


1910

Baptism In Plain English

WM. J. Wright

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Recommended Citation

Wright, WM. J., "Baptism In Plain English" (1910). *Stone-Campbell Books*. Book 106.
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**AMERICAN CHRISTIAN
MISSIONARY SOCIETY**

Y. M. C. A. Building, CINCINNATI, O.

**Baptism in
Plain English**

A BIBLE READING

BY

WM. J. WRIGHT

ISSUED BY THE

Standing Committee on Evangelism

H. O. BREEDEN, Chairman

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Baptism In Plain English.

WM. J. WRIGHT.

There is wide difference of opinion as to the divine authority for baptism, who should be baptized, how it should be done, and what its value is to persons receiving it. Let us see what the Lord says about it.

I. THE AUTHORITY FOR BAPTISM.

“He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me,” etc.—John 1:33. “And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.”—Luke 7: 29, 30.

These passages show that God is the Author of baptism, for He commanded John to baptize; that those who submitted to John’s baptism, “justified God;” and that those who rejected it, “rejected the counsel of God.”

“And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.”—Mark 1: 9.

Jesus the Son of God, our Savior and Example, was baptized! That should be authority enough for any one who desires to follow Jesus.

“And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”—Matt. 3: 17. (Read verses 13-17).

This was the first time God publicly acknowledged Jesus as His Son, and it was just

After the baptism. Moreover, God said he was well pleased with Jesus' action. If pleased with Jesus' obedience, he will be pleased with yours.

* * * "Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples)."—John 4: 1, 2.

Jesus sanctioned and superintended the baptizing done by his disciples. That is good authority.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."—Matt. 28: 19.

Here Jesus commands his disciples to baptize their converts. He claimed to have all authority in heaven and on earth,—Matt. 28: 18. Do you deny his authority?

Jesus told his Apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth.—(John 16: 13). The Apostles thus guided, always baptized their converts. Notice the following examples:

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized."—Acts 2: 41. "But 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."—Acts 8: 12. "And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."—Acts 8: 38. "And he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."—Acts 9: 18. "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."—Acts 10: 47, 48.

The last passage shows that even after a man had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, he had to be baptized in water. (Read also the following passages in the book of Acts:—8: 13; 16: 15, 33; 18: 8.)

There is all possible divine "authority for water baptism:" God is its Author; Jesus submitted to it and afterward saw that his disciples rightly administered it; God acknowledged Jesus and said he was well pleased when Jesus was baptized; Jesus commanded his disciples to baptize their converts; the Apostles guided by the Holy Spirit always baptized those who turned to the Lord during their ministry, thus proving that Father, Son and Spirit all honor baptism. How can you pray "Thy will be done," and still refuse to submit to his ordinance?

II. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

"Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and the region about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."—Matt. 3: 5, 6.

John baptized no one who did not confess his sins. He therefore baptized no infants.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."—Matt. 28: 19.

Jesus put teaching before baptism. Un-taught persons, whether adults or infants, should not be baptized.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."—Mark 16: 16.

If Jesus puts faith before baptism, who has the authority to change it and put baptism first? "Without faith it is impossible to please God."—Heb. 11: 6.

The Apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit, baptized only penitent believers in the Lord Jesus, never infants. Here is the record:

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you * * * Then they that gladly received his word were baptized."—Acts 2: 38, 41.

The Holy Spirit, who spoke through Peter, (Acts 2: 4), put repentance before baptism, and only those who received his word, were baptized. That shuts out infants from baptism, for they can neither believe nor repent.

"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. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip."—Acts 8: 12, 13.

Here it is recorded that believing *men* and *women*, not non-believing *infants*, were baptized.

"What doth hinder me to be baptized?"—Acts 8: 36.

Here is a *believer* asking for baptism. It is proper to baptize such persons, *if they are penitent*.

"And a certain woman named Lydia, * * * heard us. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us."—Acts 16: 14, 15.

That those who were baptized on this occasion were all believers is clear, because Jesus never commanded the baptism of any others,

and because the scriptures speak of none but *women* as being present; for we are plainly told that Paul "spake unto the *women* which resorted thither."—Ver. 13.

To have infants baptized as members of this household involves great difficulty: The scriptures do not say that Lydia was married; or that being married, she was a mother; or that being a mother, her children were living; or that being alive, some were still in their infancy; or that being in their infancy, Lydia had them with her at the river-side prayer-meeting on that Sabbath; or that the infants being present, the apostle ignored the terms of the Great Commission and baptized them.

All this must be assumed, and every positive, clear scripture dealing with this subject must be ignored in order to have infants baptized as members of Lydia's household. Some households are composed of *adults* and have no infants.

"And was baptized, he and all his straight-way * * * and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."—Acts 16: 33, 34.

In this place we are plainly told that all the household believed. We have not yet found any scriptural authority for infant baptism.

"And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized."—Acts 18: 8.

That is the scriptural order,—hearing, then faith, then baptism; and the scriptures contain no exception to this order. There is no scriptural authority for the baptism of infants. The Lord never commanded it. The Holy Spirit, who guided the Apostles into all truth, never

guided them into baptizing infants. If infant baptism were right the Holy Spirit would have honored it. But he did not honor it. It is therefore wrong, and being wrong, ought to be abandoned.

What the child needs is not baptism, but an example of godliness on the part of its parents and others. Let it see Christ in you and learn of Christ from you. Rear it in a spiritual atmosphere, and you will thus fit it for a proper life a thousand fold more than by sprinkling water upon it, or performing any other rite not commanded by the Lord. The infant is safe without baptism;—"Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

III. HOW PEOPLE SHOULD BE BAPTIZED.

"I indeed baptize you with *water*."—Matt. 3: 11. "They came unto a certain *water*."—Acts 8: 36. "Can any man forbid *water*."—Acts 10: 47.

There can be no Christian baptism without *water*.

"And John also was baptizing in Ænon, near to Salim, because there was *much water* there; and they came and were baptized."—John 3: 23.

This scripture does not say that John selected that place so there would be plenty of water for man and beast to *drink*. It says he was "*baptizing*" because there was much water there." "*Much water*" is a requirement for scriptural baptism. This is made still more evident by reading, "They were all baptized of him *in the river Jordan*."—Mark 1: 5.

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee *to Jordan*, unto John, to be baptized of him."—Matt. 3:

13. "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water."—Acts 8: 36.

These passages show that the person should move *to the water*, not that the water should be taken to the person.

"And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him."—Acts 8: 38.

A scriptural requirement for baptism is entering or going *down into* the water.

"And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip,"—Acts 8: 39. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water."—Matt. 3: 16.

"*Coming up out of the water*" is necessary, according to these passages.

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."—John 3: 5.

He who is baptized must be *born* of water; that is, he must be brought forth from or come out of it. The greater cannot be born of the lesser, so a man cannot be born of a few drops, or a cup, or any small quantity of water. The body of water must be larger than the person to be born of it.

"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. * * * We shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection."—Rom. 6: 4, 5. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him."—Col. 2: 12.

These scriptures make baptism represent the *burial* and *resurrection* of Jesus. To be bap-

tized scripturally, you must be *buried* in water and then *raised from it*.

Scriptural baptism, then, requires water, much water, coming to the water, going down into the water, coming up out of the water; it represents a birth, a burial and a resurrection. Immersion meets every one of these requirements. Sprinkling and pouring meet *one* of these requirements, but *only one*: they require water, but not "much water;" the water is taken to the person instead of the person to the water; the people upon whom water is sprinkled or poured for baptism, do not go "down into the water;" are not "born of water;" are not "buried in baptism;" are not "raised" as from the grave; and do not "come up out of the water." They do not fulfill the requirements of baptism, and hence are not scripturally baptized.

There is "One Lord, one faith, one baptism," (Eph. 4: 5), not two or three baptisms. Immersion is that "one baptism," because it fulfills all requirements. Those who have not been immersed, then, have not been scripturally baptized. Some other thing will not do just as well. Jesus asks, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" He says, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you," and "If a man love me he will keep my words." Paul preached that baptism is a burial and resurrection, and he will permit no man to differ from him, for he says, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that

which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. * * * If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed."—Gal. 1: 8, 9.

Have *you* been baptized? If not, make haste, for "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."—Jas. 4: 17. "And that servant which knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."—Lu. 12: 47.

IV. THE VALUE OF BAPTISM TO PERSONS PROPERLY RECEIVING IT.

Surely it is for some holy purpose when Father, Son and Holy Spirit all honor it, and men are baptized into these sacred names. God is not the Author of empty, meaningless forms. He is a Spirit, and must be worshiped in spirit and truth. The devout reader will surely find that baptism has a spiritual import.

Notice how baptism is coupled with the putting away of sin, union with Christ and our salvation:—

"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."—Mark 1: 4. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."—Mark 16: 16. "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."—John 3: 5. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."—Acts 2: 38. "And now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."—Acts 22: 16. "For as many of you as

have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ."—Gal. 3: 27. * * * "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."—Eph. 5: 25, 26. "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit."—Titus 3: 5. "The like figure whereunto even baptism, doth also now save us."—I Pet. 3: 21.

These scriptures show a close connection between baptism and salvation. Baptism is of great spiritual value when received by a penitent believer in Jesus. Its waters do not wash away sins; they do not put away the filth of the flesh; they do not procure salvation for a man; but if man's heart is so changed that he is determined to turn from the power of Satan unto God and be a new creature in Jesus, baptism secures for him a solemn, formal pledge that God forgives his sins and adopts him as His child.

If your conscience is seeking peace with God, come with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and obey the Lord in this ordinance, for He will have mercy upon you and our God will abundantly pardon, and though your sins are like scarlet, or red as crimson He will make them white as snow.

After being buried with Christ by baptism, be sure that you rise to walk in a new life which will glorify God. Let your conduct be such as becomes a Christian. Observe all things that Jesus has commanded. Be faithful even unto death, and he will give you a crown of life.