

## THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM

By Rev. Dale Andre, D.D.

Baptism in water is an important doctrine. It conveys important spiritual truth related to salvation like most of the other God-given rituals in the Scriptures, but it does not produce salvation. This is true despite the fact that the majority of churches under the canopy of Christianity teach that water baptism is essential to salvation. This erroneous idea has come from traditions held by churches which have mixed Scriptural truth related to the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the doctrine of baptism in water.

This has been done rather easily because of a statement that our Lord made that did not differentiate between Spirit baptism and water baptism: *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned* (Mark 16:15-16). It is only by comparing Scripture with Scripture that we know that this is not a reference to baptism in water, but it is a reference to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, in this present church age, an individual must be

## The Doctrine of Baptism

baptized by the Holy Spirit before he is a candidate for baptism in water (Acts 10:44-48). Thus, like the Gentiles in the household of Cornelius, individual unsaved persons hear the Word of God preached and the gospel is quickened to their hearts by the Holy Spirit. This enables them to believe the gospel and be saved. This is necessary because the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God (I Corinthians 2:14). Therefore it takes the quickening power of the Spirit of God to enable the individual to understand enough of what is preached so that he might believe the gospel and be saved. When the Spirit of God enters the individual to enable him to believe, He remains forever (John 14:16). This quickening power (Ephesians 2:1-9) equates with salvation. It also equates with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Thus, at the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit baptizes the individual sinner into the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord so that by judicial decree God counts the believer to have died with Christ, to have been buried with Christ and to have been raised with Christ. Once this has taken place, the individual is then a candidate for baptism in water. This outward physical act by one who has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation shows outwardly all that has taken place inwardly by the judicial reckoning of God.

The Scriptures are very clear about this. Even so there are many varying opinions about baptism, both as to mode and to purpose. A superficial view of the Scriptures and a misunderstanding of the rules of interpretation will account for the origin of most of these false opinions. Therefore, in the interest of arriving at the truth, it will be necessary to consider some basic rules of interpretation of the Scriptures as well as certain attributes of God. Both of these considerations are necessary tools for the proper interpretation of the Scriptures.

## The Doctrine of Baptism

The Scriptures attest to God's Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Immutability, the fact that God is not a respecter of persons, the fact that it is impossible for God to lie, to God's Justice, to His Holiness and to His Righteousness, as well as to His Love, His Mercy and His Grace. These attributes are essential elements of interpretation because they reflect the Person of the God with Whom we have to do. A proper understanding of the Scriptures also requires that we consider the immediate context as well as the overall context of any text of the Scriptures we wish to understand. The author and the audience are also two important considerations, so that we know who is speaking and to whom. Further the proper interpretation of the Scriptures allows self-evident truths from the Bible to stand uncontradicted by obscure texts. An obscure text is a portion of Scripture which is not understood because of insufficient information. It can also be a text which has been wrested from its context and made to mean something other than what it means in its context.

It is not uncommon in the academic and scientific realm for an individual to espouse a theory and then to seek data which would tend to support his theory. This is called *deductive reasoning*, and we find it used in many spheres. Even so it is not the best way to approach the interpretation of the Scriptures. The contexts of the Scriptures, the attributes of God and the rules of interpretation are too easily overlooked with this method. Even so this method is quite common. It can be properly used, but its misuse has been responsible for the misapplication and misinterpretation of the Scriptures by the subjective use of Scripture to support false theories.

The better form of reasoning in dealing with the Scriptures is *inductive reasoning*. This form of reasoning does not start with a theory. It starts with a body of evidence which must be

## The Doctrine of Baptism

properly assembled and evaluated, so that the evidence formulates the opinions of the investigator and allows him to arrive at the truth. This form of investigation is an essential tool in the study and proper interpretation of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, like those who hold to deductive reasoning, we who use an inductive approach to the Scriptures also have a bias. Our bias is that we believe the Bible to be the Word of God.

This bias has been formed from an inductive view of the Bible. We believe there is sufficient internal evidence in the Scriptures, as well as corroborative evidence in fulfilled prophecy, archeology, history and science to satisfy our minds that the Bible is indeed the Word of God. Consequently we believe the Bible to be the sole authority for our faith, our hope, our doctrine and our manner of life. Further the Scriptures attests to the fact that *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God* (II Timothy 3:16). This is plenary inspiration. This means that the very words used by the various human writers in the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek writings of the Old and New Testaments were breathed out by God. This was done within the structure of the personalities, experiences and writing styles of the various writers.

This makes the Bible to be a revelation from God to man. It provides man with the purpose of life and the means to gain eternal life. Any consideration of the Bible that is not tempered by the fact of God's authorship will, most likely, result in either a misapplication or a misunderstanding of the Scriptures. This is commonly manifested in the academic community by individuals who are touted to be *Biblical scholars*. Nevertheless a more accurate description of them would be *Biblical skeptics*. This is true because these so-called scholars give no credence to the prophetic, supernatural and miraculous intervention of God in the affairs of man. Despite

## The Doctrine of Baptism

the veracity of the Scriptures, these men still give far more credence to any other documents from antiquity than they give to the Scriptures.

We have stated that God is Omniscient. This means He knows everything. Consequently everything that can be known, is known, or ever shall be known has always been known to God. He knows the beginning from the ending, and He knows us. In fact God knows us better than we know ourselves (Psalm 139).

God's Immutability is another attribute of God which is important to the proper interpretation of Scripture. This means that God cannot change. His essential character and nature is *the same yesterday, today and forever* (Hebrews 13:8). God spoke through the prophet Malachi and said: *For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed* (Malachi 3:6). God had promised Abraham that through his seed, all of the families of the earth would be blessed. The promise was confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, and it was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Thus God stood true to His promise despite Israel's constant departures from the truth.

The Bible says: *Let God be true, and every man a liar*. Therefore a statement of God in one portion of the Word of God cannot contradict a statement of God in another portion of the Word of God. Nevertheless God has had different covenant relationships with men in different eras. For example, God dealt with the patriarchs in one fashion, the nation of Israel in another and the New Testament church in still another. This is the reason it is so important to know who is speaking and to whom when endeavoring to understand the Scriptures. Despite this, the Bible says that there is *one faith* (Ephesians 4:5). This faith may have been expressed somewhat differently because of the different covenant relationships God has had with man, but all of the

## The Doctrine of Baptism

covenants of God have ultimately had their fulfillment in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. So in every age and with every man, salvation has always been by God's grace through faith and not by works of righteousness or rituals which anyone might do.

Circumcision and baptism are two prominent rituals, one out of the Old Testament and the other out of the New Testament, but neither can be imposed upon men for salvation. This is incontrovertibly true. To require anything but faith in God's promise of salvation in Jesus Christ would be inconsistent with the attributes and statements of God recorded in the Scriptures. Thus, through God's promises fulfilled in Jesus Christ, God has made provision for man's fallen condition in a manner which satisfies God's Justice and Holiness but allows for the expression of His Love, Mercy and Grace.

The thief on the cross is a good example of the truth of justification by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. There was nothing about the thief that would suggest he was justified by his life. To the contrary, he was a thief. Thus he was clearly a violator of the law. Even so he expressed his faith in Jesus Christ when he said: *Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*. This indicated that he believed in the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord from the dead (i.e., the gospel). This is evident because, at that moment in time, both the thief and our Lord were being crucified by the Romans. This man was not baptized nor was he involved in organized religion. He was a thief who was *suffering justly* for his deeds, but he appealed to the Lord on the basis of His grace. His request of the Lord established that he clearly had his faith in the Person and the work of Jesus Christ. Consequently our Lord said to him: *Today thou shalt be with me in paradise* (Luke 23:43).

## The Doctrine of Baptism

The mercy shown to the thief was not out of respect for him above others. It could not have been. God is not a respecter of persons. The acceptance of the thief by the Lord simply illustrates the truth of the gospel: he was accepted by grace through faith apart from the deeds of the law. Further, because God is not a respecter of persons, the thief's acceptance proves that no one is accepted of God on the basis of his works. This aligns perfectly with the truth expressed by Paul: *But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for the just shall live by faith[,] and the law is not of faith...* (Galatians 3:11-12).

There is another important principle that must be considered. It is implied in some of the principles which we have already considered, but we have not stated it directly. It is connected to God's covenant relationship with Israel. Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage by God's grace through faith in the blood of the passover lambs, which blood was to be applied by faith to the door posts and lintels of their homes (on the fourteenth day of the first month) so that God would pass over them. Nevertheless, about sixty days later, God offered the law to Israel because of her transgressions (Galatians 3:19), but she did not consider her transgressions. Therefore she did not consider that she had grumbled in Egypt during the judgments of the Egyptians' gods, or that she had continued to grumble in her unbelief and rebellion all the way to Sinai. Thus, without regard to her failures, Israel rashly entered into the covenant of the law when she said: *All that the LORD hath spoken we will do* (Exodus 19:8). The writer to the Hebrews tell us this was an act of unbelief and a provocation to God (Hebrews 3:8-19).

Thus, for the next fifteen hundred years, God dealt with Israel through the law and the sacrificial system. The tabernacle and the sacrifices were designed to point the Jews to faith in

## The Doctrine of Baptism

Christ when they failed before the law, and fail they would. During the era of the law, God gave the Old Testament Scriptures to the nation of Israel by verbal inspiration through Moses and the prophets. Therefore, if we include the Gospels in the New Testament (which record the ministry of our Lord to the Jews under the law), forty-three of the sixty-six books of the Bible (or 65%) cover the period of time when the law was in effect, before the new covenant was put into effect by the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of our Lord. So even though Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are New Testament books, they record the ministry of our Lord to the Jews under the law, by our Lord's interpretation of the law, and not by the traditions of the elders. Therefore most of our Lord's ministry was to the Jews (Romans 15:8) and not to the church. If we do not understand this, we will have difficulty understanding our Lord's lawful use of the law with the Jews in His public ministry (I Timothy 1:8-10).

Now, respecting baptism, there are a number of errors practiced by professing churches of Jesus Christ. For example, there are churches that teach that baptism is essential to salvation. Most of these churches baptize infants. Then there are those who do not baptize infants, but they still claim that baptism is essential to salvation. Further there are those who teach that a person must be baptized into their particular denomination and join one of their churches, or that person cannot be saved.

Not only has there been a corruption of the purpose of baptism, there has also been a corruption of the mode of baptism. Consequently there is a parallel between these false ideas and the most prominent heresy recorded in the New Testament Scriptures. The apostles constantly battled this heresy. It was perpetrated by a group of Jews who professed to be believers in Jesus

## The Doctrine of Baptism

Christ. Despite their professed faith, they told the Gentiles: *Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved* (Acts 15:1). Their insistence upon the performance of the law of circumcision for salvation corrupted the truth of salvation by God's grace through faith. Paul called what they preached *another gospel*. Their *gospel* was not a gospel of the same sort as the gospel Paul and the other apostles of the Lord preached, but it was a gospel of *a different sort*.

This *other gospel* has found expression in our day, just as it found expression throughout the churches of the first century, but with one difference. The ritual the Judaizers claimed to be essential to salvation was circumcision, but in this age it is baptism. The ritual may have changed, but the error is the same. Those who insist upon the necessity of baptism or any other rituals for salvation are under a curse, because Paul wrote: *If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed* (Galatians 1:9).

It is a tragedy that the greater number of people who call themselves Christians do so because a ritual was performed on them when they were infants. They do not claim to be Christians because of their personal faith in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ (according to the terms of the gospel), but they make this claim because of their baptism. These people have been taught that their baptism saved them from original sin. The next step, after infant baptism for these people, was to be brought into a state of grace when they reached the age of puberty. This state was accomplished, according to the dogma, by attendance in catechism classes where they were instructed in the doctrines and sacraments of their church. A successful completion of these classes was said to bring them into a state of grace which confirmed their

## The Doctrine of Baptism

faith. This was outwardly manifested by a confirmation ceremony. According to the dogma, their confirmation enabled the Holy Spirit to indwell them at a time when temptations would increase because of the maturing of their bodies. Thus, according to the dogma, the Holy Spirit was given to enable them to keep the ten commandments, the sacraments and the ordinances of the church.

A failure in any one of these areas was, or is, constituted sin. This requires the one who has sinned to go to his priest and confess his sins. The priest grants absolution of the individual's sins based upon the performance of certain good works to show penance. The sinner must then go to mass to have (according to the doctrine of transubstantiation) a sacrifice of Jesus Christ made to atone for his sins. Thus the mass is a direct contradiction of the truth that Christ made one sacrifice for sins forever (Hebrews 10:12).

Baptismal regeneration, confirmation and transubstantiation are all doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. These doctrines, with denominational variations, are practiced by many of the churches of the Reformation era. Some hold to one thing and deny another, but almost universally they believe in baptismal regeneration. This mingling of law and ritual as necessities for salvation, as we have seen, constitutes the preaching of *another gospel*.

The preaching of *another gospel* by these churches does not mean that their memberships are void of genuine believers in Christ. We know this is not so. Just as the churches of the first century were subjected to a similar error, yet were possessed of genuine believers, so it is in these churches. There are those individuals in these churches who have placed their faith in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, despite the errors held by their churches.

## The Doctrine of Baptism

Even so the ones who proclaim ritual and law-keeping are essential to salvation are false prophets and are condemned for preaching *another gospel*. Likewise the ones who have embraced their counterfeit gospel are condemned for having believed a lie. This is a terrible tragedy which has come upon many who *have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge*.

Since the practice of requiring ritual and law-keeping for salvation is *another gospel*, it will be helpful to our study of baptism to further consider the gospel preached by Paul and the apostles of the Lord. It was a gospel of grace. The New Testament word for grace is *charis*. *Charis*, practically speaking, is the unmerited favor of God. Thus Paul wrote, *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast* (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is by the unmerited favor of God that men are saved. This is accomplished by faith, which is a gift from God, so that it is impossible for a man to boast in his salvation as though it were something attained by him.

Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me* (John 14:6). Therefore it is only through the gospel of Jesus Christ that man has access to God. This is true without regard to time. Salvation is and always has been by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. In every age, then, those who have come to God for salvation have come by faith in the promise of God which would ultimately be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Thus God made provision for the salvation of man in Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). When Adam and Eve by transgression fell, the provision of salvation in Jesus Christ was already in place. It was to be fulfilled *in the fullness of time*, through *the seed of the woman*. Adam believed the promise and called his wife's name Eve, *the mother*

## The Doctrine of Baptism

*of all living.* Then God made a sacrifice, typical of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and He clothed Adam and Eve with the skin of the victim: which represented the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 5:21). Thus the gospel was presented to the patriarchs prophetically and through the shadows and types of the sacrificial system. The gospel was adequately revealed so that their faith was in the promise of Jesus Christ, Who, at that time, was not yet come. This was expressed by the writer to the Hebrews when he wrote, *These all died in faith, not having received the promises* [of the Person and the work of Jesus Christ], *but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth* (Hebrews 11:13).

From this and other Scripture we can plainly see that the Old Testament saints believed the promises of God in Jesus Christ. Obviously they did not have the clear revelation we have in the New Testament. Nevertheless they had sufficient information to believe God's promise of a Kinsman Redeemer: that He would come in the fullness of time to stand in their stead and bear their judgment. The names of some of these believers are recorded in Hebrews chapter eleven, where it is said of them: *These all died in faith, not having received the promises.* Thus, according to this same chapter in Hebrews, their faith was counted unto them for righteousness and they are the *cloud of witnesses* in the twelfth chapter, which was used by the writer to the Hebrews to encourage believers of subsequent ages in the faith.

Their faith and their salvation are clearly established. It is also clearly established that not one of them was baptized according to the New Testament doctrine of ritual baptism. We know God is not a respecter of persons. We know God cannot lie. We know God is immutable. We

## The Doctrine of Baptism

know ritual baptism was not essential to their salvation. Therefore it cannot be essential to our salvation:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures. (I Corinthians 15:1-4)

Paul clearly states that the gospel he preached was the gospel which was contained in the Scriptures. This is the Old Testament Scriptures, because at the time when Paul wrote to the Corinthians the New Testament Scriptures were not yet completed.

As we view the Old Testament Scriptures, we find the gospel portrayed in prophetic promises as well as in shadows and types. We see it portrayed to Adam and Eve in the promise of the *seed of the woman*, and we see it in the sacrifice of the innocent victim through which God provided Adam and Eve with a suitable covering for their nakedness. We see it again in Abel's sacrifice. The Scriptures declare Abel's sacrifice was more excellent than Cain's. This is true because Abel's sacrifice revealed his faith in the Kinsman Redeemer promised to Adam and Eve in the *seed of the woman*. Consequently Abel was declared to be righteous, not because of his life, but because of his faith in the promise of God.

It is evident that if the gospel was portrayed in Abel's *more excellent sacrifice*, its denial was portrayed in Cain's gift to God. Cain's gift to God was made without faith in the promise of God. In fact it was born out of the deception that came upon the human family through the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus Cain's offering reflected his belief that he could be accepted of God by the works of his own hands. Even so, after God rejected Cain's human efforts

## The Doctrine of Baptism

for salvation, God manifested His longsuffering towards sinners when He said to Cain: *If thou doest well, wilt thou not be accepted, and if thou doest not well sin [i. e., a sin offering] lieth at the door.* It was not possible for Cain to be accepted of God by doing well: *For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not* (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Nevertheless Cain categorically rejected the offer of salvation by faith in the sin offering at the door. He showed his contempt for the gospel and his anger over the rejection of the works of his own hands when he slew his brother. He was then set wandering east of Eden. So it is with all of those who reject salvation by grace in Jesus Christ. Like Cain, they are set wandering outside of the paradise of God with no hope until they change their minds about salvation in Jesus Christ. This was true of Cain, and it has been true of Israel's national rejection and murder of Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless God's grace is extended still. The gospel was portrayed in the ark which provided a refuge (salvation) for Noah and his family in the days of the flood. It was portrayed in the sacrifice of Isaac, and it was portrayed in the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage through the blood of the passover lambs. It was portrayed in the tabernacle in the wilderness, and it was portrayed in the lifted-up serpent. In a word, the gospel was portrayed in shadows and types from the garden of Eden to its fulfillment in the events of Calvary and Christ's subsequent resurrection from the dead, and it continues to be extended through the preaching of present-day churches.

The revelation of how Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures reveals He was offered in our stead, *the Just for the unjust*, thus bearing the penalty for our sins and providing the judicial means through which God is able to be Just and the Justifier of them who believe in

## The Doctrine of Baptism

Jesus. In the sacrifice of Jesus Christ the sins of mankind were transferred to Christ by the judicial reckoning of God. Similarly, the righteousness of Christ has been transferred by judicial reckoning to whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ. It is by the judicial reckoning of God, based on the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that Paul was able to write, *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* (II Corinthians 5:21). Judicial reckoning (i. e., the doctrine of imputation), then, is an integral part of the gospel. It declares the believer's standing before God.

Baptism portrays, through an outward manifestation in water, some of the things that are judicially reckoned to the believer because of his faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism is a ritual (commanded of the Lord in the great commission) to be observed by those who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. It, like animal sacrifices and circumcision, is a portrayal of salvation, but it is not salvation. Its purpose is an outward manifestation of an inward faith. Thus it declares the believer's faith in certain judicial relationships that are his in salvation.

The gospel declares: ... *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). Baptism portrays this truth. It does not supplant it. Thus baptism portrays the judicial truth that when Christ died, God counts the believer to have died with Him; when Christ was buried, God counts the believer to have been buried with Him; and when Christ arose from the dead, God counts the believer to have been raised with Him (Romans 6:3-5). A segment of this truth was declared to Peter when Paul rebuked him for his hypocrisy at Antioch in Syria. Peter had been eating and communing with the Gentiles until certain Jews arrived from Jerusalem. Then Peter

## The Doctrine of Baptism

separated himself from the Gentiles. In Paul's rebuke of Peter he reminded Peter of the fact that he was saved by grace through faith apart from the deeds of the law. Then Paul spoke of the judicial reckoning of God :

I [was] crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

Later Paul told the Colossians that the believer is *Buried with [Christ] in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead* (Colossians 2:12). This was, of course, accomplished at the moment of salvation when the Spirit of God baptized us into the family of God: thus declaring our co-death, co-burial and co-resurrection with our Lord. By this act the Spirit of God quickened the Word of God to our hearts that we might believe and be saved. Subsequent to our salvation and in agreement with the great commission, we were baptized in water as an outward manifestation of our judicial relationship with the Lord:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4)

When the Christians at Rome were being confronted with the *other gospel* of the Judaizers, Paul revealed that no one has the capacity to keep the precepts of the law (excepting, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ). In Paul's letter to the Romans, he revealed the sinful nature of both the Jews and the Gentiles. Then he compared Christians with unsaved Jews and Gentiles: *What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no not one* (Romans 3:9-10). Paul

## The Doctrine of Baptism

followed this with the revelation of the doctrine of justification by faith apart from the deeds of the law. After that he revealed the concept of imputation to the Romans. Then he illustrated the truth of imputation (i.e., judicial reckoning) by describing God's relationship to Abraham with some of the events surrounding the birth of Isaac:

For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. (Romans 4:13-25, emphasis mine)

This portion of Scripture reveals some very important truths essential to our understanding of justification by faith, imputation and the doctrine of baptism (even though baptism is not directly mentioned in the text). First, Abraham was justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. Second, his faith was counted (i.e., imputed) unto him for righteousness. God reckoned certain things to be true, both physically and spiritually in the life of Abraham because of his faith. Third, Abraham, like each of us, was a sinful man. When God declared him to be righteous (because of his faith in Christ), he was given a status which could not have been earned or obtained by natural ability. Fourth, Paul showed the Romans how justification by faith works,

## The Doctrine of Baptism

when in the lives of Abraham and Sarah, God called those things that are not as though they are. Fifth, this manner of viewing things was shown in the birth of Isaac. Abraham had grown too old to father a son, and Sarah (who had been barren throughout her child-bearing years) was also old and had passed through menopause. Thus, from a physical point of view, it was impossible for Abraham and Sarah to produce a son in their old age. Nevertheless God told them they would have a son, because God has the ability to call those things that are as though they are not. Consequently God altered the physical condition of Abraham and Sarah to suit His purpose.

In the judicial reckoning of God all of the attributes of God are satisfied. God is able to call those things that are as though they are not, and the things that are not as though they are. Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, God has the judicial right to declare sinners to be saints. He has this right because Jesus Christ was judicially charged with the sins of the sinner, and He bore the judgment of those sins through His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, after that He was buried and arose again the third day, showing that He had power over sin, death and the grave. Consequently He has the judicial right to give the benefits of this victory over sin, death and the grave to whoever will believe that He did it for them.

After that, in his letter to the Romans, Paul questioned the Romans regarding their relationship to the sin of Adam and its consequences. Paul showed them how they were judicially charged with Adam's sin. Then he showed them that if they could be charged with Adam's sin they could (given the right set of circumstances) also be charged with Christ's righteousness. Paul continued his argument to the Romans in this vein, showing them that after their salvation and through the judicial reckoning of God they were counted dead to Adam's sin and its counterfeit

## The Doctrine of Baptism

concepts of good and evil, and they were alive unto God through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul showed the Romans: *But where the sin abounded, grace did much more abound.* Since this was so, Paul asked them:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in [the] sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to [the] sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we [were] buried with him by baptism into [His] death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we [were] planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this that our old man [was] crucified with him, that the body of [the] sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve [the] sin. For [the one having died has been justified] from [the] sin. Now if we [died] with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto [the] sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto [the] sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:1-11) (Note: In the above text, some definite articles have been added, and the meaning of words and verb tenses emended to agree with the Greek text of the New Testament.)

The baptism of the Holy Spirit declares the co-death, co-burial and co-resurrection of the believer with the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently the believer, in obedience to the command of our Lord in the great commission, acts out his judicial relationship with the Lord by being immersed in water. This is done once backwards in the form of a burial as the believer is plunged into the water. Then the believer is lifted up out of the water to signify resurrection. Thus, in a very real sense, the believer has gone into the place of death with our Lord (as Israel did crossing the Red Sea when they were delivered from Egyptian bondage), and he has come alive again from the place of death by being lifted up from the water.

Consider the Ethiopian eunuch. He met Philip as the eunuch returned to Ethiopia from a feast that had been held in Jerusalem. As he traveled, he sat in his chariot and read the book of

## The Doctrine of Baptism

Isaiah. Specifically he was reading the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah when Philip met him. Philip asked the eunuch if he understood what he was reading. Whereupon the eunuch stopped the chariot and invited Philip to ride with him and explain the Scriptures. Then Philip preached Jesus unto him from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. There must have come a point in Philip's preaching when baptism was mentioned, because the eunuch inquired:

... See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus 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 8:36-38, emphasis mine)

This account gives us some very important information about who should be baptized and how. First, it tells us an individual, such as the eunuch, must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all of his heart before he can be baptized. Second, *they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch.* This suggests that Philip immersed the eunuch in a portrayal of death, burial and resurrection. (A sprinkling, or a pouring of water on the head of the eunuch would not have required that they both go into the water.) Further, as to the method of baptism, we have those portions of Scripture, already quoted, which indicate baptism is a portrayal of death, burial and resurrection. Even the most biased reader would have to admit that there is nothing about sprinkling or pouring of water on the head of a candidate for baptism that can even remotely portray, with any degree of symbolic reality, burial on the one hand or resurrection on the other. It should also be evident, in the case of immersion, that death would surely occur if the individual were not raised from the water. Thus immersion portrays death, but sprinkling and pouring cannot even vaguely portray death.

## The Doctrine of Baptism

Clearly Scriptural baptism portrays death, burial and resurrection. Even so there are those who practice baptism by immersion three times forward, once for each of the names of the Godhead. While it might be deemed honorable to immerse for each name in the Godhead, this method also fails to fit the symbolism of death, burial and resurrection. Obviously we shall not die three times, be buried three times and be resurrected three times.

It is interesting to note, apart from the Lord's command to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, there is no reason for baptism. We baptize because our Lord commanded us to baptize. Consequently we baptize for the reason and in the manner that our Lord commanded:

All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]: 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. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

The purpose of baptism and the mode of baptism must agree with the imagery assigned to baptism in the Scriptures. We are further helped in our understanding of the doctrine of baptism by a consideration of the Greek New Testament. In the Greek New Testament there are several words derived from the word *bapto* (the root word from which we get our word baptism) that must be considered. The translators transliterated these into three words in the English Bible: *baptist*; *baptism*; and *to baptize*. These words are transliterations of Greek words and have no meaning in the English language other than that which has been ascribed to them. Even so the root word *bapto* from which they are transliterated means *to immerse, to submerge, to dip*. There are a few occasions in the New Testament (associated with Jewish ritual washing) when the translators rendered these words: *wash or washing*. There are just two other occasions in the New Testament

## The Doctrine of Baptism

when the translators translated, rather than transliterating, the Greek words into English spellings. The first is in the Gospel of John, when *Jesus dipped the sop* and gave it to Judas (John 13:26). The second is in the book of the Revelation, when Jesus will come forth from the battle of Armageddon (at His second coming) *in a vesture dipped in blood* (Revelation 19:13).

These occasions enable us to know that the translators knew the meaning of the words derived from *bapto*. Even so, because of their belief in baptismal regeneration and their practice of baptizing infants (the King James Bible translators were Episcopalians), they chose to transliterate the words when they were associated with the doctrine of baptism and to translate them when they were not. If they had consistently translated the words, there would be no question about the significance and the mode of baptism. Even so it has been argued that when *bapto* is used for the baptism of the Holy Spirit it does not suggest a dipping (a *putting in* and a *taking out*) but simply a putting in. Therefore they argue that the meaning of the Greek word *bapto* cannot be used to designate the mode of baptism.

Those who hold this position fail to see that the baptism of the Spirit is not a putting us into the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of God does the baptizing, thus we are put into the death of Christ by the Holy Spirit; and the taking out is not a taking of us out of the Spirit (Who is given to indwell us forever), but it is an identification of the believer with the resurrection of Christ: which is a taking of the believer out of the realm of death. Then the believer, by means of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the Word of God, can walk in newness of life. Remember, our Lord said: *Because I live, ye shall live also.*

It has been further argued, by those who reject immersion as the mode of baptism, that all

## The Doctrine of Baptism

of the passages of Scripture that refer to baptism as a co-death, co-burial and co-resurrection with Christ are descriptions of a believer's positional relationship with the Lord because of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I have no argument with this position except that they say ritual baptism does not convey these same truths. This is an obvious attempt to placate the masses who do not baptize by immersion, but by sprinkling or pouring at the expense of the truth.

Thus far in our study of the doctrine of baptism we have been looking at various aspects of the doctrine to bring us into a Scriptural understanding of the doctrine and its significance. First, the candidate for baptism must be a believer in Jesus Christ as his Savior. Second, the significance of baptism is a portrayal of death, burial and resurrection. Third, the significance of baptism requires that the mode be total immersion in water, in the form of a burial, to signify death and burial. Fourth, the candidate is raised from below the surface of the water to signify a resurrection from the dead. Fifth, baptism is performed as an outward manifestation of an inward faith. Thus baptism is a declaration of the co-death, co-burial and co-resurrection of the believer with Jesus Christ (which was accomplished by the baptism of the Holy Spirit). Consequently, through the judicial reckoning of God, the believer is counted dead to the law and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Further, in regard to what we have learned about baptism, we know that the person who does the baptizing must also be a believer in Jesus Christ. He must believe in the significance and the mode of baptism that we have seen outlined in the Scriptures. Thus as a representative of the church of the living God, he is to preach, to baptize and to teach by the authority given by the Lord Jesus Christ to the church in the great commission.

As we continue our study of baptism we must be aware that there is more than one kind

## The Doctrine of Baptism

of baptism in water recorded in the New Testament Scriptures. We must be careful, then, to distinguish between the believer's baptism (which we have been studying); the baptism of repentance for the nation of Israel (which was administered by John the Baptist and the disciples of the Lord before the great commission); and the baptism of Jewish converts to Christ recorded in the early chapters of the book of Acts.

The baptism of John, as well as the baptism of Jesus (*though Jesus himself did not baptize, but his disciples*) was a baptism of repentance for the nation of Israel. It was linked directly to the terms of the Palestinian covenant between God and Israel. Thus it was an outward manifestation of a change of mind (i. e., repentance) towards God when Israel realized her departure from God through false worship. This, of course, was the condition of Israel at the first advent of Christ. John was *A voice crying in the wilderness* to call Israel to a national repentance and faith in Him Who was to come. There were many in Israel who believed the message of John. Consequently they repented and received the baptism of John as an outward manifestation of their repentance. Then, by faith, they looked for the fulfillment of God's promise in the One John proclaimed (the Lord Jesus Christ), Who was to come.

The covenant responsibility of Israel to repent nationally is the reason Jesus came to John to be baptized of him. While Jesus himself had no sin, it was requisite upon him as a member of the nation of Israel to be identified with the sins of the nation. At the first, when Jesus came to John to be baptized of him, John refused, saying, *I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?* Nevertheless John baptized Jesus after Jesus said, *Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness...* (Matthew 3:15). The baptism of our Lord by John was

## The Doctrine of Baptism

not a matter of repentance because of personal sins (for *in him is no sin*), but it was an identification with the nation of Israel in their sins. This identification was incumbent upon each member of the nation of Israel according to their covenant relationship with God, and it is seen in the life of Daniel, in the ninth chapter of his prophecy, where he is seen confessing his sins and the sins of his people (Daniel 9:3-11).

The religious leaders in Israel should have known this. They should have been the first to seek the baptism of John, but they did not. Some of them came to John's baptism out of curiosity or some other motivation. Even so they did not come with any intent to change their minds. They were self-righteous, and it never occurred to them that there was any reason for them to repent.

John knew the hearts of these leaders. He knew their sham pretenses and their outward show of righteousness. He knew they trusted in their natural lineage to Abraham. John knew they did not perceive themselves to need a Savior; and he knew they certainly did not perceive the Savior to be Jesus of Nazareth, the singular seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:16), the One through Whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed (Genesis 12:3). In fact, because of their natural lineage, they perceived themselves to be *the seed* promised to Abraham:

... when [John] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

I indeed baptize you [in] water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you [in] the Holy [Spirit], and [in] fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and

## The Doctrine of Baptism

gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. (Matthew 3:7-12, emphasis mine)

Thus John made a distinction between the wheat (those baptized in the Spirit) and the chaff (those who will be baptized in fire). The baptism of the Spirit, as we have seen, takes place at the moment of salvation, and the baptism in fire will take place after the great white throne judgment, when all unbelievers shall be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

We stated in the beginning of this consideration of the doctrine of baptism that part of the confusion that reigns, reigns because the baptism of the Holy Spirit has been confused by some with ritual baptism in water. In order to alleviate this confusion, certain portions of Scripture need to be considered. First, we need to look at a statement of John the Baptist: *There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you [in] water: but he shall baptize you [in] the Holy [Spirit]* (Mark 1:7-8). Then we need to consider a direct statement of our Lord in the great commission recorded in the book of Mark, which is commonly quoted by baptismal regenerationist: *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned* (Mark 16:15-16). Now we need to put these two portions of Scripture together with the teaching of the apostle Paul in the eighth chapter of the book of Romans: *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth*

## The Doctrine of Baptism

*in you* (Romans 8:8-11). The truths contained in these portions of Scripture must now be acknowledged in the light of an important statement of our Lord to the Jews:

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy [Spirit] was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) (John 7:37-39, emphasis mine)

A proper consideration of these texts enables us to see that all believers of all ages must be baptized with the Spirit of God in order to be saved. If we will lay aside our preconceived notions concerning the baptism of the Spirit and consider the Scriptures without bias, we will arrive at the truth. First, we know that the Old Testament saints were not baptized with the Holy Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Second, we may not have previously considered this, but this was the only reason they were not baptized with the Holy Spirit. Third, the specific promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was to all who believe without respect to time. Fourth, because God is not a respecter of persons, and it is impossible for Him to lie, it was necessary at some point in time for the Old Testament saints to receive this baptism. Fifth, in the fourth chapter of the book of Ephesians, Paul makes it clear: *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all* (Ephesians 4:4-6). Sixth, the immutability of God demands, whether you are in the Old Testament or the New Testament, there is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith and one baptism, because God is one God. Obviously the one baptism cannot be ritual baptism in water, because there are many types of baptisms in water in the Scriptures. Seventh, as Paul continues his argument in the fourth chapter of the book of

## The Doctrine of Baptism

Ephesians, in context with the giving of spiritual gifts to the church, he wrote: *Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)*

Why did Paul speak of our Lord taking the souls of the Old Testament saints into heaven in context with the giving of spiritual gifts to the church? It should be evident. The gifts of the Spirit were given with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Thus, by implication, the Holy Spirit baptized the Old Testament saints into the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord when the Lord ... *led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men* (Ephesians 4:8). Paul also told the Romans: *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His* (Romans 8:9b). Since they could not be baptized with the Spirit until Christ was glorified (John 7:39), they had to be baptized with the Spirit when our Lord *led captivity captive*. So in addition to this information, we must take note of the new covenant:

Whereof the Holy [Spirit] also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. (Hebrews 10:15-17, emphasis mine)

This covenant was applied to the saints of the Old Testament when Christ was crucified, buried and rose again from the dead. Thus there is not a single sin of an Old Testament saint recorded in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews or anywhere else in the New Testament. This verifies that even though they did not live their lives under the precepts of the new covenant, with the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of our Lord, the new covenant was put into effect for them

## The Doctrine of Baptism

as well as for us. For this to be true, they had to have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord. Thus we also read:

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:39-40)

This text indicates that the Old Testament saints died in faith before our Lord came in His first advent. Then it tells us something better was provided for the believers of the first century, because Christ came in their lifetime. It also tells us, *that they without us should not be made perfect*. Thus, without us they could not be made perfect, but with us they could be. This is confirmed to us by another portion of the book of Hebrews: *But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect* (Hebrews 12:22- 23, emphasis mine). *The spirits of just men made perfect* can be none other than the souls of the Old Testament saints whom our Lord led *captivity captive* into the presence of God in heaven.

John's baptism was for Jews in a covenant relationship with God. It was a baptism of hope in Him Who was to come. Yet it was without the immediate realization of His coming and His baptism with the Holy Spirit. This, then, is the reason the disciples of John, who met Paul at Ephesus, were re-baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Paul inquired of them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed, but they had not. Paul asked them, *Unto what then were ye baptized?* Luke gives us the details of this meeting in the nineteenth chapter of the book of Acts, where we read:

## The Doctrine of Baptism

And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coast came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy [Spirit] since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy [Spirit]. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy [Spirit] came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve. (Acts 19:1-7)

Thus by their baptism in the name of the Lord and their reception of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the hands of the apostle Paul, these, who had initially believed through the ministry of John the Baptist, were brought into the fullness of their faith in Christ by the apostle Paul. Paul did not bring them to faith in Christ, he simply brought them into a greater understanding of their faith, and he was the vessel through whom they received the Holy Spirit during this time of transition from the old covenant to the new covenant.

Thus their previous lack of the Holy Spirit was simply a reflection of their Old Testament status. The Holy Spirit could not be permanently given to indwell Old Testament believers, because the Lord Jesus Christ had not yet fulfilled the promise of the Father to be the Redeemer. Once Christ had been crucified, buried and had risen from the dead, the Holy Spirit could be permanently given. Their baptism in the name of Jesus reflected their faith in the *One Who was to come*, the Lord Jesus Christ. This incident, as noted in the above reference, is recorded in the book of Acts.

It is important for us to understand that the book of Acts is a book of transition. It begins with the ascension of Christ into heaven and continues to the time of Paul's imprisonment in Rome, a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The events recorded in the

## The Doctrine of Baptism

book of Acts span approximately thirty-eight years. During these years Christianity and Judaism operated side by side, because, at different times, both Israel and the church had been made custodians of the truth of the Word of God. Nevertheless, at the time of the events in the book of Acts, Israel's authority was being taken from her because of her apostasy and national rejection of Jesus Christ, and the authority that she had possessed was given to the church. The book of Acts records the transition from one to the other. So, at the present time, Israel's *house [has been] left unto her desolate.*

God established the church's authority with the Jews (who would receive it) by the performance of the sign-gifts, because *The Jews require a sign.* Our Lord had established His authority with the nation of Israel by the performance of many signs and wonders, even though most of the nation rejected His authority. Then, with His departure into heaven, He employed the same method to convince the Jews that the church spoke with the authority of God by empowering His church with signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Consequently the Jews (who made up the newly formed church) proclaimed the truth of the Word of God to the Jews who remained in Judaism, and God punctuated their authority with the sign-gifts of the Spirit (Hebrews 2:3-4). This is the reason the early church healed the sick, raised the dead, spoke with other tongues, interpreted those tongues, prophesied and performed miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

However, once the New Testament canon of Scripture was completed, the expression of the sign-gifts began to wane until they disappeared altogether. This is observable in the book of Acts by comparing the number of miracles in the early chapters with the number of miracles in

## The Doctrine of Baptism

the latter chapters. Consequently Paul testified that the sign-gifts (that were necessary in the infancy of the church) would be rendered unnecessary *when that which is perfect is come* (I Corinthians 13:10). *That which is perfect* is not a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ (as is assumed by many) since it is in the neuter gender in the Greek text of the New Testament. This means it does not refer to a person, it refers to a thing; and the thing it refers to is the completion of the revelation of the New Testament Scriptures.

The disciples of John the Baptist showed their submission to the authority of the church of Jesus Christ by obeying Paul's instructions to them. Consequently they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and received the gift of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of the apostle Paul. Then God enabled these disciples of John to speak the truth of the Word of God with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Through an outward manifestation of speaking in tongues and prophesying, the Spirit of God showed the Jewish believers that these disciples, as well as they, were *all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise* (Galatians 3:26-29).

The manner in which the Spirit of God was given to the several groups in the early church established unity. If they had received the Spirit of God independent of one another, it would have been very easy for the early church to have been divided five ways: Jews, Jews of the *diaspora*, Samaritans, Gentiles and the disciples of John the Baptist. Nevertheless God's wisdom prevailed.

## The Doctrine of Baptism

The church *continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers* (Acts 2:42). It also gave forth a unified effort against the world, the flesh and the devil; but as churches were established throughout the world, it did not take long before they would face attacks from the devil through false prophets (II Peter 2:1).

This brings us, then, to the final baptism in our study. It is the baptism of Jews who were converted on the day of Pentecost and in the early days of the church. We have seen that the Jews had a covenant relationship with God. Consequently there were some strictly Jewish requirements imposed upon the first believers in the church to make the transition from the old covenant to the new covenant:

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in [the grave], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in [the grave], neither his flesh did see corruption.

This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy [Spirit], he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and

## The Doctrine of Baptism

Christ.

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent [Change your minds], and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy [Spirit]. (Acts 2:22-38)

Peter's message to the Jews on that particular Pentecost is important to our understanding of the doctrine of baptism, especially when we compare the baptism of the Gentiles (in the tenth chapter of Acts) with the baptism of the Jews who were saved on the day of Pentecost and in the early days of the church. We need to take note of several points in Peter's message. We must also keep the rules of interpretation in mind to aid us with the difficulties we shall encounter when we compare the differences between these two baptisms.

First, Peter addressed his message to Jews and Jewish proselytes. Second, he testified to them of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, that He was a man *approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you*. Third, he testified that Jesus was delivered into the *wicked hands* of the Jewish leaders, *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, to be crucified and slain. Fourth, despite their wicked intentions, we know God meant the death of Christ for good. Peter testified that God raised Jesus from the dead, because death could not hold Him. Fifth, Peter testified that David spoke of the resurrection to the nation of Israel. Even so David's use of personal pronouns in the sixteenth Psalm was not an indication that David was speaking of himself when he spoke of the resurrection. Thus Peter explained to the Jews that David had not spoken of himself, because David had died and his tomb had remained with the Jews even to the time of Peter's message (on the day of Pentecost). Nevertheless David was a prophet, who knew that God *had sworn with an oath to him, that of the*

## The Doctrine of Baptism

*fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.... This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses.* Sixth, Peter testified further that this same Jesus had been exalted to the right hand of the Father and had been given the gift of the Holy Spirit, which He had given to His disciples. The manifestation of the Spirit, through speaking in tongues, was the fulfillment of that which had been spoken by the prophet Joel. Consequently the disciples were not drunk as the Jews had supposed, but they were speaking the truth of the Word of God (in the fifteen different languages of the countries from which Peter's audience had come) so that they might be saved. Seventh, Peter said, *Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* Eighth, when the Jews heard that they had crucified their Lord (the Messiah) they were deeply convicted, and cried, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* It was then that Peter answered, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy [Spirit].* Peter called the Jews to repentance. The Greek word from which we get our English word *repentance* means to change the mind. Thus Peter directed these Jews to change their minds about Jesus of Nazareth so that they might believe and be saved. That change of mind was rather monumental when we consider all that had happened within the previous two months.

Therefore we must think about all that had transpired prior to the Passover in context with these events on the day of Pentecost. So in our mind's eye we are taken back to the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and the apparent acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah by the nation of Israel. Despite this, in the days following His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus was examined of the Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees, the chief priests and scribes and finally (on the

## The Doctrine of Baptism

preparation day of the Passover) He was examined by Pontius Pilate and Herod. Each of these sought to find fault with Jesus, but they could not. The conclusion of all of their examinations was stated by Pilate when he said: *I find no fault in this just man.*

Despite Pilate's pronouncement and the Jews earlier elation at the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and their shouts of *Hosannah in the highest*, they were convinced by their leaders that Jesus of Nazareth was a blasphemer. They were convinced of this despite the evidence. They were incited to religious rage by the deceitful practices of their leaders. They blindly followed their leaders, and when given the opportunity to have Jesus released they chose rather to release Barabbas and turned on Jesus, shouting: *Crucify him! Crucify him!* They allowed the insidious lies of their leaders to incite them to ignore the evidence that had been presented to them in Christ's ministry.

Since these same Jews (who cried, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?*) had been incited to publicly reject Jesus as the Messiah and had called for His crucifixion, Peter would not let them forget it. Peter charged them with the death of Christ. Then in response to their question: *What shall we do?* Peter told them to change their mind about Jesus of Nazareth and show their change of mind by being publicly baptized in His name. They had publicly denounced Jesus of Nazareth as being the Christ. To become His disciples, they had to publicly announce Him to be their Lord and Savior through a public display of baptism in His name. After that, in fulfillment of God's promise, they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, God's earnest pledge that they were indeed the children of God.

Thus Peter's instructions were not three steps to salvation as some have erroneously

## The Doctrine of Baptism

assumed, but they are simply the carry-over of covenant responsibilities of a people who were passing from one covenant relationship with God to another. They had publicly crucified the Christ because of their desire to worship after the works of their own hands. Therefore they had to publicly denounce their false worship and identify themselves with Jesus in His crucifixion, His burial and His resurrection by baptism in His name: thus declaring that they were dead to the law and alive unto God through Jesus Christ. This outward manifestation of their inward change of heart allowed them to leave the old covenant of law and enter into the new covenant of grace in their relationship with God. Thus their baptism differs from ours in that it contained elements from John's baptism and Christian baptism to effect the transition.

These requirements continued during the early days of the church. However, after the gospel was taken to the Gentiles and the counsel in Jerusalem had been held, there is evidence that these requirements were no longer necessary. Thus at the counsel Peter testified:

... Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy [Spirit], even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. (Acts 15:7-11, emphasis mine)

Thus Peter testified that God put no difference between the Gentiles and the Jews; that God gave the same gift to them that He had given to the Jews; that God had accomplished this without the yoke of the law, which they and their fathers had been unable to bear. Then he testified: ... *we [Jews] shall be saved, even as they [Gentiles]*. This meant that the method that God had used in the household of Cornelius was to become the method that God would use with the Jews, once

## The Doctrine of Baptism

the transition was complete.

Let us go with Peter to the household of Cornelius and view the events that led to the salvation of the first Gentiles in the church age. As we do this we must understand, Peter did not one day decide to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He, like all of the Jews of that era, was naturally biased against them. He had to be convinced to preach to them. Consequently God gave Peter a vision of a great sheet containing all sorts of unclean animals. It was pulled together at the corners and let down from heaven before Peter. Then God said: *Rise Peter, kill and eat.* God repeated this command three times, and three times Peter answered: *Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.* Therefore three times God said: *What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common:*

While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto

## The Doctrine of Baptism

thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before thee, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) that word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy [Spirit] and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy [Spirit] fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy [Spirit]. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy [Spirit] as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days. (Acts 10:19-48, emphasis mine)

These events obviously agree with what we have learned from the Scriptures thus far, and they agree with our experiences in this present age. The Scripture says, *Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.* It also says, *By the foolishness of preaching God hath chosen to save them that believe.* Further, when writing to the church at Ephesus, Paul said, *And you hath he [the Holy Spirit] quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin.* Thus in the present age, we preach to those who are dead in trespasses and sin the truth of the gospel. The Spirit of God quickens the truth of the gospel to the minds of those who are dead in trespasses and sin by giving them the gift of faith to believe the gospel and be saved. When the Spirit of God enters the unbeliever to quicken the truth to him, He remains according to the promise of the Lord Jesus

## The Doctrine of Baptism

Christ: *He will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*

Salvation takes place by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God, so that the new believer receives the Spirit of God to abide in him forever. This is what took place in the house of Cornelius. In fact Peter's question to the Jews who accompanied him was: *Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy [Spirit] as well as we? (Acts 10:47)* No unsaved man is indwelt by the Spirit of God. The reception of the Spirit of God through the baptism of the Spirit is proof of the salvation of these Gentiles. Thus, after they were already saved, they were baptized in water in the name of the Lord, showing outwardly what had taken place inwardly, so that their baptism in water was a public declaration that they had died with Christ; that they had been buried with Christ; and that they had been raised from the dead with Christ to walk in newness of life.

When the Jews were saved on the day of Pentecost, Peter's instructions to them were different than his instructions to these Gentiles. We have seen the reason for the difference in the instructions to the Jews because of their covenant relationship with God. Remember, the same Jews who shouted *Hosannah in the highest* when Jesus entered into Jerusalem, less than two months later shouted: *Crucify Him! Crucify Him!* By the terms of the Palestinian covenant, they had overtly rejected their God, so they must overtly declare their repentance and faith in Him. Thus their repentance was shown by an overt act. However, once the authority of the church was fully established and it was clear that the house of Israel had been left unto them desolate, the order for the salvation of the Jews was the same as the order for the Gentiles, because *God is not a respecter of persons*, and in the church: *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond*

## The Doctrine of Baptism

*nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).*

We also repent; otherwise we would not be saved. But our repentance is less conspicuous. Each of us as members of the human race has thought, from the time we were old enough to consider these things, our relationship with God was based upon whether we were good or bad. In order to be saved we have to change our minds to agree with God, Who through the apostle Paul said: *[It is] not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to God's mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy [Spirit] (Titus 3:5).* Thus, once the realization of salvation has been accomplished by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God, the new believer testifies to his relationship with the Lord by being baptized in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is an outward manifestation of the believer's belief in his co-death, co-burial and co-resurrection with Jesus Christ. It does not produce his salvation, but it does publicly declare it. Thus, at the beginning of this study, we stated that baptism in water is an important doctrine. It, like all other rituals in Scripture, is not salvation, but it is a portrayal of salvation, as the Scriptures clearly attest.