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Keys to Total Health

PRODUCED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EDUCATION, SCHOOL OF HEALTH

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Why is Baptism by Immersion Necessary?

The false teachings included in the "wine" of Revelation 14:8 were (1) Sunday worship in place of the seventh-day Sabbath of Scripture; (2) teaching of an immortal soul instead of life only in Christ; (3) teaching of purgatory and eternal torment; (4) perversion of the Lord's supper; and (5) infant baptism by sprinkling instead of adult baptism by immersion. In this lesson we will examine Scriptural baptism.

Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." (John 3:3,5). To be born again, we first must die to self. Paul said, "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." (1 Corinthians 15:31) Again he said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I 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) Baptism is the symbol of this death and rebirth; Christian baptism is a public testimony that a man has been born again. Baptism symbolizes the washing away of sin by the blood of Jesus. For a place in God's kingdom, baptism is necessary. "And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16)

Baptism Is By Immersion

Christian baptism is a symbol of death, burial and resurrection. "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." (Colossians 2:12) "Know ye not, that so many of us 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Romans 6:3-6)

When a person is baptized, he buries his past life of sin, and he is resurrected to live a new life! The only method of baptism which can rightly represent the significance of this experience is immersion. Only baptism by immersion depicts a death, burial and resurrection. Jesus Christ was baptized by immersion. "And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill

Baptism is the symbol of death and rebirth.

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:" (Matthew 3:15,16). Jesus came up out of the water, He set the example for us.

Philip baptized the Ethiopian by immersion. "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, 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 Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8:35-39) Baptism is by immersion, the only method taught in sacred scripture, and the only method employed by Jesus Christ and the primitive church. The word "baptize" means to immerse.

What Must A Person Do To Be Baptized?

Before an individual is baptized, he must believe! "And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized

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shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:15,16). The two fold combination is (1) believe; (2) be baptized. A baby cannot believe, therefore a small child is too young to be baptized. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:19,20) Thorough instruction is necessary before baptism. We must be taught “to observe all things.” A child must be old enough for instruction before he is a candidate for baptism. When he can understand and believe, then he is old enough to be baptized.

Before baptism a person must repent of all his sins. This is beyond the ability of an infant. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and he shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38) These requirements babies cannot comply with—therefore the Bible does not teach infant baptism. A child must be old enough to believe, repent, and experience the new birth before he is baptized.

Must A Person Join The Church To Be Baptized?

Baptism is the entrance into Christ’s church. Concerning the events on the day of Pentecost we read: “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls ... Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (Acts 2:41,47) Three thousand souls “were added unto them” by baptism. There is no baptism aside from church membership.

Sometimes people come to us wanting to be baptized, but they don’t want to join the church. I can’t baptize them. For baptism without church responsibilities is meaningless. Paul wrote: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, ... whether we be bond or free and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:12,13) Notice, “we all (are) baptized into one body” - the church (see also Colossians 1:18). Therefore church membership is essential to baptism. Paul continues: “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” (1 Corinthians 12:27,28) These gifts are set “in the church.” By belonging to God’s church upon this earth we benefit from fellowship together which we need.

Jesus Christ was baptized by immersion.

Rebaptism

Some wonder if rebaptism is ever necessary. The answer is yes, under two circumstances. Even though a person may have been baptized by immersion, when he receives new light, he should be rebaptized into that new light. Notice this example from the book of Acts: “He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since you believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 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 in 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.” (Acts 19:2-5) These “disciples” (verse 1) had been baptized by immersion by John the Baptist, yet when they received new light they were rebaptized. This did not deny at all their previous baptism or experience. John was a man sent from God (see John 1:6). This rebaptism only added to their previous experience.

A person who was once baptized into the full light of the gospel, but who has fallen away, should again be baptized, once again walking in the newness of life. “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” (Ephesians 4:17-23) Once a man has fallen back into sin he needs once again to be created in righteousness and true holiness. Therefore he needs to renew his contract, his covenant, with God by baptism. God signed His part of the agreement in blood, His own blood. Man signs his part of the covenant by baptism. If man has broken the covenant, a new covenant needs to be made and the individual needs a rebaptism.

The Meaning Of Baptism

Baptism is important! For through baptism an individual is born into God’s kingdom. “For ye are 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 you be Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:26-29)

One of the key themes of the Bible is “in Christ”. This is the key to a deep Christian experience, to a vital connection with heaven. We must have this mystical union “in Christ” of which Paul speaks in order to have life, both here and eternally. We ask, “How can these things be? How can I dwell in Christ, while at the same time Christ dwells in me?” One writer put it this way “In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live, and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.”

Through Christ, God blesses us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places. In Christ Jesus our Lord we can have a

Nothing that we can ever hope to do will entitle us to a place in heaven.

contract with heaven that transcends anything that we can imagine upon this earth. Baptism is a symbol of this intimate fellowship with God. It is a symbol that we live in Him and He lives in us. Nothing that we can ever hope to do will entitle us to a place in heaven. If we get there, it will be only by the wonderful mercies of God. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus 3:5) And friends, this grace is bestowed upon us only in Christ. We must establish this vital connection with heaven, through prayer, Bible study, and constant meditation upon Him. There is no other way to eternal life except in Christ. He is the way, the only way. No one can find access to the Father except through him.

But how wonderful it is that in Christ we can find grace to help in time of need. Grace that not only blots out sin from a book in heaven, but grace that actually cleanses sin out of our lives. Grace that can write God's law upon our hearts, and grace to strengthen us when we are faced with temptation. This is the glorious grace of God which is ours in Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us avail ourselves of this wonderful grace that we may be found before Him without spot or blemish or any such thing. We have redemption in Christ. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:23,24) Redemption is in Christ because it is Christ who shed His blood as a propitiation for our sin.

We often hear illustrations of one human being dying for other fellow human beings, or one person taking somebody else's punishment. But these don't illustrate the great sacrifice which Christ made in our behalf. We never hear of anybody taking a dog's punishment, especially dying so that some dog might live. This would come closer to giving a true picture, but even if we had an illustration of a human being dying that an ant might live the illustration would be inadequate. Suppose that a little red ant bit a man and it hurt. The man decided that the ant should die for his crime, but, before the execution was carried out, another human being stepped up and said, "No! Don't kill the ant. Let it live. Kill me instead and let the ant go free." Why, we wouldn't be able to believe such a thing! Why it wouldn't even be reasonable. But we are less than ants compared to Christ,

In Adam our nature is corrupt; in Christ we receive a new nature.

the eternal Creator. And this is the astonishing thing, that the great God should come and die that such a worm as I should live. The very thought of it staggers me and as I drop to my knees I cry out: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15) "In whom we have redemption through his blood." (Ephesians 1:7) Redemption is in Christ; how can we neglect so great a salvation?

From Adam we inherited the propensity to evil, from Christ we inherit the propensity to righteousness. In Adam our nature is corrupt; in Christ we receive a new nature, created in the image of the All-perfect, an Almighty God. Thank God, we can find forgiveness in the righteous One, even Christ Jesus, our Lord. Let us invite Him into our hearts, not just once, not just once a year, not just once a week, but daily. "It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly, by abiding in Him, that we are to grow in grace." "Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, 'Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.' This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that Day."

It is easier to coast down than it is to ride up. I remember when I was a boy with a bike, I used to enjoy finding the highest hill and then just letting loose and coasting to the bottom. There wasn't much work to that, it was fun. But there was always a "bottom" to the hill, a place where I could no longer go down. The coasting stopped and there was no longer any place to go down. I had two choices, one, to go back up, two, just ride along on the level.

It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly, by abiding in Him, that we are to grow in grace.

Your Choice

Satan keeps trying to pull us down with the current, with the crowd. But at the end we can no longer coast along. Somewhere our downward path will come to a halt. We have but two choices, one, to climb back up the way the Lord leads, or, to just drift along in sin. As the poet put it:

"To every man there openeth a way, and ways, and a way,

And the high soul climbs the high way,
and the low soul gropes the low;
and in between, on the misty flats,
the rest drift to and fro ..."

That is where most folks are, on the misty flats of sin. But let us not remain in sin, walking down the Satanic path to destruction. Let us, instead look up! Behold! And live!

Baptism by immersion is part of the gospel message. Under the Second Angel, infant baptism is condemned. But every adult should be baptized by immersion, demonstrating your complete surrender to the Will of Christ. If you have not been baptized by immersion, won't you make that decision right now?

WHY IS BAPTISM BY IMMERSION NECESSARY?

Take a few moments to read Genesis 4:3-7.

Why do you suppose the Lord did not accept Cain's offering?

What was the Lord's warning to Cain at that time?

What is the relationship between this story and substituting infant baptism for baptism by immersion, or Sunday for Sabbath?

What are the benefits of being obedient to the teachings and guidelines set forth by God and Jesus Christ? Are you ready for such obedience? Why or why not?

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Phone _____