

The Simple Truths of Baptism.

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ALTHOUGH brought up mainly among baptised believers, the writer was led to the Saviour in one of the denominations that does not teach "believers' baptism by immersion," and well remembers thinking to himself very soon after being saved, "I do not see any need for me to be baptised in water." Shortly after this the subject of baptism was brought before me, and I felt it incumbent upon me to look into the Scriptures on the matter, with the result that I became convinced that baptism was one of the Lord's commands, and was baptised.

Recently whilst conducting an elder girls' Bible Class one of the girls sug-

gested the subject of "Baptism." This was taken up under the following four headings, and having felt that the consideration of the Scriptures on the subject was beneficial to both teacher and class, these few simple thoughts are put into print in the hope that they may be helpful to others, especially to young Christians.

1.—Who are to be Baptised?

"Then they that **gladly received His word** were baptised" (Acts 2:41).

"When they **believed** Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised" (Acts 8:12).

"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised which have **received the Holy Ghost** as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptised" (Acts 10:47-48).

“And a certain woman named Lydia . . . heard us, **whose heart the Lord opened** that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And . . . she was baptised” (Acts 16:14-15).

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night . . . and was baptised, he and all his straightway . . . and rejoiced, **believing** in God with all his house” (Acts 16:30-34).

In these and other passages which could be quoted, we have the examples of Peter, Philip, Paul, and we clearly see that those who were baptised were those who **“received the Word,”** those who **“believed,”** those who **“received the Holy Ghost,”** those **“whose hearts the Lord opened.”** In every case there is clear evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in first bringing men and women into

touch with Christ by faith, before they were baptised. Some contend from Acts 16: that it is reasonable to assume that the young children (irrespective of whether they believed in Christ or not) of those who believed were also baptised, but a careful reading of the two examples does not warrant such a conclusion. It is highly improbable that Lydia, whose business as a seller of purple had taken her 200 miles away from her native city of Thyatira, had any children with her. And in the case of the jailor we are expressly told that Paul and Silas spoke the Word of the Lord to **all** that were in the house, and that the jailor **believed** in God with **all** his house. It is significant also that in Acts 8:6-12, where Philip preached the Gospel to the people of Samaria, and evidently a large number believed, we read that "they were baptised, both **men** and **women** (no mention of children). And a careful search fails to reveal any clear instance of precept or practice in baptising any save

those who believed the Gospel message.

We judge then, from these Scriptures, that the proper subjects for baptism are those who are old enough to receive the Gospel and to believe in Christ, and that only such were baptised by the apostles and those who preached the Word.

2.—Why should Believers be Baptised?

“Go ye therefore and teach all nations, **baptising them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:20).

“Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved” (Mark 16:15).

“And he **commanded** them to be baptised in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48).

“And now why tarriest thou, **arise and be baptised**” (Acts 22:16).

“Then cometh Jesus . . . unto John to

be baptised of him. But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptised of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now, for thus **it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness**" (Matt. 3:13-15).

From these Scriptures it is evident that baptism is a command of the Lord to those who believe in Him. In Acts 10:48 we see the apostle Peter, as soon as he perceived that his hearers had believed in Christ and were saved, **commands** them to be baptised; and this command he gives in the name of, or on the authority of, the Lord Jesus. In Matthew 28:20 and Mark 16:15 we see where he gets this authority—the risen Lord Jesus here commissions His disciples to preach the Gospel not to Jews only but to the whole world, to every creature; and clearly part of His commission to them was to **baptise** those who believed the Gospel, those who received their teaching. In Acts 22: we read how the Lord Jesus meets Saul the persecutor on the Damascus

road. So soon as Saul perceives that he has been fighting against God, and that this Jesus whom he had been persecuting was the Christ of God, the Messiah, the Saviour, he acknowledges His Lordship and asks, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and it is significant that the first command placed before him by the Lord is this one from the lips of Ananias, "Arise, and be baptised." Then, further, we have the example of the Lord Jesus Himself, who was baptised by John, saying, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."*

We conclude, then, that believers should be baptised because it is a command of the risen Lord Jesus, who has Himself said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

*Although the Lord Jesus was baptised unto John's baptism, not believers' baptism, we believe He undoubtedly set us an **example of obedience** to every ordinance of God, that believers in this day do well to lay to heart.

3.—When should Baptism take place?

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptised” (Acts 2:41).

“When they believed Philip preaching . . . they were baptised” (Acts 8:12).

“And he (the jailer) took them **the same hour of the night**, and was baptised” (Acts 16:33).

“And Philip said, If thou **believest with all thine heart** thou mayest (be baptised)” (Acts 8:37).

It is apparent from these and other Scriptures that baptism immediately followed faith in Christ, and never preceded it. And so it will always be when a work of the Holy Spirit is manifestly going on, and those preaching are faithful to the Lord's commission and instruct those who believe as to the truth of baptism. In such cases there is usually a readiness to obey the Lord's command and be baptised. But it would be wrong to conclude that all who **profess** to be-

lieve in Christ should immediately be baptised in water. In apostolic days such was the power of the Holy Spirit that "of the rest durst no man join himself unto them," consequently there would be few empty professions; whereas in our day the civilised world abounds with people who profess to be Christians, but evidently are not. But the Spirit of God is careful to leave guidance for us in all things, and thus we see that those who preached the Word used care and discernment as to whom they baptised. When the eunuch desired to be baptised, Philip **tests him** with the condition, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest." His reply satisfied Philip as to the reality of his faith in Christ, and he at once baptised him. And in Acts 10 the apostle Peter discerns the evident work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Cornelius and those with him before he commands them to be baptised. And this the true evangelist and pastor will ever do—seek to use care and to discern

the evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of those who desire to be baptised.

We believe it is clear, then, that baptism should follow faith in Christ, as soon after as those who are interested in the spiritual welfare of young believers can perceive evidence of the reality of their profession.

4.—How should We be Baptised?

“And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptised him” (Acts 8:38).

“Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death” (Rom. 6:4).

“Buried with Him in baptism” (Col. 2:12).

The teaching concerning baptism clearly implies immersion, not sprinkling. Rightly understood, when a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is baptised, he goes through in **figure** what the Saviour went through in **reality**.. In effect he pro-

claims, "I was worthy of death for my sins, and God counts me as having died with Christ. As burial follows death, and as Christ was laid in the tomb dead to the world, so do I desire, in being baptised, to take my place as dead to my former life. And as Christ was raised again from the dead, now living in the power of an endless life, so am I counted as one in resurrection with Him, and should strive henceforth to live as one dead to sin and to the world, but alive unto God." Romans 6:4 clearly explains it: "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead . . . even so we also should walk in newness of life." When Christ was baptised in death for us (Luke 12:50) He was overwhelmed by death, and when a believer is baptised in water he should be covered by water. Moreover, the best authorities admit the word "baptise" is derived from the Greek "baptizo," meaning to dip, to plunge, to immerse; and the only places

where the actual act is enlarged upon (Acts 8:38, Matt. 3:16), the Scriptures speak of going down into the water and coming up out of the water, and John 3:23 tells us John was baptising in Aenon because there was **much water** there."

The mode of baptism is therefore evidently by the immersion of the whole body in water.

And now a word to the reader. If you have not as yet personally accepted Christ into your heart as your own Saviour, you have no part in this matter. "Baptismal regeneration" is nowhere taught in Scripture, and for you to be baptised will not bring you one whit nearer to being saved. The first act of obedience God wants from you is to obey the Gospel; in other words, to believe the Gospel—the good news concerning Christ and His work on Calvary's cross when He died to put away sin. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not

see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

But if the reader is a believer in Christ—if you are trusting alone in His precious blood for salvation and eternal life—have you fully considered this matter of obedience to the Lord's command, and been baptised? If not, do not put it from you, saying, "It is non-essential," or "My church doesn't teach it;" but seek to know the mind of God from His Word, look into the subject with a willing heart to be guided by the Spirit of God and to be subject to His will, remembering that the Lord Jesus said, "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). "I made haste, and delayed not, to keep Thy commandments" (Psalm 119:60). "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5).

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