

SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM  
(Continued)

III. Who Should Be Baptized?

Who is to be baptized, a believer or an unbeliever, a child of God or a follower of Satan? According to the Scriptures, only those who have believed on Christ unto the Salvation of their souls are the proper subjects for baptism.

John the Baptist would not baptize those who requested him to do so until they convinced him that they had been saved. He demanded evidence of repentance toward God and faith in the coming Messiah before he would baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to him. To those who applied to him for baptism he said, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:8).

Christ always made disciples before He baptized them (His disciples baptized for Him). "The Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples)" (John 4:1-2).

Christ authorized and commanded the administration of the ordinance of baptism in what we call the Great Commission wherein He said: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20). With reference to disciples His order was to make them, to baptize them, and to teach them. "Them" is a personal pronoun which is used in the place of disciples. The specification of "them" eliminates all others. Those who say that "them" refers to disciples and their children need to be reminded that a pronoun can never include more than is embraced in the noun for which it stands; so, the word "them" denotes the disciples.

After Peter preached his great sermon on the day of Pentecost three thousand were baptized. Were those who were baptized and added to the church that day believers or unbelievers, saved or unsaved? They were saved because they had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, Whom Peter had preached so clearly and effectively. Of them God's Word says: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41).

While they were riding along in the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch, Philip preached Christ to him. When he was convinced that Christ was "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," the eunuch believed on Him as his Saviour, whereupon his sins were forgiven and he was saved. Then Philip taught him that it was the duty of every Christian to follow Christ in baptism. As soon as they came to a place where there was ample water in which to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36). Unwilling to baptize him until he was convinced that the eunuch really believed on Christ, Philip said: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts 8:37-38).

Our Lord commanded the baptism of all believers in Him. Inasmuch as there is a maxim of law to the effect that "the expression of one thing is the exclusion of another," the command of Christ to baptize believers would necessarily forbid the baptism of unbelievers. In order for a baptism to be valid and scriptural the candidate must be a child of God. There is no authority, reason, or justification for administering baptism to anyone who has not passed from death unto life. Scriptural baptism can be administered only to those who are old enough to hear the gospel of Christ, to be convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit, to repent of sin, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to make a

personal and public profession of faith in the Saviour, and who have actually done these things. There is neither precept nor example in the New Testament for baptizing anybody except professing believers in Christ.

Who, then, should be baptized? Every thoughtful reader of the clear and uniform teaching of the New Testament on this question knows that only those who have heard the gospel of Christ, accepted its message, repented of their sins, believed with saving faith on Christ as their personal and all-sufficient Saviour from sin, been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit, and confessed their faith in Him as Saviour and prepared or qualified for scriptural baptism. After all, why should any unbeliever be baptized in the name of the Father Whom he does not know, in the name of the Son in Whom he does not believe, and in the name of the Holy Spirit Whom he has resisted since he became accountable and responsible for his decisions and actions?

#### IV. Why Should All Believers Be Baptized?

Scriptural baptism is a duty which is enjoined upon every child of God. It is a certainty that Christ did not give a command which is obligatory on everyone of His followers without a specific reason for it and a definite purpose in it. No believer in Christ has any right to refuse to be baptized scripturally.

What are some of the reasons why all believers should be baptized?

##### 1. To follow the example of Christ.

In His baptism, as well as in many other things which He did, Christ set an example for all of His followers. That which the Son of God did should never be treated with indifference or considered as unimportant by those who call themselves Christians. With reference to Christ's baptism God's Word says: "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:9-11). Since Christ's example was perfect in every respect, there is no reason why anyone, whom He has saved, should ever hesitate to do what his Saviour did.

It is truly wonderful for us to have the exalted privilege of doing what our Lord did. None of us can live a sinless life, or perform miracles as He did. Nor can we speak as did the Christ of Whom it was said: "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). But, there is one thing which every believer in Christ can do just like He did, namely, walk down into the baptismal waters and be buried in the likeness of our Lord's death and be raised in the likeness of His resurrection. All believers in Christ who follow His example in baptism will become the recipients of God's approval as certainly as Christ, immediately following His baptism, heard the Father express His pleasure in the words: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

##### 2. To obey the command of Christ.

Christ commanded the baptism of all believers, saying: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20). In obedience to this command, all of the believers, who were mentioned in the New Testament, were baptized, with the exception of the thief who died on the cross without having an opportunity to be baptized after Christ saved him.

All of Christ's commands are important, and all Christians are obligated to obey them. Believers should be just as careful to obey Christ's command to be baptized as promptly and cheerfully as any other that He ever gave. Their submission to scriptural baptism, as an act of Christian obedience, is a mark of their enthronement of Christ as Lord, and a test of their willingness to do His blessed will. Obedience to Christ always results in blessings to the children of God.

Baptists are frequently accused of teaching that one must be baptized in order to be saved, but nothing could be further from the truth. On the contrary, they believe and teach that baptism is not essential to salvation, but that salvation is a prerequisite to scriptural baptism. Only children of God ought to be baptized. If baptism were essential to salvation, then one's salvation would be dependent ultimately upon the person administering the ordinance. Those who are saved know that they received their salvation directly from Jesus Christ, Who is the only Saviour, and not from the hands of any human being, or from the water in which they were immersed. In no reference in the New Testament is baptism said to be essential to salvation, but it is clearly and repeatedly set forth as an act of Christian obedience. We are not baptized to obtain, but in order to obey. It is the duty of every Christian to obey Christ in scriptural baptism, as well as in the various other things which He commanded. Baptism in obedience to His command is a proof of the love of believers for Christ. He said: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15); "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); "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14); "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

A sick child, who wanted to be baptized, said, "Mother, I hope I won't die tonight." "Why?" inquired the mother. The child replied, "Because I haven't been baptized." "Do you think baptism will save you?" asked the mother. "Oh, no," said the child, "I am already saved, for I am trusting in Jesus, but I wouldn't like to go to heaven without doing what the Lord Jesus Christ told me to do." Why should any believer want to go to heaven without doing what the Lord Jesus Christ told him or her to do?

### 3. To confess their faith in Christ.

Scriptural baptism is an external symbol of an internal work of grace. The reception of baptism affords every believer a wonderful opportunity to confess his faith in Christ as his personal Saviour, and to declare publicly and courageously his allegiance to Him as Lord and Master. This beautiful ordinance is a symbolic declaration of the fact that the remission of sins has been obtained previously through repentance toward God and faith in Christ.

In the act of scriptural baptism the believer announces to all witnesses thereof that he has truly repented of his sins, that he has died to sin, that his previous life of sin has been buried, that he has received from Christ a new and victorious life, and that henceforth, in the ample strength which is to be imparted to him by the Holy Spirit, he fully intends and expects to live a life of Christian fruitfulness to the glory of God.

Through his burial in the liquid grave and his resurrection therefrom the true believer has a splendid opportunity of saying in effect: "I have trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour, and He has saved me. I am grateful beyond expression for the glorious privilege of being one of His followers. I have a great longing that all others might come to know Him as their Saviour, too." That is indeed a tremendously meaningful confession of faith, of discipleship, and of friendship.

#### 4. To dramatize the gospel of Christ.

Christ's baptism portrayed, in figure, what He was going to do, in fact, at the close of His earthly ministry, namely, die, be buried, and arise from the dead. All believers should be baptized for the same purpose for which Christ was baptized, namely, to portray His death, His burial, and His resurrection. When a believer is baptized scripturally, the great and central facts of the gospel -- the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ -- are presented in vivid imagery.

As the believer is lowered under the water and then lifted out of the water, he is dramatizing the glorious gospel "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" (I Corinthians 15:3-4). This beautiful act of baptism speaks louder than words. In fact, no more effective witness is ever borne than when the believer is buried with Christ in baptism and lifted out of the watery grave to live triumphantly for Him.

To preach the gospel of Christ is to proclaim the fact of His death, His burial, and His resurrection. To be baptized scripturally is to dramatize the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ. Had these important truths not been embodied in and declared by the act of baptism, this ordinance would not have been divinely instituted and made obligatory to "whosoever believeth." It is vitally important that every preacher proclaim the true gospel of Christ. It is equally important that every believer dramatize the true gospel in his baptism. Anything which does not portray the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, regardless of what it may be called, is not scriptural baptism.

#### V. What, Then, Is Scriptural Baptism?

Scriptural baptism is the immersion in water of a believer in Christ, upon a profession of faith in Him as Saviour and Lord, in obedience to the command of Christ, by the authority of a New Testament church, and in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This baptism should be received promptly and joyously by everyone whom Christ saves.