerning God's judgment of those who would add to the word of God.

God is serious about our not binding upon the consciences of men those things that He has not bound. If religious practices are bound upon men and claimed to have originated from God, the Scriptures pronounce harsh condemnations on those who would bind such man-made religious traditions. Unbiblical religious traditions that are bound on the consciences of men lead men to ignore the authority of God's word. When men ignore the authority of the word of God, they will create a religion after their own desires,

and thus, eventually reject the commandments of God in order to keep their religious traditions (Mk 7:1-9). Once people are faithful to their traditions, they usually do not return to the authority of the word of God after they have departed from such. They have set their course to maintain their own religion, which religion is an invention of man. It is for this reason that we encourage people to reconsider their practice of infant baptism. If infant baptism cannot be found in the New Testament, then it is an invention of men. And since it is a religious invention of men, then no parents will be held accountable before God for not baptizing their infants.

## Chapter 14

### Baptism And Infant Salvation

As previously emphasized, infant baptism is a major practice and belief in the religious world. Changing from this belief to the truth concerning true candidates for baptism is often quite difficult for parents. When one has been for generations in a religious group that has baptized babies, it is psychologically challenging to leave this tradition behind. For this reason, we must give some special attention to the nature of the soul of babies and their relationship to God.

An important Bible teaching is the innocence of newly born babies. They are **pure** of sin and **safe** from condemnation. However, a truly false teaching has been developed by some religious groups that centers around the theology

that babies are born sinners. Because of this belief, it is affirmed that infants must be baptized for the remission of sins. However, if we fully understand some simple truths, there will be no reason to believe in the necessity that babies should be baptized because they are supposedly sinners in the sight of God.

#### A. Infants are pure of sin.

In the sight of God, infants are pure of sin, and thus, do not need to be baptized for the remission of sins. Pure of sin means they have no sin. They are not born sinners, neither do they have the ability as infants to sin by voluntarily rejecting the will of God. Jesus used the

innocence of little children to illustrate the nature of servanthood in the kingdom. He said, “*Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and **become as little children**, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven*” (Mt 18:3). We wonder why Jesus would make this statement if children are of a sinful nature. Why would He illustrate the pure nature of the kingdom by that which is not pure? The answer to this question is that He would not.

Jesus also said of little children, “... *for of such is the kingdom of heaven*” (Mt 19:14; see 18:2-5; Mk 10:14,15). The point is that the kingdom originates from heaven. It is the kingdom “of heaven.” Since it originates from heaven, then it is pure, for all that originates from heaven is pure. It is not of sin. If we understand this point, then we can understand what Jesus is saying about the nature of infants and children until they reach the age at which they can make a choice concerning the will of God. What He is saying is that the soul of infants is as pure as that from which their spirits originated. Since God, in whom there is no darkness (1 Jn 1:5), is the Father of our spirits (Hb 12:9), then we must conclude that there is absolutely no darkness in an infant at the time of birth.

Jesus told Nicodemus, “... *unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (Jn 3:3). Being “born again” and becoming “as little children” **refer to the same concept**. When one is born of the water (baptism), his sins are washed away (At 2:38; 22:16). One comes out of the grave of water a new

creature in order to “*walk in newness of life*” (Rm 6:4-6; 2 Co 5:17). At the point of immersion one is washed of every sin and becomes **pure as a little child**. The kingdom of heaven is without sin. Jesus keeps the submitted subject of His kingdom continually cleansed of sin by His blood (1 Jn 1:7). When one continues to allow the sovereign will of Jesus to rule in his or her heart by walking in the light, the blood of Jesus continues to wash one of all sin.

The very concept that one must be “born anew” assumes that in physical birth one is pure. Why would Jesus use the statement “born anew” in His instructions to Nicodemus, if infants are with sin when they are physically born? What Jesus was saying was that one must be born anew in order to become pure as an infant when newly born.

One is cleansed of sin by immersion. He is born again to be pure as he was when first born as a baby. The kingdom is free of sin because of the continual cleansing work of the blood of Jesus. These basic New Testament teachings are illustrated by the fact that children are pure of sin. And if children are pure of sin, **they do not need to be baptized for remission of sins**.

It is often argued that in Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:15 and Luke 18:17 Jesus was urging the little children to come to Him in order that they be baptized. But this is an unjustified assumption. It is an addition to the context. The word “baptism” is not mentioned in any of these three chapters. It is not even under consideration. In order for one to make the

assumption that Jesus was urging children to come to Him for baptism, he must first find such a teaching in declarative or imperative statements in other contexts of the New Testament. The fact is that there are absolutely no other statements concerning infant baptism throughout the entire New Testament.

## **B. Infants are safe from condemnation.**

If infants are sinless, then it follows that they are safe from condemnation. Children who die in infancy will not be condemned to hell because they have not lived in rebellion to God's laws while on earth. A baby that does not recognize his accountability to the laws of God cannot sin. Infants do not recognize God's laws, and therefore, cannot be held accountable to those laws. If a child dies, that child is safe from any condemnation. This is a most comforting teaching of the New Testament.

Sin is man's free-moral rejection of God's law. John wrote, "*Sin is lawlessness*" (1 Jn 3:4). When one voluntarily refuses to live according to God's law, then he or she sins against God. One can do this by doing that which God says not to do, or by not doing that which God says one must do. In either situation, it is the individual who is making a free-moral decision to either do good or evil. Babies cannot sin after this manner because they do not recognize God's law. They simply behave according to their needs to preserve life. They cannot sin after the Bible's definition of sin.

James adds another manner by which we sin. "*Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin*" (Jas 4:17). One must be able to recognize a biblically defined principle of good before he can respond. If he recognizes the good, and refuses to respond in a positive manner, then he sins. Babies cannot respond to biblically defined principles of good. Therefore, they do not sin when they do not respond in order to do good.

Sin is defined in relation to an individual's response to law or biblically defined principles of good. Babies can do neither. Therefore, babies are not sinners. They do not need to be baptized for remission of sins.

Ezekiel said that children will not inherit the guilt of the fathers' sin (Ez 18:20). What Ezekiel was saying was that the children are not responsible for the sin of the fathers. **Everyone will give account of his own sin before God.** Paul wrote, "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that everyone may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*" (2 Co 5:10). To the Romans Paul stated, "*For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ... each one of us will give account of himself to God*" (Rm 14:10,12). We will not give account for the sin of any other person, including our fathers. Therefore, we do not inherit the sin of Adam or our fathers. Every individual will be responsible for his or her own sin before God on the day of final judgment. Each person must give account of his own deeds

before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Co 5:10). The point is that babies are not accountable for sin. They are pure.

## Chapter 15

# Baptism And Conditions For A Covenant Relationship

In a previous chapter we discussed the biblical teaching of remission of sins in relation to those who are in a covenant relationship with God. Only those in a covenant relationship with God have remission of sins and can benefit from the “blood of the covenant” (Lk 22:20; 1 Jn 1:7). In this chapter we must consider the conditions for coming into this covenant relationship with God in view of the practice of infant baptism. Because infant baptism is often paralleled with teachings concerning the Jews’ covenant relationship with the Father, it is important here to review the principal conditions of this covenant and its nature.

We must first understand that all mankind today lives under the sovereign reign of Jesus (Ep 1:20-23). Those who would be saved must establish a covenant relationship with Jesus. Before the establishment of the new covenant of Jesus, the Jews were in a covenant relationship with the Father. God had established this covenant with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. However, the establishment of a covenant relationship with the Father under the Old Testament law was different from the New Testament covenant relationship that one must establish with God today.

### A. Inclusion into the new covenant is

#### for accountable people.

In order for one to become a part of the new covenant, he or she must be one who is able to be accountable for his or her own behavior. One must be able to respond to the law of God.

**1. *One is baptized into a covenant relationship with Jesus.*** One is immersed into the body (1 Co 12:13). He is born anew by baptism in order to enter the body of those who have allowed the kingdom reign of Jesus in their hearts (Jn 3:3-5; Lk 17:20,21). These are those who have come into Christ (Rm 6:3; Gl 3:27). But one is immersed only after he or she has heard the gospel message, believed on Jesus, and repented of sins. Only accountable people can do this. Therefore, only those who have grown to a mature age where they can intellectually and emotionally respond to the gospel can come into a covenant relationship with Jesus.

**2. *Jewish babies were physically born into a covenant relationship with God in the Old Testament.*** Under the Old Testament law one was born a Jew. He did not choose to be a Jew. A male Jew was circumcised the eighth day after birth and that circumcision was a sign of his covenant relationship that he had

with God as a citizen of the nation of Israel (Gn 17:9-14).

Jeremiah 31:31-34 explains the difference between the old and new covenants. In verses 31 through 33 God promised, “*Behold, the days are coming says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant ....*” Under this new covenant, God said, “*I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts....*” This meant that they would know God and His laws **before** they established a covenant relationship with Him.

Under the old covenant, the one who was born into a covenant relationship with God as a child of Jewish parents, **had to be taught to know God and His laws after he was physically born a Jew**. Under the new covenant, however, people are **already taught** of God and His laws **before** they are spiritually born again through immersion into a covenant relationship with God (Jr 31:34; Jn 6:45). This fact is emphasized in Hebrews 8:11 when the Hebrew writer quotes Jeremiah 31 in order to apply this thought to the Christian age and Jesus’ new covenant. **The point here is that only those who can be taught to know God and His laws can be brought into a covenant relationship with God in the new covenant** (See Jn 6:45).

The new covenant of the Son is in force today. Therefore, only accountable people can be taught to know God and brought into this new covenant. One can come into a covenant relationship with God only when he or she reaches the age of accountability at which time one can

be taught. But until that time, infants are **pure of sin and safe from condemnation**. They are not subject to the law of the new covenant of Christ in the sense that they must recognize the law and obey it. They cannot, therefore, come into a covenant relationship with the Father according to the requirements set forth in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

## **B. Circumcision and baptism are not parallel conditions.**

Some have taught that baptism replaced circumcision under the new covenant. Therefore, children must be baptized today as children were circumcised under the Old Testament covenant. The Bible, however, does not teach that the “*circumcision of the heart*” in the New Testament is parallel to the act of circumcision in the Old Testament. In Romans 2:29 Paul stated, “*But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and **circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit ....***” In Colossians 2:11 he also stated, “*In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision not made with hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.*” In these passages Paul is not making the spiritual circumcision of the Christian’s heart a replacement of the physical circumcision of the Jewish males on the eighth day after birth. **He is talking about cutting off the old man of sin when one comes into a relationship with Jesus.**

The Bible does not state or teach that baptism took the place of circumcision. Nowhere does the New Testament make

a direct comparison between baptism and circumcision. The fact is that here is a difference between the **purpose** and **function** of baptism and circumcision. This difference clearly manifests that baptism did not take the place of circumcision.

**1. The age of the subjects is different.** Circumcision of the Old Testament took place on the eighth day after birth (Gn 17:12; Lv 12:3). But under the new covenant, candidates for baptism must be old enough to understand, believe and obey the gospel in baptism. There is no set date or age for being baptized. There was a set day for circumcision under the old covenant law, but not for baptism under the new covenant.

**2. Baptism is obedience to the gospel, but circumcision was a token.** Circumcision was a token, or sign, of a covenant between God and Abraham (Gn 17:9-14). It later became a sign of the covenant between God and the nation of Israel. Baptism, however, is an obedience to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Rm 6:3-5). Therefore, the purposes of baptism and circumcision are completely different.

**3. The candidates for baptism and circumcision are different.** Circumcision was a religious rite under the old Jewish law. It was administered to **males only** (Gn 17:10). But since the establishment of the new covenant, baptism is required of both males and females (At 8:12). Circumcision was never administered to females under the Old Testament law. If baptism is to be administered to

the same persons as was circumcision in the Old Testament, then females should not be baptized today because females were not circumcised under the Old Testament law. This truth clearly manifests the fact that baptism did not take the place of circumcision.

**4. Candidates for circumcision had no choice, whereas candidates for baptism choose.** On the eighth day after birth, the small Jewish infant had no choice as to whether he would be circumcised. He was circumcised because God had commanded that all Jewish males be circumcised. However, under the new covenant, individuals have a choice as to whether they want to come into a covenant relationship with God. They can choose to either accept or reject the gospel.

In Colossians 2:11-14 Paul metaphorically uses the Jewish circumcision of the flesh to refer to a circumcision that is not made with hands. His reference is to what the individual does in his or her own life in making a personal choice to turn from the sins of the flesh (See Ep 2:1-3). The repentant believer in this “circumcision” chooses to cut off the old man of sin (See Rm 6:6; Gl 2:20). This takes place **before** one is “buried with Him in baptism ...” (Cl 2:12). Verse 13 of Colossians 2 is a parallel passage of Romans 6:6-8. One is dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of the flesh while the old man still lives (See Ep 2:1-3). However, one is “made alive together with” Christ when he comes forth from the grave of baptism (Rm 6:8). In Colossians 2, therefore, Paul is using the



Jewish practice of circumcision (the cutting off of the foreskin) as a **metaphorical figure** to represent the cutting off of the old man of sin when one is immersed for the remission of sins.

Religious people must be careful about allowing traditional teachings to direct their religious behavior. Several religious traditions concerning baptism have been handed down from generation to generation in religious groups throughout the world. It is the responsibility of every generation to reexamine the Scriptures in order to reaffirm their stand upon what the Bible teaches. It is the responsibility of this generation to restore New Testament teachings concerning that truth which is most important to do in order to be saved.

We must urge every Bible student to study thoroughly God's word on this matter. Sometimes, these most funda-

mental teachings are the teachings that are neglected the most in our studies. We too often take for granted simple fundamental teachings. However, we need to continue in every generation to restudy those fundamentals upon which our faith is built. If we do not, then our children will forget those essential teachings that identify the church to be different from the man-made religions of the world. It is important to re-affirm our beliefs lest the religious culture in which we live influences or intimidates us to accept teachings that are foreign to the Bible. One must keep in mind that the intimidation of one's religious culture is very strong, and often stronger than loyalty to the Bible. But the mark of a good disciple of Jesus is that he will hold to the word of God regardless of traditional teachings.

## Chapter 16

### Baptism And Common Objections

Tradition is a tremendous mental force. It is a mental force that is so strong that it nailed the Son of God to the cross, for those religious leaders who rejected Jesus had already done what Jesus said to them in Mark 7:9, "***All too well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your own tradition.***" The religious leaders of Israel were so bound by their traditional beliefs that they would not accept even the Son of God who came to them in person. Since they had already rejected the commandments of God, it

was easy for them to reject the Son of God. Since they had already substituted their traditions for the will of God, it was easy for them to add any religious practice they so chose to their religious system. Traditional thought still binds people today from accepting the truth of the gospel. Men are still binding on the consciences of men those things God has not bound.

The result of traditional thinking concerning man-made concepts concerning baptism has led to many twisted concepts

of the subject of baptism. Some of these twisted objections have already been considered in this book. Further study of these objections will help us better understand and clarify the necessity of immersion in relation to one's salvation. Each point below is a common objection that has been made against the teaching that immersion into Christ is essential for remission of sins. Here is what people often say:

**A. "Baptism is only a symbol of salvation."**

Some have affirmed that baptism is an "outward manifestation of an inward grace." In other words, baptism is a manifestation of salvation that one has already received after he has made a self-proclaimed emotional declaration of his own salvation. When one simply "accepts the Lord as his or her Savior," or utters a "sinner's prayer," then he or she is supposedly saved. Immersion, therefore, is only an option. Baptism to some becomes a "symbol" of something that has already taken place in the life of the one who has accepted Jesus as his or her Savior.

In arguing the above position, some have used Colossians 2:11 as a supporting passage. *"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision not made with hands, in the removal of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ."* As circumcision was a "sign" of the covenant that one had with God when he was born a Jew, it is stated that in like manner baptism is a "sign" of salvation that he has before he is baptized.

Though Colossians 2:11 has already been discussed, we must emphasize the context of what Paul is stating. Colossians 2:13 explains the context of Colossians 2:11. Paul stated, *"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all trespasses."* Paul is metaphorically discussing the "cutting off" of the old man of sin. His context here is the exact same context as Romans 6 where he stated in relation to baptism, *"Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, that we should no longer be bondservants to sin"* (Rm 6:6). Paul's argument is this: *"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you have obeyed from the heart that form of teaching that was delivered to you."* (Rm 6:17).

At the point of immersion, the old man of sin was buried in a tomb of water. The old man, according to the metaphorical phraseology of Colossians 2:11, was "cut off" by being buried with Christ. This was done **"by the circumcision of Christ,"** not the individual who is baptized. In other words, when one is baptized, **it is Christ who cuts off the old man of sin.** At the cross, Christ accomplished the spiritual action of "cutting off" that is mentioned in the context of Colossians 2, but the old man of sin is buried at the time of baptism in order to be raised a new man in Christ.

The old man of sin is "circumcised" at the point of baptism. This is where the remission of sins is activated in the

life of the repentant. Paul metaphorically uses the term “circumcision” in Colossians 2:11 in reference to this cutting off of the old man of sin. It is not used to refer to something that has already taken place in the personal life of the individual who is baptized. Therefore, baptism is not a symbol of salvation that has already taken place in the life of an individual. Baptism is a time when an old man of sin is buried. It is a time when Jesus’ crucifixion of the old man with Him on the cross is finally buried in a grave in order to be raised a new creation (Rm 6:6; 2 Co 5:17).

In immersion there is both a physical and spiritual action that takes place. There is the physical action of immersion in water. There is also the spiritual action of burying the old man of sin that was crucified with Him at the cross. The two actions are combined together at the point of baptism when the old man of sin is buried. The repentant believer voluntarily partakes of the physical action of immersion in water. Jesus took care of the spiritual part at the cross. The old man of sin is finally buried; all sins are washed away. Once one believes, Jesus is ready to take care of the spiritual death problem with a spiritual newness of life (Rm 6:6). For this reason, Ananias said to Saul, “*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (At 22:16).

**B. “Baptism is a meritorious work on the part of man.”**

James stated a very important principle concerning the relationship between faith and works with reference to the life of a Christian. The same principle would apply to the alien sinner in becoming a Christian. “*Even so faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead*” (Js 2:17). This is an inescapable principle that permeates the Bible. Faith must be manifested by obedient works. When one recognizes the grace of God that is revealed for the salvation of man, his faith must move him to respond by obedience. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, “... *through whom [Jesus] we have received grace and apostleship, for **obedience of faith** among all nations for His name*” (Rm 1:5; see also Rm 16:26).

**Neither the Christian nor alien sinner is saved by meritorious works.** That is, one cannot meritoriously work in order to save himself. This principle applies to the keeping of law, as well as the performance of meritorious works. Paul stated this clearly in Galatians 2:16. “*Knowing that a man is not justified by works of law, but by the faith of Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus ....*” (See Rm 3:20). However, in the same book and in the same context, Paul wrote, “*For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision, **but faith working through love***” (Gl 5:6). Does Paul contradict himself? Certainly not! His point is simple. Legalistic Jews were teaching that through meritorious law-keeping one was justified before God. Paul’s argument against this belief is that no one can

keep law perfectly in order to be saved. Neither can one do meritorious works in order to atone for a single sin. Therefore, one must trust in the grace of God for salvation. However, Paul agrees with James when it comes to responding to the grace of God. Simple, inactive faith will not do. Love of and faith in God must respond. Individuals must respond to the grace of God that was manifested on the cross. That response is obedience. It is not meritorious obedience. It is obedience in response to the grace of God. This brings us to why one is baptized.

Baptism is an obedient response to one's faith in the grace of God to save him. One is baptized, not to perform a meritorious work in order to be justified before God. One is baptized in response to the plan of grace that God revealed from heaven through Jesus Christ. It is after the principle Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 15:10 concerning the labor of his life. *"But by the grace of God I am what I am. And His grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."*

If the principle of 1 Corinthians 15:10 can be clearly understood, then we have answered the argument that some use to say that baptism is a meritorious work. The same principle is in 2 Corinthians 4:15. *"For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace that is reaching many people may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God."* When the grace of God is preached and understood, **it causes people to respond in thanksgiving for the good news of the cross**

**and resurrection.** If there is no response, then there is either no understanding of the grace of God or appreciation. Whatever the case in an individual's life, if one does not obediently respond in thanksgiving to the grace of God, then he is not manifesting an appreciation for the cross.

Paul stated that as a disciple he "labored more abundantly" in response to the grace of God. Was he stating that his labors were works of merit in an effort to save himself? If one obediently responds in thanksgiving to the grace of God, does this mean that one is working meritoriously in order to earn his salvation? Certainly not! Notice carefully to what Paul said. God's grace toward him was **not in vain**. That is, God's grace was not useless, or unprofitable. The grace was not in vain because of Paul's labors of thanksgiving. Paul responded to the grace of God in his life; he worked in thanksgiving to what he had, that is, his salvation in Christ. This is why he said, *"... yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."* When Paul saw his salvation because of the grace of God, he responded. His work was by faith in the grace of God that saved him. His work, therefore, was a response, a response of his faith in God's grace by which he was saved. For this reason, he gives credit to God for his work. And so it is with baptism. Baptism is the alien sinner's response to the grace of God that appeared on a cross outside Jerusalem (Ti 2:11).

One is baptized because of faith. Baptism is a response of faith to God's

grace that was manifested on the cross. It is not that one has already been justified by grace before he is baptized, for where there is grace, there is the forgiveness of sins. Faith must precede the application of God's grace in order to forgive our sins. If one expresses no obedience of faith, then certainly God cannot respond with grace. Therefore, one must respond by faith through baptism in order to receive the forgiveness of sins by the grace of God (At 2:38; 22:16). Forgiveness comes from grace, and thus, one is baptized when he recognizes that God, through grace, will forgive him.

Our faith responds through baptism. God responds to our faith by grace. This is exactly what Paul said in Romans 5:1,2.

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

We have access to the grace of God through our faith. But this must be an obedient faith. James was clear. "Faith without works is dead." Our faith, therefore, must respond; it must be obedient. Obedient faith is the door through which we must enter in order to receive the grace of God. In conversion, obedient faith in baptism is the access door through which all must pass in order to receive the forgiving grace of God. Thus baptism can never be a meritorious work. **It is a work of thanksgiving in response**

**to one's faith in the saving grace of God.** Those who teach that baptism is not necessary are actually saying that the grace of God is insufficient to move one to respond with thanksgiving to the gospel. In other words, if one does not faithfully respond to the grace of God in obedience by immersion, then God's grace is useless in reference to one's salvation.

### **C. "Paul said we are not sent to baptize."**

In 1 Corinthians 1:17 Paul said, "*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel.*" Because people misunderstand the context of this statement, they unfortunately contend that baptism is not necessary for salvation. However, in the very context in which this statement is made, Paul affirmed that one is "of Christ" only if he has been baptized in the name of Christ (1 Co 1:13). He also testified concerning the first converts of Corinth whom he had personally baptized (1 Co 1:14-16).

What Paul is affirming in 1 Corinthians 1:17 is the principle of the preceding point. He preached the gospel of God's grace. As Philip preached the same to the eunuch, the response was the same. The eunuch responded by requesting that he be baptized (At 8:36). Crispus, Gaius and the household of Stephanas in Corinth responded in the same manner. They manifested their response to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus by being immersed for the remission of their sins. The fact that they responded by immersion emphasizes the fact that Paul

preached what men and women must do in order to respond to the gospel. What they must do in response to the gospel is obey the gospel by immersion into Christ (Rm 6:3-6; see 2 Th 1:7-9).

The message of Paul's preaching was Jesus Christ and His crucifixion (1 Co 1:23). We must read the entirety of 1 Corinthians 1:17. "*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void.*" The gospel was the first thing that Paul preached in Corinth (1 Co 15:3,4). When the good news of the cross is preached, men and women naturally want to connect with Jesus. They want to connect at the cross, and then join with Jesus in burial and resurrection. Therefore, when we preach the cross, the burial and resurrection naturally follow. The cross is the motivation. Baptism and resurrection are the response. One has not fully responded to the message of the cross unless he manifests his response by joining with Jesus in burial and resurrection (See Rm 6:3-6).

**D. *"The thief on the cross was saved without baptism."***

In Luke 23:43 Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "*Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.*" From this statement some have affirmed the teaching that baptism is not necessary for salvation simply because the thief on the cross was not baptized, and yet, he was saved by Jesus.

The above argument manifests at

least three critical misunderstandings concerning biblical interpretation. First, those who make this argument do not understand the New Testament concerning the baptism to which we today are to submit in order to be saved. Second, this argument also manifests both a misunderstanding concerning the covenants of God, as well as, God's requirements on the part of man for his salvation under the New Testament covenant. And third, those who make this unfortunate argument against baptism truly do not understand who Jesus was and is. Now consider the following answers to the objections to baptism because Jesus personally saved the thief who lived under the Old Testament covenant:

**1. *The thief could have been baptized unto John's baptism.*** John came baptizing **for the remission of sins** (Mk 1:4). As a result of his preaching, many went out to the wilderness where he was preaching. They heard and were baptized (See Lk 3:21; 7:29; Mt 3:5,6; 21:32). Since the thief on the cross showed repentance and knowledge of who Jesus was, it is not unlikely that he had been a student of John. The man feared God for he said to the other thief, "*Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?*" (Lk 23:40). The thief also knew that Jesus was a man who had done nothing wrong (Lk 23:41). Would it be too much to assume that he had contact with both John and Jesus during their ministries? Who is to say that he was not baptized for the remission of sins unto John's baptism? Sim-



ply because the text does not say that he was not baptized does not mean that he was not.

**2. *The thief lived under the Old Testament covenant.*** The new covenant of Jesus did not come into force until the death of the testator, Jesus, and its official announcement in Acts 2. A testament is in force when the testator is dead (Hb 9:16,17). *“For a covenant is ratified upon death, since it has no force while the one who made it lives.”* (Hb 9:17). When Jesus was still alive on the cross, His testament had not yet been brought into effect. Even when the death of the testator occurs, his testament is not brought into force until its official announcement.

Under the Old Testament covenant, **baptism in the name of Jesus for remission of sins was not a condition for salvation.** This baptism was not announced as a part of the new covenant until the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. **The thief lived under the old covenant,** not the new. He was not subject to the new, but the old. Therefore, he was not subject to immersion for remission of sins in the name of Jesus. Only those who lived after the official announcement of the kingdom reign of Jesus in Acts 2 were subject to baptism in the name of Jesus (See At 2:38).

**3. *The thief could personally be saved by Jesus.*** It is certainly not a good illustration to use Jesus’ saving of the thief as a model for our salvation today. Those who would use the thief to argue against the necessity of baptism prove too much. If the thief is a model for how

one should be saved today, then we would have to have the **personal presence** of Jesus in His incarnate state in order to be saved, for Jesus was there in the presence of the thief. Jesus on the cross was the conclusion of His earthly ministry. This event took place before His death and resurrection. On this occasion Jesus personally spoke the words of salvation to the thief. Must we have Jesus today personally speaking words of salvation to each alien sinner in order that they be saved?

**We must remember that while on earth, Jesus as the Son of God, had the authority to personally forgive sins since He was the incarnation of God on earth.** In the healing of a paralytic, Jesus said to the scribes who questioned His authority, *“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins ...”* (Mt 9:6). While Jesus was on earth, and during His personal ministry, He as the Son of God could personally forgive sins. He could because sin that was committed was sin against God who Jesus was. This was Jesus’ argument against the religious leaders who accused Him in the context of Matthew 9. Jesus’ forgiving of the thief on the cross was His last effort to prove to us that He was the Son of God on earth with the authority to forgive sin. While on earth Jesus could grant forgiveness of sins because sin was against God. Today, forgiveness is through His blood. And one comes into contact with Jesus’ blood through obedience to the gospel in immersion.

**4. *The thief could not obey the gos-***

*pel.* In order for one to be saved today, he or she must obey the gospel which is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (1 Co 15:3,4; see 2 Th 1:7-9). One obeys the gospel by immersion (Rm 6:4,5). One is baptized into the death of Jesus and resurrected from the tomb of water.

The thief lived before Jesus had died and was resurrected. How could he have been baptized in obedience to the gospel when the gospel event had not yet taken place? He could have been baptized unto John's baptism. However, John's baptism was not in obedience to the gospel. It was a baptism "unto repentance" (Mk 1:4). The baptism of the new covenant is in the name of Jesus into His death, burial and resurrection.

Those who were baptized unto John's baptism after the establishment of the new covenant in Acts 2, had to be rebaptized in the name of Jesus. This was the situation with some disciples in Ephesus who had been baptized with John's baptism (At 19:1-6). When Paul learned that they had been so baptized, he rebaptized these disciples in the name of Jesus (At 19:4,5).

**E. "One is saved by faith when there is no water."**

In Matthew 12 the Pharisees unjustly accused Jesus and His disciples of working on the Sabbath by plucking ears of maize from the fields and eating the grain in the fields. They accused, "*Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath*" (vs 2). Jesus' response to their accusation can be applied to answer the

argument that salvation is by faith only because there are cases where people believed, but could not be baptized for lack of water.

Consider closely Jesus' response to the Pharisees. "*Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him.*" (vs 3). David had entered into the tabernacle and eaten the showbread that legally could be eaten **only by the priests** (vs 4). The law said that this bread was reserved only for the priests (Ex 29:32). But when David was fleeing from Saul for his life, he and his men broke this law in order to live. A higher law was in place in this case that the Pharisees knew. The higher law was that God's anointed, David, should be preserved as the future king of Israel. For this reason, when David ate of the showbread, he did not break the written law of Exodus 29:32 because there was a higher principle of law that came into force.

Because the higher principle of law of the preservation of the future king of Isarel, David's breaking of the law by eating the showbread **did not make him a lawbreaker, nor did his actions change the law.** The occasion was unusual, and thus, the higher law of his preservation was greater at the time than the law that only the priests eat the showbread. **But his breaking of the law did not change the law.**

Now some have asserted that if one is in the middle of the desert and hears the gospel and believes, then he is saved at that point, for there is no water into which the believer can be immersed. Therefore,

he is saved by “faith only.” And because he is saved without immersion in water, everyone is similarly saved by “faith only.”

There are two things to consider in reference to this argument. First, hypothetical situations **do not change the law**. By hypothetical we mean circumstances that are dreamed up in order to establish a foundation upon which one interprets the Scriptures, and thus, establishes a law by the hypothetical circumstance. We would also add that unusual circumstances as David’s eating of the maize **does not change the law**.

If one is saved by faith until he finds sufficient water into which he can be immersed, then we would assume that God knows the heart of this person as He knew the heart of David. When Jesus was preached to the eunuch, we understand that baptism for remission of sins was also taught. And thus, the traveler would do what he was taught to do as soon as he came upon some water. We would also assume that because God knew his heart between the time he believed and the time when he was baptized, that God’s mercy and grace would save him if he somehow died before he reached sufficient water at his soonest opportunity. We have never heard of such a circumstance where one believed and died before he was baptized. Nevertheless, we would trust in God’s grace in such cases, for God would know that the believing traveler would be baptized as soon as he arrived at some water and was able to say, “*See, here is water! What hinders me from being baptized*” (At 8:36). We would as-

sume that he was saved before he went down into the water, **but this exception does not change the law that one is to be baptized to wash away his sins**. If the traveler knowingly passed up the water on his way to his destination, then would we conclude that his refusal to be baptized in the water changed the law of baptism?

Second, please keep in mind that we are not in the business of establishing law through either hypothetical or real circumstances as in the case of David. David’s eating of the showbread that was to be eaten only by the priests did not change the law. If it did, then every Jew could scratch from their Bibles the law of Exodus 29:32. **Neither hypothetical nor real circumstances where the law cannot be obeyed change the law**. Rahab the harlot lied, but was “*justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way*” (Js 2:25). Because she lied to preserve Israel’s conquest of the land of promise did not forever change the law that it is sinful to lie (see Rv 21:8).

Those who live in this dispensation of time will be judged by the word of Christ. Jesus said, “*He who rejects Me and does not receive My words, has one who judges him. The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day*” (Jn 12:48). The word of Jesus will be the standard by which we will be judged. “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that everyone may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*” (2 Co 5:10). Preachers and

teachers of the word of Christ must communicate to others those things Jesus commanded in His word, for it will be by this word that all will be judged. Baptism in obedience to the gospel is a part of the word of Jesus, for He said, "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*" (Mk 16:16). Simply because Jesus made this statement necessitates that those who proclaim the word of Jesus, must also proclaim this teaching of Jesus. Those who do not, are not proclaiming the complete word of Jesus that will be the standard by which people will be judged. They are not proclaiming an essential for salvation that all men must hear and obey.

The arguments presented in this book will not convince some concerning the proposition that has been maintained and proved. The reason they will not be convinced is because of an erroneous religious world view. This world view is based on the idea that man is saved regardless of any obedience he may do in reference to his faith in God. The historical foundation for this belief came out of a religious movement wherein it was taught that men were individually predestined to either heaven or hell, regardless of the free-moral choice of the individual. Since one could not do anything to change his destiny, then it was concluded that salvation could never be based on any voluntary obedience the individual did to save himself (See At 3:19). Salvation, or condemnation, was already predestined by God. No one could change his or her destiny.

From this erroneous belief evolved the concept that no person who was not predestined to be saved could free-morally respond to the grace of God in order to be saved. Though one recognized the grace of God on the cross, he could not respond in any manner in order to save himself unless God had already individually predestined that person to be saved. In relation to the subject of this book, no one could of his own will respond in baptism for remission of sins in order to gain access to the saving grace of God.

The above world view permeates many religious groups today. Though some groups have changed in their teaching concerning individual predestination, they have yet to accept the fact that one has the privilege of free-morally responding to the grace of God by immersion in the name of Jesus for remission of sins. And without this individual and voluntary response, one cannot be saved.

We would conclude that man is a free-moral agent and that he will be held accountable for his sin against God. And because he will be held accountable, then he must do something about his problem of sin. The New Testament is clear on what one must do. The most important thing one must do is to believe and obey the gospel by immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The apostles called on men to do such. The New Testament writers called on men to do such. And now we call on men to do such today simply because the New Testament so instructs us. No one can say that baptism for remission of sins is not important. Because so much emphasis

is placed on baptism in the New Testament, all those who believe the Bible to be the revelation of God must also emphasize the importance of baptism for remission of sins.

God's grace is made active in the life of repentant believers at the point of baptism. It is this grace that saves. There is no magic in the water or saving power in the action of immersion. However, at the point of immersion God declares that all our sins are washed away. They are washed away by the blood of Jesus that flows from the cross of grace. Therefore, we are sent forth to preach the grace of God, the gospel of Jesus. Those who respond today will respond in the same manner as those in the first century. Both men and women will be immersed for the remission of their sins.

We have completed a very extensive study of the subject of baptism. More could be said on the matter. Unfortunately, we live in a world of Christendom where there is great controversy over this subject which should be so easy to understand. The existence of the controversy is striking because the New Testament says so much about people being baptized. One would think that if there is so much teaching on the subject, then there would be little controversy over the matter. But Satan would not be idle in his attack against that which is so important in reference to one's eternal salvation.

We must never underestimate the hold tradition has on the minds of people. This is especially true in the area of religious tradition. Traditional churches

have for centuries established various erroneous views concerning baptism. All sorts of beliefs surround this subject that is so clearly explained in the New Testament. For men to give up misguided beliefs in view of clear teachings in the Bible seems somewhat ridiculous. But we must always keep in mind that the desire of men to create religious beliefs after their own desires and traditions is often stronger than their desire to study objectively and submit to the word of God. Israel is a historical lesson that men seek to go their own way, regardless of the word of God (See Hb 2:1-3; 10:39).

At the end of all arguments concerning the necessity of obeying the gospel by immersion in water for remission of one's sins, the final argument is simply, **"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"** (Mk 16:16). Nothing could be more clear. If one truly wants to do what Jesus has told us to do, then he will simply obey Jesus' statement that he be baptized and follow His example. *"Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him"* (Mt 3:13). This puzzled John, not that Jesus wanted to be baptized, but to be baptized by him (Mt 3:14). But Jesus responded, *"Permit it at this time, for thus it is appropriate for us to fulfill all righteousness"* (Mt 3:15). If one would seek to follow the example of Jesus, then as an adult he or she must be baptized.

One must forget his traditional teachings in reference to this matter. Our salvation is not about the tradition of our fathers. It is not about us. It is totally about Jesus in His efforts to bring us into

eternal dwelling with Him. And if one seeks to make Jesus the Lord of his life, then certainly he will seek out water in order to obey the death, burial and resurrection of the One who gave Himself on a cross for our reconciliation to God.