

**A Principle  
of the  
Gospel**

**Baptism**



Apostle B. C. Flint

Published

By the Board of Publications  
Church of Christ  
(Temple Lot)  
Box 472  
Independence, Missouri

March 1999 edition

## BAPTISM

Among religious teachers and church organizations, the subject of baptism has held a prominent place during the entire course of the Christian era. That it still occupies a place in a study of the Christian religion is very evident from the fact that generally speaking, no unanimity of understanding has yet been reached. This condition can arise from only two causes: First – it could be due to the fact that present day Christianity does not properly represent Christ, (or being without authority to do so) or the Bible is not sufficiently clear on the subject to make a unanimity of understanding possible.

We would doubtless be regarded as uncharitable were we to say very much about the first proposition, so we will leave that and turn our attention almost entirely to the second, and leave the reader to judge whether or not, by this brief treatise, we have vindicated the reliability of the Bible as a correct exponent of the subject. And, if we succeed in that, may it not be logical to conclude that the other proposition is also answered, at least indirectly?

In this endeavor we will at once assert boldly that baptism in water is a principle of the gospel, and that the Bible teaches that a compliance with this principle is essential to salvation. Paul, in Hebrews 6:1, 2, classes baptism among the “principles of the doctrine of Christ.” In I Peter 3:21 occurs this language: “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

These texts are sufficient for a beginning and warrant us in affirming that it is a

## BAPTISM

principle of the gospel, and that it is essential to salvation. We will further call attention to the fact that it occupied a large part in the last commission given by the Christ just prior to his ascension into heaven. No one would try to contend that Christ has ever returned to earth and revoked that commission then given to his disciples. And, if not, is it not logical to insist that if we can learn the terms of that commission, and the object intended to be accomplished by it, that we will have committed Christ the Master to one side or the other of this question? And that is just what we intend doing. Hear him! "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe **all** things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen!" (Emphasis mine. B.C.F.) Matt. 28: 19, 20. In the preceding 18th verse, Christ announces that: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Hence, that power is still reserved in His hands, which being true, and baptism being included among the "all things" taught by Christ, and, in turn, enjoined upon his disciples to be a part of their teaching subsequent to his ascension, and the statement occurs that He and His teaching were to be "always even unto the end of the world;" the question at once arises: Will I be teaching the "all things" that Jesus taught if I fail to include baptism as a saving ordinance in my preaching? And if not, will I be correctly representing Christ, or will I be misrepresenting him? In Rev. 22: 18, 19 we are told of some terrible punishment that will be visited on any who "add to" or "take from" the things written in the Word of God.

That present day Christianity might be

## BAPTISM

guilty of just this kind of neglect, and so show that they were not authorized to represent Christ, we call attention to Christ's own warning in Matt. 24:4, 5, where speaking of his second coming and of the end of the world, He says: "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Hence, we fearlessly assert that any man or institution, today, that teaches that baptism is a non-essential to salvation, we care not how loudly he may assert the fact that Jesus is Christ, does just that thing. He deceives the people and himself too. We will go even further, and include ourselves in this statement, and if ANY ONE seeks to, in anyway, set aside ANY of the "all things" that Jesus commanded to be a part of the plan of salvation, they are guilty of not only misrepresenting Christ, but are driving one nail after the other into the cross of popular opinion whereon is to be crucified Christ today, and the divided condition of Christianity today is evidence of such crucifixion. A striking example of this came to us while working as a missionary among the Iriquois Indians in Canada. We found there groups representing various Christian denominations, and we also found adherents of the primitive Indian religion. With considerable logic these latter went to their brethren who had espoused the white man's creeds and said: "The white man comes to us with many churches. Which one is right? Doesn't the white man know? It is better for us to stay as we are, because we are one."

Having committed Christ to the principle of baptism we will proceed to commit others whose authority no one will question. In Matt. 3:13-17 we have the account of Christ's own baptism at the hands of John the Baptist: "Then cometh Jesus from

## BAPTISM

Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and lo a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased~”

First, we want to notice that Jesus says here that he himself, the immaculate Christ, could not fulfill “all righteousness~~ without being baptized in water, by the servant of God. And if he couldn’t, being the Son of God, what shall we say of the presumption of men today, ministers of religion, who assert that **THEY** can? But we want to call attention to the fact that we now have three more witnesses to the necessity of baptism as a saving ordinance. They are God the Father, who here so emphatically endorses his Son’s act of obedience to this law of the gospel. The Holy Ghost, who comes to confirm the Son in his act, and John the Baptist, whom the scriptures inform us was to be a forerunner of the Christ, and in this connection we will further commit him to the principle of baptism. In Mark 1:4, “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.,,

Next we will call as witnesses those of the twelve apostles whom Jesus chose to be his ministers to go to the world as his representatives. Acts 2:38: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission

## BAPTISM

of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” The 14th verse of this chapter tells us that Peter spoke as the representative of the Twelve. And it was All indicted by the wonderful outpouring of the Spirit received on the Day of Pentecost, because this was the occasion.

Next we have Paul, who was not one of the original twelve, but who became an apostle later to fill a vacancy, (the apostolic office being a perpetual office, when the Church of Christ exists properly). Paul was a Pharisee, and a bitter opponent of the Church of Christ, until he was converted in the miraculous way recounted in Acts 9:1- 19. Here, after he had met Christ while on his way to Damascus, to persecute the saints, he was smitten to the ground and arose blind, and Christ commanded him to go “into the city” and he would be told “what he must do,” and coming to another of Christ’s witnesses, Ananias, there in the city, here is the thing he was told he “must do.” “And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Acts 22:16.

These are only a few of the many scriptural witnesses we might call, but let us sum up and see the results thus far:

For Baptism as a Saving **Ordinance** –

God the Father

Jesus the Son

The Holy Ghost

John the Baptist

The Original Twelve Apostles of Christ

Paul, a subsequent Apostle

Ananias the baptizer of Paul

Against Baptism as a Saving Ordinance – Only modern doctors of divinity and not

## BAPTISM

a single scriptural witness.

To these might be added Phillip, Apollos, Cornelius, and many others, but their endorsement will appear when we discuss baptism in a general way. Besides, this treatise is not intended to be exhaustive. It would become too lengthy.

### WHAT IS BAPTISM?

It is the third principle of the gospel, and, as we have shown and will continue to show, was for the remission of sins, and that there is **NO OTHER** scriptural means for such remission. But it will first be necessary to show that there are two very essential prerequisites for baptism in order that baptism may be effective and accomplish this end.

The first of these prerequisites is Faith; “Without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” Heb. 11:6.

It is very evident that faith is the groundwork of all activity. It is one of the first impulses that swells our bosoms and continues with us until death. The next moment is ours, only on the principle of faith. The farmer plants the seed in the spring, but it is the eye of faith that visualizes the harvest. Not a single activity among men or that results will follow. So mankind, having heard of God and learned something concerning Him, faith is engendered, and the scriptures tell us that: “Faith comes by hearing” Rom. 10:17. So, having heard, we realize that we came from God, and that we should be like him.

## BAPTISM

should be like Hint We are also made to realize that we are out of rapport with Him, and this causes us sorrow, which brings our thoughts to the next prerequisite of Baptism, and that is the principle of Repentance, which is defined in scripture as a godly sorrow for sin, and a desire to forsake such and make restitution. Nothing else is true repentance. So, having had faith in God, and having truly repented of our sins, our next step would naturally be to find a means of having our sins remitted, and it is here as the third principle of the gospel, that the law of Christ provides the washing of regeneration, in the waters of baptism. And as we have already seen, Christ himself complied with it. In fact, had he not done so he would have become a breaker of his own law. We have already furnished a number of scripture quotations showing baptism to be an ordinance whereby mankind's sins are remitted or washed away. We find no other means provided anywhere in Christ's teachings. This thought, however, raises a question: How can water wash away sin? This question is relevant and, if we are correct concerning baptism as a saving ordinance, there should be a scriptural answer, and we believe there is one. Some, however, have thought that the answer is found in the statement of John that: "the blood of Jesus Christ, cleanseth us from all sin," and so reject baptism. We agree, so far as the "blood of Christ" being the cleansing medium, but this thought brings another question, and that is: How, or by what means, are we to apply the Blood of Christ? We think the answer is found in the very text, I John 1:7. Let us read it all: "But if we walk in the light as he in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." So if we wish to apply the blood of Christ, we

## BAPTISM

must do it by “walking in the light as he is in the light.” We will do the things he did. We will follow in his footsteps, and HE complied with own law by going to John the Baptist, and demanding baptism at his hands. It is the act of obedience to Christ that brings the remission. Or, stating it another way: When Christ Himself went down into the waters of baptism, He, by that act, sanctified the water for this same purpose to every one who would obey that law. Hence, when we then go down into the water and accept baptism at the hands of one authorized to perform the ordinance, the blood of Christ meets us there in the water, and our sins are washed away. Furthermore, since the gospel is for all mankind, and Christ’s death on the cross made atonement for the sin of the world, and in Him alone is salvation, His own obedience would be retroactive and would equally affect all who yielded obedience to the gospel, even clear back to the morning of creation. In illustration of how obedience thus operates, we have a very interesting story in the Old Testament, in II Kings 5, where Naaman, a Syrian nobleman, was afflicted with leprosy, and having been induced to visit with the prophet Elisha, was told by this man of God to go and dip himself seven times in the river Jordan and he would be healed of his leprosy. The story informs us that he did as required, but that it was NOT until he had come up from the seventh dipping that the leprosy was gone. Will someone tell us how water could wash away his leprosy? Now all will agree that it was obedience that did it. The same is true of baptism.

## MODE

People today quibble over the “mode” of baptism. This in itself is ridiculous, and

## BAPTISM

shows the lack of authority on the part of so-called ministers of Christ. If it be an ordinance of the gospel as we believe we have shown, then to talk about mode could never be anything but an expedient for the purpose of evading the compliance with this ordinance. The Word itself explains what should be done. Every instance in the whole New Testament where baptism is mentioned indicates that both the candidate and the minister "went down into the water" and "came up out of the water." It was when Jesus and John "came up out of the water" that the heavens were opened and God and the Holy Ghost indorsed that act. Suppose you should desire to be baptized and the minister to whom you applied should ask you by which "mode" you desired to be baptized, "Sprinlding," "Pouring," or "Immersion" (the three "modes" accepted by modern theologians). And to this question you should reply: "I want to be baptized in the same manner Jesus was baptized." What would that minister have to do? While we could write at length on this phase of the question we will content ourselves for the sake of brevity to this simple statement of fact. The word "baptism" is not an English translation of any word, but is a transfer direct from the Greek, and in the Greek ALWAYS means "immersion" or "to dip," as the following from Dr. John Jones in his Greek and English Lexicon has to say on the word from which baptism is evolved:

"Bapto - I dip, I dye, I stain," "Baptize - I plunge (in water), dip, baptize, bury, overwhelm;" "Baptisma - immersion, baptism," etc. In Romans 6:4 Paul speaks of baptism as being "buried" with Christ in Baptism. In short, not a single Bible text on the subject of baptism will permit of the modern subterfuge in calling "sprinkling" or "pouring" scriptural baptism. We invite the test.

## BAPTISM

### WHO ARE SUBJECTS FOR BAPTISM?

Since the very nature of baptism, as a means of remission of sins, precludes any who have not understood and been qualified to apply the prerequisites of faith and repentance to their lives, it naturally follows that only those who have reached the age of intelligent reason could be proper subjects for baptism. This rule fits EVERY case of baptism in the whole New Testament, hence, refutes another modern subterfuge, called "infant baptism." This is also a modern invention, as is easily proved by an appeal to history. Since infants under the age of being able to reason can neither have faith nor repent, in the sense implied, they could not be proper subjects for baptism. Besides, Jesus in speaking of little children says: "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven," present tense. They are already in the kingdom. In this some find a difficulty and insist that baptism is for Adamic sin, or original sin as it is called; hence, a child being born of the seed of Adam must be baptized. That this is an error is plain from the statement in I Cor. 15:22, which says: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Since ALL will die who are born of the seed of Adam, even though they may have been baptized, it is very evident that baptism does not atone for that sin. No, baptism is to atone for personal sin, and one must have reached the age capable of sinning before they are proper subjects for baptism.

### WHO HAS THE AUTHORITY TO BAPTIZE?

This could well be answered by the mere simple statement concerning priesthood authority, as found in Heb. 5:4, which reads: "And no man taketh this honor unto

## BAPTISM

himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.” However, we also find in John 3:24, these words: “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God.” In the light of the above, what inconsistent folly it would be to apply for baptism to an individual who, though a minister, does not believe nor teach baptism as a saving ordinance. Where is the virtue of ordination, as performed by Christ upon his ministers, and through them to others, if any, though unauthorized, may perform this sacred rite? We have a striking example of this in the ministry of the Apostle Paul, as recorded in the 19th chapter of Acts and the 1st to 6th verses. The story tells us that Paul found, at Ephesus, certain individuals who had thus been baptized by an unauthorized minister; baptized as they thought by John’s baptism; but when Paul questioned them, he learned that they did not even understand the purpose of baptism, so they were then BAPTIZED. Paul did not rebaptize them because they NEVER had been legally baptized, the one performing the act having no authority to act. So it could be today. A minister actually “sent” from God would “speak the words of God.”

### **BAPTISM A NEW BIRTH INTO CHRIST**

**The** young ruler who came to Jesus by night and asked him momentous questions relative to salvation was answered by Christ on this wise: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”

## BAPTISM

John 3:3-5. That this birth into the kingdom is the door to that kingdom we learn in John 10:1, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that... climbeth up some other way, the same a thief and a robber.” The continued reading shows plainly that Christ himself went through the door, and John the Baptist as the porter who opened that door, by baptizing the master, who then became the door of the sheep as stated in the 7th and 9<sup>th</sup> verses. The 9th verse says “I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.” The manner of going through this door, Christ, is the same as that of applying the blood of Christ as already shown, and as we will further prove by Gal. 3:27: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

In Eph. 4:5, we are told: “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” And in Christ’s conversation with Nicodemus, as already noted, this spiritual birth is an exact counterpart of the physical birth, it naturally follows then that once a proper spiritual birth has taken place, that there can no more be a duplication of it than there could be a duplication of the natural birth, and to undertake it would be solemn mockery before God, because it would set aside the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse, once that blood had been applied through the ordinance of baptism. We will prove this conclusion from the scriptures. In 1 Pet. 3:18, the language is: “For Christ also hath ONCE suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” (Emphasis mine, B.C.F.) According to this, we can only apply the blood (be baptized) once, because Christ only suffered once for us. Furthermore, after having been baptized into Christ, and put on Christ, he then becomes

## BAPTISM

our advocate with the Father; see I John 2:1:

“And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” So once having been born into the kingdom of God through obedience to the principles of the gospel that Christ gave his life on the cross to make effective, we become citizens of that kingdom. O, we may be very poor citizens. We may become disobedient citizens, and all of that; we will have Jesus Christ as our advocate with the Father and can become good citizens again by coming to him through repentance. True, we can sin to the point that we lose our citizenship, and so set aside the saving blood of Christ, but when we do that we have no more claim upon Christ at all because, he only suffered for sins ONCE. When we do that we have committed the unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost, and crucify to ourselves Christ afresh. Of such it is written:

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame” Heb. 6:4-6. The language here plainly shows that there could never be a second new birth. Ten thousand baptisms would be unavailing. No wonder Paul says: “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

### GENERAL TEXTS ON **BAPTISM**

“After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Enon near to Salim, because there was much water there; and

## BAPTISM

they came, and were baptized” John 3:22,23.

Concerning Phillip’s preaching to the people of Samaria, we read this in Acts 8:5:

“Then Phillip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them.” In the 12th verse of this chapter we read what was the results of “preaching Christ” to the people in the New Testament times:

“But when they believed Phillip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”

Again, Phillip had another experience, recorded in this same 8th chapter of Acts. He saw a eunuch driving along in his chariot and reading the scriptures, and Philip got in to ride with him, and asked him if he understood what he was reading. The eunuch asked Phillip to explain it to him, and here is the language: “Then Phillip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” The results again of “preaching Jesus” is the same as at Samaria, because: “As they went on their way, they came to a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Phillip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” (Query: Could any stretch of the imagination make any of the above apply to an infant in arms?) Continuing we read: “And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the water, both Phillip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Phillip that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing” Acts

## BAPTISM

8:35-39.

After reading the above will any one still prattle about “modes” of baptism? Or will any one say that the Bible isn’t clear on this question of baptism and its purpose?

We close with the last commission of Christ to his disciples just before his ascension for the last time, and from which he has not yet returned in the flesh, so it cannot be claimed that the terms of this commission have been revoked. We will give both Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts of this commission.

“And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power 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 Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” Matt. 28:18-20.

“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. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover” Mark 16:15-18.

This treatise touches just a few highlights on the subject of Baptism.

