

death and resurrection. The baptism of repentant sinners was the distinguishing mark of the ministry of John the Baptist, who thus prepared “the way of the Lord.” It is written of those who went out to John that they “were baptized of him in Jordan **confessing their sins**” (Matt 3:6). Thus, from the first mention made of baptism, we learn that it was for sinners who, in response to the call of God, **repented and confessed their sins**. It is the **voluntary act** of those who are old enough to recognize that they have need of the forgiveness of sins; and who obey the Word of God, counting upon His mercy. Every Scripture that bears on the subject shows that baptism is the immersion in water of **sinners** who **repent** and **believe** the gospel of God concerning His Son.

It is written of John that “he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the **baptism of repentance for the remission of sins**” (Luke 3:3). This shows again that baptism is for those who are old enough to understand that they are **sinners**, and who trust in God’s mercy for **the remission of their sins**. In the same chapter it is recorded that the Lord Jesus, when He was baptized, was about thirty years old. He was not baptized as an infant.

In John 3:22-23 we read that “Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He tarried with them and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was **much water** there; and they came and were baptized.” And in chapter 4:1-2, we read, “When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus **made and baptized** more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples) He left Judea.” These

Scriptures tell us that baptism, which was begun by John, was continued by the Lord Jesus through His disciples. And it shows clearly that all those who were baptized were **first** “made disciples.” That is, they were persons old enough to hear Christ’s teaching and to follow Him. In the entire new Testament there is no exception to this rule. Thus baptism is firmly established for all who heed the call of “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

The foregoing Scriptures also acquaint us with the fact that John preached in a region where there was “much water.” Why? because the water has to be deep enough for new converts to go under the water which pictures a **burial** under the ground. The above passages completely exclude the idea that the sprinkling of water on an infant is baptism.

In Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:16 we have the Lord’s final commands to His disciples, which were briefly **to preach, to baptize, and to teach**. Only those who can hear preaching and be taught are to be baptized. The passage in Mark is very simple and plain: “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.” One must first hear and believe the gospel and **then** be baptized.

In Acts 2 is the account of how the Apostles began, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to carry out the Lord’s commands. Peter preached the gospel, announcing the resurrection of Jesus, who had been crucified seven weeks previous, and declaring that God had exalted Him to His own right hand;

and that Jesus of Nazareth is both Lord and Christ. This is the gospel. Thereupon some of the hearers were pricked in their heart, and asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (v 37). To whom Peter replied, “**Repent and be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for **the remission of sins**.” And “then they that gladly received the Word were baptized” (v 41).

This Scripture makes it very plain that **repentance** precedes baptism, and that only those are baptized who voluntarily own that they have need of “the remission of sins.”

Soon after this Philip was preaching the gospel to the Samaritans; and it is written in Acts 8:12, “When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (not children).

The same chapter contains the account of the conversion of the Ethiopian through the preaching of Philip, who was specially commanded by the Holy Spirit to join himself to the Ethiopian’s chariot. And as they went on their way the Ethiopian said, “See here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized?” And Philip said: “**If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest**” (v 37). When the man confessed faith in Jesus Christ, Philip commanded the chariot to stand still: “And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch: and he baptized him” (v 38).

All this was done under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit; and it clearly shows **(1)** that baptism is for one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ; and **(2)** that baptism is the immersion of believers in water. Philip

wouldn’t baptize **anyone** who did not believe with all their heart. Would Philip baptize an infant? He tells us plainly—No! No minister has any right to baptize anyone who does not believe in Christ with all their heart.

The account of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus is found in Acts 9. His conversion was different from that of any other man; for it was by the appearance and words of the Lord Jesus Himself. And when Saul, trembling and astonished said, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (v 6) the Lord said, “Arise, and go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do.” Accordingly Saul went unto Damascus; and there was a disciple named Ananias, being instructed by the Lord in a vision, who came unto him and told him to “arise, and be baptized” (See Acts 22:16); “and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized” (9:18). So the thing Saul was to do first of all was to be baptized.

In Acts 10 it is related how Peter, by the express command of the Holy Spirit, went to preach the gospel of Christ to a Gentile company assembled in the house of Cornelius, the Roman centurion at Caesarea. Peter preached Jesus Christ risen from the dead as “Lord of all”; and when he announced the **forgiveness of sins** through His name to all **who believe** on Him, the Holy Spirit fell on **all them which heard the word**. Thereupon Peter “commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:44-48).

In Acts 16 we read that Paul baptized the household of Lydia, after the Lord had **opened her heart** so that she attended unto the things that were spoken by Paul (vv 14-15). Here again

baptism followed the preaching and believing of the gospel. It is sometimes surmised that there might have been infants in Lydia's household. But the Scripture does not say so; and if there were, it does not appear that such infants were baptized. Baptism is invariably mentioned in connection with the conversion of persons old enough to hear and understand the gospel.

Lydia was seemingly an unmarried woman, for no husband is mentioned. She was a merchant engaged in business on her own account. She was a dealer in purple cloths manufactured in Thyatira, and was then in Philippi, a long way from her home. It is unreasonable to imagine that she would be traveling on long business journeys with infants. Common sense tells us plainly that her "household" in this text consisted of her servants and helpers in business.

In the same chapter (*Acts 16:25-34*) is the account of the conversion of the Philippian jailer. It says Paul and Silas "spake unto him the word of the Lord and to *all that were in his house.*" And then he "was baptized," and he "*rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*" So this Scripture, like all the others, shows that before baptism, there must be faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and that those who believe in Him, through hearing the gospel should be baptized "straightway."

In Acts 18:8 it is written that "many Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." Simply and briefly, this states God's order concerning baptism: first *hearing*, then *believing*, then being *baptized*.

In Acts 19:1-5 those whom the apostle Paul baptized were men. So the

accounts of the baptizing done by John, by the disciples of Christ, and by the apostles after the Lord's resurrection, make it very plain that baptism is for repentant and believing sinners.

The Epistles, which explain the *meaning* of baptism, add strong confirmation to what has been stated above. In Romans 6:3-4, Paul explains in few and clear words, that those who have received the remission of sins—or, as it is called, have been "justified" through faith in Jesus Christ (*Rom 3:24-25; 5:1*)—are *buried with Christ by baptism* into death. He says, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into 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."

From this we learn that, as a dead body is let down into a grave, so a believer is let down into the water; and that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, so the believer comes out of the water to walk in the new manner of life. Briefly, by baptism the believer expresses the great truth that he partakes of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This explanation of baptism is even more concisely stated in Colossians 2:12, where Paul says to the believers, "*Buried with Him in baptism*, wherein also ye are *risen* with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead."

The Apostle Peter also explains the meaning of baptism, telling us it is, like the ark, a "figure" or type of that which saves us, namely "the

resurrection of Jesus Christ"; that it is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a *good conscience toward God*" (*1 Peter 3:20-21*). Those whose consciences have been purified through faith in Christ Jesus, can answer to God's grace and to Christ's work for them, by being baptized. Baptism is for those who are old enough to have a "conscience toward God."

So, in the clear light of the Scriptures, we do not allow our children to be put through the form of baptism. Much less do we allow them to be sprinkled as a *substitute* for baptism. It is contrary to Scripture to do so; and it is a great wrong to the little ones, because it may lead them to suppose (as indeed is taught in some churches) that the ceremony has some mysterious "sacramental" value; or if they become believers, it may lead them to neglect and refuse baptism, under the mistaken idea that they have already been baptized.

What we are to do is to bring up our children "in the fear and admonition of the Lord," faithfully teaching them the gospel, and thus leading them to *trust in Christ*. Then, as *believers*, they will gladly obey His command, and be baptized. ■

—Philip Mauro

Plain Words About BAPTISM

Many of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are uncertain and confused about baptism. This is not because the Bible speaks uncertainly about it; for the Bible's teaching on this subject is (as we should expect) quite clear. But the teaching of the various "churches" is quite otherwise; for some say one thing and some another. And the Lord's people, for the most part, do not take the trouble to search the Scriptures for themselves, but they simply follow the custom and tradition of some "church."

It is an unhappy fact that, through the Church of Rome, the doctrine of Christ has been corrupted—and particularly the doctrine concerning baptism. And while the various protestant denominations have discarded many of the errors of Rome, they have not entirely thrown off its corrupt ways. Many of them to this day follow Rome in substituting the sprinkling of *infants* for God's holy ordinance of the burial of *believers* with Christ in baptism (*Rom 6:4; Col 2:12*). Nevertheless, amid all the confusion of the sects and religious denominations, the Word of God is still a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Now the Bible tells us very plainly what baptism is, and for whom it is intended.

Baptism may be regarded as a great monument, which God has set up to mark the coming of His Son into the world to save sinners through His