



MBS109

A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



# THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM



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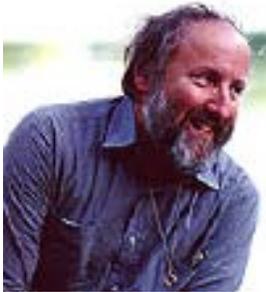
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*For as often as you  
eat this bread,  
and drink the cup,  
you proclaim  
the Lord's death  
till he come.  
I Cor 11:26*

**T**he ordinance of baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two ordinances of the Church. This study will be covered in two sections: the word “ordinance” and the ordinance of baptism itself.

## **I. THE MEANING OF THE WORD “ORDINANCE”**

Exactly what an ordinance is will be discussed in four areas: first, the definition; secondly, the qualifications of an ordinance; thirdly, the number of ordinances; and fourthly, the necessity of ordinances.

### **A. The Definition**

To get a comprehensive view of the word “ordinance, the best way to begin this study is by defining the word. It is important to distinguish between two terms: “sacrament” and “ordinance.”

#### **1. Sacrament**

In the realm of Christendom, the term “sacrament” carries with it the idea that, through the practice of the ritual, grace is somehow efficiently conveyed to the partaker. To what extent this grace is extended is described differently by different groups. In Roman Catholicism, grace that is conveyed through the sacrament has saving value. With the Reformation, other ideas concerning the expression of sacraments were formulated. The Reformed definition of a sacrament is: “A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ in which by sensible signs the grace of God in Christ and the benefits of the covenant of grace are represented, sealed, and applied to believers and these in turn give expression to their faith and allegiance to God.”

In the Reformed view, the sacrament is a real means of grace. It is a means appointed and employed by the Messiah for conveying the

benefits of His redemption to His people, and they are made partakers of the blessing of which the sacraments are divinely appointed signs and seals.

In the Reformed view, the efficacy is not in the elements, rather, it is due to the blessing of Yeshua (Jesus) and the working of His Spirit. Furthermore, this conveying of grace is effectual only for adults if it is received by faith. The saving and sanctifying influence can be on believers only. Again, in the Reformed view, there is the conveying of grace automatically to the partaker.

## 2. Ordinance

An ordinance can be defined as a rite or ritual or practice prescribed by the Messiah to be performed by the Church, as an outward sign of the saving truth of the Christian faith. Rather than seeing the ordinances as conveying grace, it is better to see them as visible signs of saving truth, and that is why the term “ordinance” is better than the term “sacrament.”

### B. The Qualifications of an Ordinance

How does one determine what is and what is not an ordinance? The best way of determining the qualifications of an ordinance is to apply three tests. If all three things are present, then the act qualifies as an ordinance.

First, was it commanded by Yeshua? Did He command believers to practice this? Of course, He commanded believers to practice many things, but not all of them became ordinances. Nevertheless, something could not become an ordinance unless it was commanded by the Messiah.

The second test of an ordinance is: Was it observed in the Book of Acts? Are there examples where it was observed by the Church in the Book of Acts?

The third qualification is: Was the rite or ritual expounded upon in the Epistles? Do the Epistles spell out the theological significance of this outward rite?

### C. The Number of Ordinances

How many ordinances are there? In Roman Catholicism, there are a total of seven ordinances. These are known to Roman Catholics as the Seven Sacraments. These Seven Sacraments are: ordination, confirmation, matrimony, extreme unction, penance, baptism, and the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper.

The various Brethren groups believe in three ordinances: baptism, the Lord's Supper, and “footwashing.” Footwashing is taken to be an ordinance on the basis of John 13:12-15, where Jesus commanded them *to wash one another's feet* in verse 14. They believe that footwashing

is a symbol of the Atonement just as baptism and the Lord's Supper are symbols of the Atonement, and therefore, footwashing is their third ordinance.

But is footwashing truly an ordinance? In this passage, the context does not emphasize footwashing as such, but humility. Furthermore, in that same context, footwashing is not a symbol of the Atonement, but it is a symbol of the spiritual cleansing of the believer who has already had the Atonement applied to him. So this passage simply does not teach footwashing as an ordinance.

Finally, footwashing does not meet all three qualifications. Whereas it was commanded by the Messiah, it is never recorded as a practice in the Book of Acts, nor is there any theological exposition of it in the Epistles.

How many ordinances are there? Only two meet all the qualifications: the Lord's Supper and baptism.

#### **D. The Necessity of the Observance of Ordinances**

Why is it necessary to observe ordinances? According to Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism, they should be practiced because they have regeneration value; that is, they have saving value. The Bible simply does not teach that as being necessary for the practice of the ordinances.

The biblical reason for practicing the ordinances is a matter of obedience; believers do this in order to obey that which the Bible commands.

## **II. THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM ITSELF**

The ordinance of baptism will be discussed in seven areas: the meaning of baptism, the qualifications of baptism as an ordinance, the formula for baptism, the modes of baptism, the subjects for baptism, the relationship of baptism to salvation, and rebaptism.

### **A. The Meaning of Baptism**

The first area of the ordinance of baptism is the meaning of baptism. One definition is that of the Westminster Confession, which is used by many of the Reformed churches:

“Baptism is a sacrament wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit both signify and seal one's ingrafting into Christ and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace and our encouragement to be the Lord's recipients of grace.”

This definition can be broken down into five points. First, it is a divine

ordinance. Secondly, it is a means of grace to believers. Thirdly, it is a sign and seal of the “covenant of grace.” Fourthly, it was intended for a perpetual obligation. And fifth, God promises to bring the benefits signified by baptism. The Reformed position has the element of conveying of grace in this act, and they connect it with a theological concept known as the covenant of grace, something that is not found anywhere in Scripture.

There is a better definition that is more in keeping with the Jewish origins of baptism: “Baptism is an identification or association with a person or message or group.”

The word “identification” is the single most important word in describing exactly what baptism means. For instance, in Judaism there was the practice of proselyte baptism: when a Gentile converted to Judaism, he was baptized; when he was baptized, he identified himself with Judaism and the Jewish people. One who was baptized by John the Baptist identified himself with the message of John and committed himself to accepting the Messiah, once the Messiah was pointed out. Believer's baptism or Christian baptism is also best defined by the word “identification.” One identifies himself with three things: the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah.

There are five key Greek words by which the meaning of “baptism” is determined. The first word is *bapto*, which means “to dip,” and it is used three times in the New Testament. The second word is *baptizo*, which means “to baptize,” and it is used eight times. The third word is *baptisteis*, which means “baptizer,” and it is used four times. The fourth word is *baptisma*, which means “baptism,” and is used twenty two times. The fifth word is *baptismos*, which is used nine times, and it is translated two different ways: “baptism” or “washing.”

### **B. The Qualifications of Baptism as an Ordinance**

The second area is that baptism meets all three qualifications for an ordinance. First, it was commanded by the Messiah (Mat. 28:18-20). Secondly, it is practiced in the Book of Acts (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12-13, 36, 38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5). Thirdly, it was expounded upon in the Epistles (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:11-12).

### **C. The Formula for Baptism**

The third area of the ordinance of baptism is the formula for baptism, given by Yeshua in Matthew 28:18-20: baptism should be done *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. By this formula, believer's baptism will be distinguished from other baptisms prevalent in that day. This formula will distinguish it from proselyte baptism, which was the baptism performed upon a Gentile converting to Judaism, and this formula will distinguish it from John's baptism.

Some teach that, because the Book of Acts only mentions being baptized in the Messiah's name, baptism needs to name Jesus only.

Here they are misunderstanding the Jewish context in which Christian baptism originated. Again, baptism was a Jewish practice long before it became a Church practice. When the New Testament speaks of being baptized in the Messiah's name, it never uses the word "only." It mentions the Messiah or Jesus and not Father or Spirit simply because that is enough to distinguish it from other forms of baptism. When the New Testament states, "Baptize in the name of Yeshua," it simply means that the person was baptized into believer's baptism, not into John's baptism, not into proselyte baptism nor any other baptism which was practiced in those days. The expression "baptized in Jesus' name" simply distinguished it from other types of baptism and means the same thing as believer's baptism. However, the actual formula to be spoken during a baptism is: "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

#### **D. The Modes of Baptism**

The fourth area of the ordinance of baptism is the controversy between those who insist on immersion only and those who use non-immersion modes of baptism such as pouring or sprinkling.

##### **1. Non-Immersion Modes**

Under the heading of non-immersion modes, there are two practices. One is affusion or pouring and the other is sprinkling. There are six main arguments used to support non-immersion practices.

The first argument is that the word *baptizo* is used in a secondary sense of "bringing under the influence of," and this is best pictured by pouring. While it is true that *baptizo* can be used in a secondary sense, the problem with this view is that this is not the way Scripture is interpreted elsewhere. Interpretation must first be based on the primary meaning. One never resorts to a secondary meaning if the primary meaning is clear. If the primary meaning does not make sense, only then does one resort to a secondary meaning. In no passage where *baptizo* is used is it necessary to resort to a secondary meaning. Also, in this case, the secondary meaning is a derived meaning of the act, not the meaning of the word. The expression "to bring under the influence of" is not a secondary meaning of the word *baptizo*. Rather, it is simply a secondary meaning of the act of baptism itself. The primary meaning of the word is always "to immerse."

The second argument used to support non-immersion modes is that, since baptism is to picture the Spirit's coming upon a person, the best way of picturing this is by affusion. However, the answer is that this is not the way water baptism and Spirit baptism are related in the Scriptures. Rather, Spirit baptism places the believer totally into the Body of the Messiah, and immersion is a far better picture of that spiritual truth.

The third argument used to favor non-immersion modes of baptism states that immersion was improbable or impossible in places such as:

Acts 2:41, where there were simply too many people; Acts 8:38, where there would be too little water; Acts 10:47 and 16:33, where there would not be enough water in a house. But in these passages in the Book of Acts, is immersion really impossible or improbable? In relation to Acts 2:41, one thing archeology has discovered is that throughout Jerusalem there were many pools of water both for ritual and non-ritual immersion purposes. So there were plenty of pools in Jerusalem to immerse all of the three thousand people who were saved on the Day of Pentecost when the Church was born. As for Acts 8:38, the exact place where the baptism occurred is unknown, but there are ponds all over the area that would be sufficient for immersion. As for Acts 10:47 and 16:33, these were Roman homes, and Roman homes had pools or baths, which were sufficient for immersion.

The fourth argument used in support of non-immersion modes of baptism is based on Hebrews 9:10, where the word *baptizo* is used to include the Old Testament rituals of sprinkling. However, the word here is not “sprinkling,” but “washings.” The washings of Old Testament law required the instruments used for the Temple to be immersed into water. The utensils were not cleansed by sprinkling water on them; anyone who washes utensils would not consider them clean by simply sprinkling water on them. Quite the contrary, the instruments were washed by dipping them or immersing them in water. Furthermore, it might be pointed out that throughout the rituals of the Old Testament Law, it was blood that was sprinkled, not water. The Greek language has a word for dipping, *bapto*, but the Bible does not use this word in relation to the ritual. It uses the more intensive word, *baptizo*, which proves the point even better; *bapto* means “to dip,” but the more intensive form of the word, *baptizo*, means “to totally immerse” the instrument.

The fifth argument concerns the significance of baptism according to non-immersionists. Some non immersionists teach that baptism represents the death of the Messiah on the cross. They claim that baptism does not represent the Lord's burial because the Atonement was completed on the cross; that baptism does not represent the Messiah's Resurrection, because the Resurrection does not add to the Atonement. Therefore, immersion is not necessary. The answer to this claim is that baptism is never associated with the manner of the Messiah's death, but with the act of His death, burial, and Resurrection according to Romans 6:3-5 and Colossians 2:11-12. In these two passages, the emphasis in baptism is clearly on the burial aspect, and it is not merely the fact of the Atonement that baptism portrays, but the acts which the Messiah had to undergo to accomplish the Atonement: death, burial, and Resurrection. Furthermore, according to Romans 4:25, without the Resurrection, there would be no Atonement, because the Resurrection was important for justification. So to say that burial and Resurrection are not part of the actual Atonement and, therefore, immersion is not necessary does not logically or biblically follow.

The last argument in favor of non immersion modes of baptism is to say that three-quarters of the visible church today does not immerse. Since three-quarters do not immerse, how could three-quarters of the church be wrong? However, the majority can often be wrong. Truth is never determined by a majority vote, but by what the Scriptures teach. No church has the right to dispense with the command of the Messiah or to modify it, for this would put the church above Yeshua.

## 2. Immersion

On what basis is it taught that immersion is the only proper way of baptizing? There are ten arguments supporting the view that immersion is the only true, biblical form of baptism.

First, the primary meaning of the Greek word *baptizo* is “to immerse.” It might be pointed out that the word “baptism” is not a true English word. It is merely a transliteration of the Greek word. “Baptism” is from the Greek word *baptismos*. The translation of that form of the word would be “immersion.” If the original English translators had been honest, every time they came to the word, *baptismos*, they would have translated it as “immersion.” Unfortunately, sprinkling had become widespread by the time the English versions of the Bible were available, and many of the translators themselves were sprinklers. So rather than translating the word, they transliterated it, and the English text reads “to baptize” and “baptism,” but the meaning of these words is “to immerse” and “immersion.”

Secondly, immersion is the best way of explaining the normal meaning of the words “into” and “out of.” In the context of baptism, the Bible speaks about the person being baptized as going into the water, and coming up out of the water; these statements clearly imply immersion (Mat. 3:11, 16; Mk. 1:5, 8, 9-10; Acts 8:38-39).

The third argument in favor of immersion as the only proper mode of baptism is that this is how Jesus was baptized (Mat. 3:16; Mk. 1:9-10).

The fourth argument in favor of immersion as the true, biblical mode of baptism is that this was clearly the method of the baptism of John (Jn. 3:23). According to this verse, John had to leave for a different part of the country because *there was much water there*. If simply sprinkling were sufficient, John could have stayed right where he was, because there was always a trickle of water down the Jordan River. However, merely a few sprinkles of water would not have been sufficient, therefore, John was forced to go to a place where *there was much water*, a place where there was a sufficient amount of water for the purpose of immersing people.

Fifth, every New Testament case allows for immersion. There is not a single example anywhere in the New Testament where immersion was either improbable or impossible, as critics maintain. In every New Testament case where baptism was performed, it is obvious that

immersion was possible.

The sixth argument in favor of immersion as the only proper mode of baptism is that the Greek language has words for pouring and sprinkling, but neither term is ever used for baptism. In the case of pouring, the Greek word is *epicheo*. Another form of the word is *katecheo*. While these words are used in the New Testament, they are never used in connection with baptism. The Greek language also has a word for sprinkling, *rantizo*. While *rantizo* is also used in the New Testament, it is never used in connection with baptism. When the New Testament speaks of baptism, it is always the word that means “immersion.” This is the common word that Greek speakers would use, meaning “to immerse something into water.” Even apart from its ritualistic sense, whenever a Greek wanted to say, “I want to immerse this knife into the water,” he would use the word *baptizo*. It is the same word for immersion that is always used in connection with the ritual of baptism.

The seventh argument is that immersion best pictures the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. Romans 6:3-5 speaks of Spirit baptism, not water baptism. When one is *baptized into Christ Jesus*, he is baptized into His Body by the Spirit, and the believer is then identified with the death, burial, and Resurrection of the Messiah. Immersion is the best picture of this. First of all, the believer is placed totally into water, just as he has been placed by the Spirit totally into the Body. Furthermore, baptism pictures the death, burial, and Resurrection of the Messiah: going down into the water is a picture of death and burial; coming up out of the water is a picture of the Resurrection.

The eighth argument in favor of immersion as the only proper mode of baptism is that the Jewish practice of baptism was always by immersion. For example, Jewish proselyte baptism was by immersion and that points to John's baptism and believer's baptism being by the same means: immersion. Baptism did not begin with the Gentile Church, rather, it began with Jewish believers who continued the practice of baptism from Judaism, but gave it a different meaning and a different formula. Jewish baptism was always by immersion, so Jewish believers would practice only immersion as a proper form of baptism. So, from a purely Jewish perspective, a Jewish believer that had a Jewish background would never be in favor of either sprinkling or pouring. He would always favor immersion only.

The ninth argument in favor of immersion is that it was the practice of the early Church, both the Jewish branch and the Gentile branch. In the first century, for example, immersion was the only practice performed by either the Jewish believers or by the Gentile believers. The practice of pouring began in the second century. Even when pouring was first mentioned in a second century document, it had to do with a believer who was on his deathbed and was simply too ill to go to a place where he could be immersed. So it was suggested that in

this case, and in this case only, it was permissible to pour water on his body. But again, the pouring would mean that the person would still become totally wet. While the second century document does not carry biblical validity, those who use this mode should be reminded that it was emphasized in that same document that this was the exception to the rule, and it was not to become a common practice. As for sprinkling as a mode of baptism, it began only in the twelfth century A.D.

The tenth argument is to point out the practice of the Greek Orthodox Church. This church has many similarities with Roman Catholicism, but they use Greek as their language, not Latin. Since they know Greek, they know what the word *bapizmos* means. Consequently, the Greek Orthodox Church, to this day, does not practice pouring or sprinkling, but practices immersion only.

Therefore, the only proper mode of baptism is immersion. Any other kind of practice, such as sprinkling or pouring, is not biblical baptism. Those who have merely been sprinkled or have had water poured on them have not yet undergone true biblical baptism.

### **E. The Subjects for Baptism**

The fifth area of the ordinance of baptism is the question: Who qualifies as a subject for baptism? This area will be divided into two parts: infant baptism and believer's baptism.

#### **1. Infant Baptism**

Infant baptism will be discussed in three aspects: the reasons for it, the arguments for it, and the arguments against it.

##### **a. The Reasons for Infant Baptism**

While several different groups practice infant baptism, they do not all practice it for the same reason. Since infant baptism is not found in Scripture, they have to find different reasons for it. There are the two main reasons why groups practice infant baptism.

First, some groups practice infant baptism because they believe in baptismal regeneration: that the infant is saved by means of baptism. This is the view of Episcopalians and Lutherans.

Secondly, other groups that practice infant baptism do not believe in baptismal regeneration. Groups that are based on Covenant Theology such as the Presbyterian Church and Dutch Reformed Church practice infant baptism because they believe that the child is brought into the covenant family by this means. This is why only the children of at least one believing parent can qualify for baptism.

##### **b. Arguments for Infant Baptism**

The second aspect of infant baptism is the arguments used to defend

the practice of infant baptism. Four primary arguments are used: the anti-type of circumcision, household promises, the inclusion of infants in household baptism, and church tradition.

**NOTES**

### **(1) The Anti-Type of Circumcision**

First, it is taught that baptism is the anti-type of circumcision. Since circumcision was practiced on infants, therefore, baptism should be practiced upon infants. However, if it were true that baptism is the anti-type of circumcision, then only male infants should be baptized, because only male infants were circumcised. Furthermore, in the Bible, the anti-type of circumcision is never said to be baptism. Rather, the anti-type of the circumcision of the flesh is the circumcision of the heart. In Acts 15, the controversy over the necessity of circumcision was not solved by the Jerusalem Council's declaring that baptism is a replacement for circumcision. They solved it by pointing out that the Gentiles were simply not under the Law.

### **(2) Household Promises**

The second primary argument used is the assumption that “household promises” allow for infant baptism. One such household promise is in I Corinthians 7:14, where the children are sanctified by the believing parent. However, one has to read baptism into the passage. The teaching that household promises allow for infant baptism is an unproven assumption.

Furthermore, I Corinthians 7:14 states that the unbelieving spouse is also said to be sanctified by the believing spouse. Therefore, if this verse is used to teach infant baptism, it would also teach the baptism of unbelieving adults, for they, too, are found in this passage. However, adherents to this view do not baptize unbelieving adults. This is an inconsistent way of handling this passage.

### **(3) Inclusion of Infants in Household Baptism**

The third primary argument used to support infant baptism is to claim that household baptism must have included infants. The passages used to support this argument are Acts 16:15, 33; 18:8; and I Corinthians 1:16, where it states that the entire house was baptized. They go on to point out that there must have been infants in that house.

The answer to this argument is that the inclusion of infants is again an assumption, for it is equally likely that there were no infants in that house. For example, I belong to a family with parents and a total of seven children. My parents are still living, and all of the children are still living. I am the oldest, and the youngest is twenty-two years younger than I am. Yet every one of us is old enough to believe and therefore to be baptized. If my entire house were baptized, there would not be a single infant among us. Again, the inclusion of infants

is an assumption, for it is equally likely that there were no infants. A second way to answer this argument is to point out that even in household baptisms, faith was a prerequisite. Even when the whole household was baptized, it was only because the whole household believed. For example, in the case of Acts 16:15, verse 40, shows that all those in the woman's house were believers. As for Acts 16:33, verse 34 shows that the whole house believed. There were no infants that could not believe.

As for Acts 18:8, the very same verse states that his house believed and therefore was baptized; again, the believing preceded the baptizing. As for I Corinthians 1:16, in 16:15 the same house is mentioned again, and everyone in that house was old enough to minister. If they were all old enough to minister, then there were no infants. If they were old enough to minister, then they were old enough to believe. It was because they believed that they were baptized.

#### **(4) Church Tradition**

The fourth argument used to defend the practice of infant baptism is aimed toward supporting church tradition.

One of the theologians who taught and favored infant baptism admitted in a theology book which he wrote that there is no biblical command to baptize infants. He also admitted that there is not a single example of infant baptism in the New Testament. But after having made those admissions, he nevertheless went on to defend the practice. It is obvious that church tradition overruled what the Bible teaches.

This theologian's argument began by going back to the Abrahamic Covenant and pointing out that circumcision was practiced on infants. But again, the Bible does not teach that baptism is the anti-type of circumcision. Furthermore, they do baptize infant girls, but circumcision was never performed on infant girls.

Secondly, this theologian claims that the Abrahamic Covenant is the same as the New Covenant, and since there was infant participation in the Abrahamic Covenant, there must be infant participation in the New Covenant. However, the Bible never makes the two covenants as one and the same, and this theologian is simply presuming his theory rather than proving it.

Thirdly, this theologian then states that infants partook in the benefits of the covenants and received circumcision. While that statement is true, it does not prove that it carries over to the New Testament with baptism. There is a lot of "reading into" and assumptions made here.

His fourth statement is that baptism is a replacement for circumcision as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace. The answer to this is that

the Bible does not even teach the existence of a thing known as the covenant of grace, and furthermore, the anti-type of the circumcision of the flesh is not baptism, but circumcision of the heart.

His fifth argument is that there was no New Testament mention of infant baptism only because it emphasized the ministry to adults. This a true statement as far as it goes, but the real issue is the reason that the New Testament does not mention infant baptism is because it was not practiced, not because it only emphasized ministry to adults.

Rather than turning away from tradition to the Word of God, these people chose to turn away from the Word of God to their traditions. That kind of traditionalism is hypocrisy. There is no teaching, or even an example, of infant baptism in the Bible.

### **c. The Arguments Against Infant Baptism**

The third aspect of infant baptism are six arguments against it. First, the very meaning of baptism restricts it to those who consciously exercise faith. Baptism means the identification with a person or a message or a group. It is a choice which the individual must make. An infant cannot make such a choice and therefore does not qualify to be baptized.

Secondly, there is no New Testament command to baptize infants.

Thirdly, there is not even a New Testament example of baptizing infants.

Fourthly, infant baptism was not practiced in the early Church. The first clear case of infant baptism was only in the third century.

The fifth argument is that infant baptism is based on the sacramental idea of baptismal regeneration, and many of the denominations practice infant baptism because they believe and teach that, by means of a little sprinkling of water, the baby will be saved. Infant baptism is not based upon Scripture, it is based on the false teaching of baptismal regeneration.

And the sixth argument against infant baptism is that there are certain evil effects of infant baptism. First, it forestalls a personal commitment. In dealing with people who were baptized as infants, it is often found that they are depending upon the “baptismal covenant” received as an infant for their salvation. They have never made a personal commitment to trust the Messiah for their salvation. They are trusting on an act performed on them at the decision of their parents only. So one evil effect is that it forestalls personal commitment. Secondly, it has created a superstitious confidence in the efficacy of water. There is a superstitious belief among many of these

adherents that, by means of a few drops of water, they have been miraculously or magically saved. The third evil effect of infant baptism is that it brings unregenerate people into the membership of the church. There is no guarantee that these infants are going to truly believe when they grow up. But upon being baptized, they automatically become members of that church; as they grow up, they will always be members of that church, even if they never become believers. As a result, there are many unregenerate people in these churches, and that is probably the worst effect of infant baptism.

## 2. Believer's Baptism

The second part of the subjects for baptism is believer's baptism, which means that the subject is qualified for baptism only after he exercises faith. The clear teaching of Scripture is that, only after he has believed, does he qualify for baptism. For example, Acts 2:38 commands: *Repent...and be baptized*; repentance must precede baptism. Acts 2:41 states that only those who *received Peter's word were baptized*; the reception of the Word must come first. Acts 8:12 states that they believed, and then they were baptized; believing preceded their baptism. Acts 8:36 states that nothing hindered the Ethiopian's baptism, because he had already believed. In Acts 9:18, Paul believed first, and only then was he baptized. In Acts 10:44-48, once it was clear that these Gentiles in the house of Cornelius were saved because the Spirit had fallen upon them, only then were they free to be baptized. In Acts 16:30-34, only after faith was exercised, baptism followed for all. In Acts 18:8, after believing, they were baptized. Again, one must believe first before he qualifies for baptism, and this one prerequisite excludes an infant as a being qualified for baptism.

One other matter regarding believer's baptism is to point out a distinction between circumcision and baptism. Circumcision is often used to support infant baptism, but there is a clear distinction between the two practices. Circumcision never showed the faith of the child. At the age of eight days, that child didn't believe anything. Circumcision showed the faith and obedience of the parents, not the child. Baptism is to show the faith and obedience of the one being baptized.

## F. The Relationship of Baptism to Salvation

The sixth area of baptism as an ordinance is that some groups teach the doctrine of baptismal regeneration: that one must be baptized to be saved. Three points can be made concerning this issue.

### 1. Numerous Salvation Passages

First, in more than two hundred passages where salvation is mentioned, faith is the only condition for salvation. If baptism were necessary for salvation, it should have been mentioned in all cases where the condition for salvation is clearly stated.

### 2. Paul's Statement

The second point is that Paul did not consider baptism to be that vital.

In I Corinthians 1:14-17, Paul states that he was happy that he did not baptize too many people in the Corinthian Church, thus eliminating the chance that they would count on the fact that they were baptized by Paul. Furthermore, in verse 17, he said that God did not send him to baptize, but *to preach the gospel*. If baptism were necessary for salvation, then Paul would have said that he was sent to preach the gospel and to baptize. When he discussed the gospel in I Corinthians 15:1-4, he pointed out that it is the gospel that saves (v. 2), and baptism is not part of that gospel.

### 3. Some Problem Passages

The third point is that there are some “problem passages” that people use to support the doctrine of baptismal regeneration.

#### a. Mark 16:16

*He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieves shall be condemned.*

In the first passage, two things can be noted. First, there is a real question as to whether this part of Mark 16 was originally part of the Gospel of Mark, because the oldest and best manuscripts do not even have this passage in it. It is foolish to base a doctrine on a passage that is not found in the best and oldest manuscripts. A second way of answering this is to point out that it is not stated negatively. He does not say that if you do not believe and are not baptized, you will be lost, he simply says that if you do not believe, you will be lost. If baptism were necessary, he would have also said that if you believe but are not baptized, you will still be lost. He mentioned believing and baptism together, because in those days, baptism immediately followed believing. In those days, people understood that the act of baptism identified them with a message, person, or group. Today, there is so much confusion concerning baptism that it might be wise to delay the baptism of the new believer until he has had a chance to be taught what baptism means.

#### b. John 3:5

*Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

This passage speaks of being born of water, not baptism. If it were, Jesus would have used the word for baptism. Being born of water was a Jewish expression meaning “physical birth.” “Mere physical birth as a Jew,” He tells Nicodemus, “is not sufficient to enter the Kingdom.”

#### c. Acts 2:38

*And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

The Greek word for *unto* is *eis*. This word is also used in Matthew 12:41, where it means “on account of.” In this verse, the word *eis*

should also read “on account of.” Therefore, he is saying: “Repent and be baptized on account of or on the basis of the remission of sin.”

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#### d. Acts 22:16

*And now why tarries you? arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.*

There are two parts to this verse that should be kept distinct. In the first part, *arise* is a participle and *be baptized* is an imperative; the word “and” is not in the Greek text. It simply says, “arising, be baptized.” In the second part, *washing away your sins* is an imperative followed by the participle, *calling*. Therefore, this verse is saying that baptism follows the arising, just as forgiveness follows the calling upon the name of the Lord. One is saved by merely calling upon the name of the Lord. But after being saved by calling upon His name, he then should *arise, and be baptized* as an act of obedience.

#### e. I Peter 3:20-21

*that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water: which also after a true likeness does now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

This verse is speaking of a cleansing of the conscience, not salvation. These were Jewish believers who had not undergone the obedience of water baptism, and were operating under a bad conscience, because they were disobeying the Lord. The writer is telling them that they need to have that bad conscience cleansed. The conscience is always cleansed the same way: by obeying the Lord in whatever area one is disobedient. In this case, they were in disobedience as to the command of baptism. While baptism is a symbol and a sign of cleansing, it is never the means of cleansing. Baptism is only necessary for discipleship and obedience, not for salvation. One can be a believer in Yeshua, but he cannot be a disciple if he has not undergone water baptism.

### G. Rebaptism

The seventh and last area of the ordinance of baptism is the question: Is there ever any basis to be rebaptized? There is one passage, Acts 19:1-7, where people were rebaptized. These were disciples of John the Baptist who had been baptized by John, but they had never been baptized into believer's baptism because they had left the country before John pointed out that Jesus was the Messiah. In this passage, Paul lets them know that Yeshua was the one whom John had predicted would come. Once they believed, Paul proceeded to baptize them into believer's baptism. Since John's baptism was not Christian baptism, they needed to be rebaptized.

If a person has been biblically baptized, there is no basis for rebaptism. Rebaptism should not be practiced just to join a new

church, as it sometimes is. Rebaptism should not be practiced just because one happens to be by the Jordan River and wants to be baptized in that particular river, for ceremonial reasons.

However, if someone was baptized in an improper baptism, then this calls for a rebaptism. If one was baptized before he became a believer, he is to be rebaptized. If one was baptized as an infant, he is to be rebaptized. If one was baptized in a wrong mode, either by pouring or sprinkling, he is to be rebaptized. All of these cases are not biblical baptisms; therefore, this calls for a rebaptism with a proper biblical baptism in obedience to the Lord.✧

**NOTES**

**IF YOU ENJOYED THIS  
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