

BAPTISM – Essential to Salvation

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Are You Dying to Live?

In posing the question above, it is obvious that we have in mind a different kind of life to that possessed now.

The life we have in mind is eternal life, to be enjoyed in the Kingdom of God to be set up on earth at Christ's return. The Bible teaches:

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

The prospect of eternal life, therefore, is set before us conditionally.

One of the conditions is that we must "die" to obtain it!

There are two ways in which we can understand such an expression. It is sometimes used colloquially to describe an intense desire to obtain the object before one. For example, a person will say: "I am dying for such and such to happen," indicating, by very exaggeration, that life would be unbearable without it.

That use of the expression in relation to eternal life is quite legitimate, for we must develop an intense desire to live for eternity before we will fulfil the conditions necessary to attain to it.

However, that is not the way we are using the expression in the title above.

There is another sense in which one must die to live eternally, and that is to figuratively "die" to much that constitutes "life" now. Unfortunately, that principle is not recognized generally, with the result that most people refuse to walk the path that leads to salvation.

Hence our question: Are *you* dying to life?

This figurative "death" is associated with baptism, for the Bible declares:

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4).

Baptism into death followed by a figurative resurrection to "newness of life" constitutes the way to salvation. What does this signify?

First Step To Salvation

In the compass of this short article, it is impossible for us to provide an exhaustive explanation of every detail relative to this subject, and we suggest that if you are in doubt as to the meaning of anything we herewith set down, that you take the trouble of corresponding with us regarding it.

Firstly, we maintain that the Bible shows that baptism is essential to salvation, and if we are not prepared to humble ourselves and submit to it, we will not be saved, no matter how "pious" we may imagine ourselves to be.

But a knowledge of the basic principles of the Gospel is *first* necessary to make baptism valid.

Consider Christ's commission to his Apostles:

"Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

He taught that belief of the Gospel must precede baptism, and that unbelief will reap condemnation. Elsewhere he further decreed that obedience to his commandments must follow baptism if we would attain unto life (Matthew 28:20).

Belief, baptism and obedience (in that order) are the essential steps to salvation. *"True worshippers,"* taught Jesus, *"worship the Father in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:22). By using the adjective *true*, he clearly implied that there is such a thing as false worship, and that it is found where truth is not upheld.

Salvation is reserved only for those who worship in truth.

Consider these statements:

"This is life eternal, to KNOW Thee, the only true God, and Jews Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

"The gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that BELIEVETH" (Romans 1:16).

"By [the Gospel] ye are saved, IF ye KEEP IN MEMORY what I preached unto you unless ye have believed in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:2).

These references (and they can be multiplied) show that a knowledge of God's revelation to man is absolutely essential to salvation. But this is not generally acknowledged. Few are prepared to search the Scriptures to ascertain the basic principles of Bible teaching as a foundation of acceptable worship before God. Most claim that it is unnecessary. They believe that such knowledge is of little account so long as their "motives" are pure in their own eyes, and they worship God "according to their conscience."

The result is, according to the Bible, that many are perishing *"for lack of knowledge"* (Hosea 4:6).

On the other hand, the Bible teaches that there is but *"one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism"* (Ephesians 4:4-5), that man is *"alienated from the life of God through ignorance"* (Ephesians 4:18), and that in such a state he has *"no hope, and without God in the world"* (Ephesians 2:12).

It is important, therefore, that we put our minds right with God by seeking to understand the saving truths of the Gospel. We plead with the reader to consider his own future in that light.

Can he give a Scriptural definition of what constitutes the Gospel? If not, why not write to us for an explanation of it.

The Next Essential Step

Having come to a clear understanding of the Gospel, what then?

Christ declared: "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*"

But though Christ's statement is clear, many hesitate to take this vital step. Why is that?

Usually because they fail to comprehend its significance, and therefore doubt its importance. They "feel" that it is not of much importance, that the Lord will not hold it against them if they neglect to submit to it, and therefore ignore his specific teaching.

There is no denying that the Lord commanded his Apostles to teach that believers be baptized, and no disputing that, in Apostolic times, all submitted to it. Indeed, Christ himself showed the way. He presented himself to John the Baptist and was baptized of him, even though he had no sins to confess. When John suggested that under those circumstances it seemed unnecessary for Jesus to be baptized, the Lord replied:

"Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15).

If Christ considered it so essential in his case, are we wise to refuse it in our circumstances?

The great Apostle Paul also submitted. He was commanded:

"Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

If Paul considered it necessary to be baptized in order that his sins might be "washed away," why should lesser men resist the command?

Consider also the example of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. The record of his conversion and baptism is contained in Acts 10, and will well repay a reading. He was an outstandingly pious man, even before baptism, and yet was required to submit. The record says of his spiritual state before he was baptized that he was:

"A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway" (Acts 10:2).

Surely such a man was assured of salvation without the need of baptism. But no! He was told to send for Peter, and *"he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do"* (Acts 10:6).

When Peter arrived at the home of Cornelius, he found that he was already familiar with the teaching of the Lord Jesus. Peter declared:

"The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), that word, YE KNOW..." (Acts 10:36-38).

Cornelius already had an understanding of certain truths, and needed little further instruction before he had sufficient knowledge to justify baptism. The account of his conversion closes with the statement that Peter "commanded them to be baptized" (Acts 10:48).

Thus Cornelius was a man whose piety was above doubt, whose motives were sincere and honorable, whose knowledge was sound, who was in the habit of praying regularly, paying alms to the people, and worshipping God according to his light; and yet he was commanded to be baptized!

If such a man as that required baptism to ensure his salvation, what of us?

Notice, however, that before Cornelius was baptized, he was properly instructed in the right doctrine.

What About Infant Christening?

Sometimes, when we press these points home to folk, they protest that they were baptized when, as children, they were christened. But christening (the sprinkling of infants with "holy" water) is quite unscriptural.

Certainly it is no valid substitution for baptism, but is a meaningless rite introduced by an apostate Christendom.

It is contrary to Apostolic practice. The Apostles invariably instructed people in the truth before they were baptized, and in performing the act, believers were placed bodily into water. Thus the Bible speaks of Jesus, at his baptism, coming "*out of the water*" (Matt. 3:16); of John baptizing in Aenon because "*there was much water there*" (John 3:23); of the Ethiopian convert going "*down into the water*" (Acts 8:38). All these expressions show that baptism took the form of bodily immersion.

The very word *baptism* implies this. Concerning it, *The Diaglott* declares:

"Bapto signifies immerse, dip, plunge; no translator has ever ventured to render the words as 'sprinkle' or 'pour' in any version."

It is openly admitted by most church authorities that the custom of baptizing children of tender years was wholly unknown in Apostolic times. Herzog, a well-known Church authority, has written:

"That in the New Testament there is no trace of infant baptism may, for scientific exegesis, be held as established:"

Another authority (Prof. Feine) declares:

"The practice of infant baptism is not to be traced in the Apostolic or immediate post-Apostolic time..."

Infant baptism was first heard of in the days of Tertuilian (about 200 years after Christ). He opposed it vigorously. In a book on Baptism he wrote:

"The Lord did indeed say, Forbid them (i.e. children) not to come unto me (Matt. 19:14). Very well, they may then come when they are grown; they may come when they learn; when they become instructed whither they come. They can become Christians when they can know Christ... Let them first understand to ask for salvation so that it may be granted to them at their request... When one perceives the weightiness of baptism one will fear to reach it too early rather than to postpone it. Only complete faith (which comes by understanding) can be without care (i.e. can give assurance) in regard to salvation."

The rite of infant sprinkling dates back to pagan times. In the religious customs of the Romans the *aqua lustralis* or water of purification played an important part. A newly born girl, on the eighth day after birth, and a boy on the ninth day, underwent a ceremony of purification with this so-called "holy water" in order to protect them against sorcery. It was effected by the child being carried through the house to the household altar and even through the temple.

In *Manual of Roman Antiquities* (Ramsay and Lanciane), it is recorded:

"Boys on the ninth, and girls on the eighth day after birth underwent a religious purification termed 'lustratio', and on this day, which was called 'Dies Lustricus', the former received their 'Proenomen' (nomen accipiebant)."

Proenomen means "first name," in Christendom the *Christian* name, or name given at baptism or christening.

Like so many other pagan ideas and doctrines, this rite of infant baptism was gradually superimposed upon Christian teaching, and became an established ordinance of an apostate church that ultimately fully answered to the description given in the prophetic words of Paul:

"The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lusts they shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3).

The introduction by the church of infant baptism, or christening, and the neglect of adult baptism after an understanding of sound doctrine as an essential step to salvation, helped to fulfil these words of Paul.

But even adult immersion does not necessarily constitute a Scriptural baptism. This is shown by the meaning of the word, for baptism signifies more than immersion. W. E. Vine in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* declares of the word *Baptizo*:

"To baptize, primarily a frequentative form of 'bapto', to dip, was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment..."

Baptism, therefore, defines an act whereby is obtained a change of color or appearance in an article. To dip a piece of cloth into clear water is immersion, but it is not baptism; but to add the dye to the water and then dip the cloth is baptism in the primary signification of the word.

Thus Tertullian translated *baptizio* as *tinge*.

This significant meaning of the word indicates the importance of a true understanding of the fundamental principles of God's revelation, before baptism can be considered valid. The knowledge of the Gospel is equivalent to the dye in the water. It causes a person to view life from the standpoint of God. He comes to water figuratively dyed with the blood of Jesus, and the significance of this changes his life as dye in water will change the color of the cloth that is immersed therein.

On the Day of Pentecost, when the Gospel was first preached in the Name of Jesus, people who had been convinced by the message pleaded with the Apostles, asking: "*What shall we do?*"

The reply was:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:37-38).

The word here translated *repent* signifies to *change one's outlook and way of life*. It is elsewhere described as something that God has granted men that they might have life (Acts 11:18). What induces this change of outlook and new way of life? Not merely baptism, but knowledge: an understanding of the will and purpose of God. Without this there will be no true repentance, no real change (for repentance means much more than to be sorry for sin), and no true baptism.

What if a person has been baptized without adequate understanding? The obvious answer is that he must be re-immersed, and such a case as that is actually reported in Acts 19:1-4. The narrative records how that Paul found certain disciples (see v.1) at Ephesus who had been baptized only into John's baptism. They obviously had some understanding of Jesus, for Paul asked: "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since *ye believed?*" When it was revealed that they had only been baptized into John's baptism, they were re-immersed. Their action provides an example of what should be done when one has been immersed without adequate knowledge.

Baptism As A Symbol Of Death

Baptism is actually a very meaningful ordinance. It is a public testimony on the part of the individual that he is prepared to die to self in order to live unto God. It is a symbol of sacrifice. This is shown by the words of Jesus when He spoke of his impending death. He described this sacrificial death as a "baptism" of suffering, saying:

"I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (Luke 12:50).

His death upon the cross had been pre-figured by his submission to baptism at the hands of John. In doing so, he had testified publicly that he was prepared to submit to the Father's will, even unto death, for baptism is a symbol of death, burial and resurrection. Paul taught:

"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" (Romans 6:4).

When a person is baptized, he figuratively dies, is buried, and is raised again to newness of life.

Thus, he figuratively dies to live!

How incongruous is sprinkling under such circumstances! It would be like sprinkling dust on a dead body and calling it burial! True Baptism demands complete immersion in water.

Baptism, however, symbolizes not merely death, but *sacrificial* death, for Paul teaches:

"KNOW ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized INTO HIS DEATH?" (Romans 6:3).

We see what he means when we consider the death of the Lord.

Jesus died a sacrificial death on the cross. Paul teaches that he *"died unto sin once"* (Romans 6:10). "Sin" is used in this statement as a metonymy for the flesh with its lusts. Jesus never gave way to these. He denied himself in life to do the Father's will, thus *"putting to death"* the *"deeds of flesh"* (Romans 8:13, Colossians 3:5); and his crucifixion was a public dramatization of what men must try to do if they would attain unto salvation. Paul taught that they, too, must become *"dead unto sin"* (Romans 6:2), or, as he declared elsewhere:

"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24).

To crucify the flesh is to deny it the free expression of its lusts, or to so limit personal desire as to do the will of God. The sacrifice of Jesus was a public demonstration of this, showing men that they must die to the flesh and live unto God, if they would be saved.

The first steps to that end are to learn God's will and purpose, and submit to the ordinance of baptism.

There are two aspects to the sacrifice of Jesus. Not only was his flesh crucified, but his blood was shed, or poured out. Whereas flesh crucified implies the denial of its lusts, blood poured out in sacrifice is a symbolic act denoting life dedicated, *"for the life of the flesh is in the blood"* (Leviticus 17:11). The former sets forth a negative sacrifice: the latter a positive one; and both must find reflection in the life of the believer. Not only must he learn to deny personal desires according to the Divine will, but he must also *do* the will of God. That is why the Bible teaches that *"without the shedding of blood [a dedication of life] there is no remission of sin"* (Hebrews 9:22).

We make figurative contact with the blood of Jesus by baptism, for true baptism is *"into his death"* (Romans 6:3).

The significance of this is shown by animal sacrifice under the Mosaic Law. This was prophetic of the Lord's offering. Sin demands sacrifice. The worshipper had to ritually show that he was conscious of sin, desired forgiveness, and wanted to make amends. In illustration of this, an animal without blemish was selected, and presented to the priest. The sinner placed his hand on the head of the animal and made confession of his sin, at the same time praying for forgiveness. The animal was then slain (showing that mortal flesh is rightly related to death), and its blood poured out (implying that life should be dedicated to doing God's will). By this ritual the worshipper acknowledged what should be done. As the animal was slain, so he should deny the flesh to do the will of God; as its blood was poured out, so he should dedicate his life to obedience, as he continually failed, so he pleaded forgiveness on the basis of the sacrifice that God would provide, and which was ritually expressed in the slain animal before him.

But there was a hopelessness about this offering under the Law that emphasized the inability of "*the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin*" (Hebrews 10:4). The animal remained dead and this symbolized the hopeless condition of the Israelite who put his confidence in such a sacrifice without faith to comprehend that it was but a type pointing forward to the Redeemer who should come.

How different was the offering of the Lord Jesus! He not only died for the sins of humanity, but also rose from the dead. And so Paul again teaches:

"He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). *"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death (i.e. through baptism), we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection"* (Romans 6:5).

That fact expresses the glorious hope of salvation. But notice that Paul limits this privilege to those who "*were baptized into the death*" of Jesus (Romans 6:3). Those who are so baptized, and learn thus to deny themselves in order to serve God, are assured of a resurrection to life eternal at the coming of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:23).

They die to the flesh in hope of living eternally.

Jesus Fulfilled The Type

Jesus is described as "*the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). As such, he was the antitype of the offerings under the Law of Moses. As they had to be without blemish, so, in character, was he. His nature was identical with that of all mankind, but he triumphed over it, in that he never gave way to its weakness. Strengthened by God (Psalm 80:17), he brought all its desires into captivity to the will of God. Paul taught:

"We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

Yet, in spite of his sinless life, the Lord was required to lay it down in a sacrificial death!

Why was that?

He was teaching that men must die to the flesh if they would live eternally.

Baptism is a public acknowledgement of this. It is a demonstration on the part of the believer that the flesh profits nothing, and that its desires must be denied, or modified, in accordance with the will of God. He comes to the waters of baptism with a consciousness of sins enlivened in him by his knowledge of God's will and purpose; he passes under the water and his past sins are "covered over," "washed away" or forgiven; he rises therefrom a new creature in Christ Jesus; he commences a new life with the realization that he can, through the Lord, derive strength to conquer (Philippians 4:13), and that he has access to the Father for the forgiveness of sins. He now lives in communion with God, and in constant awareness of Him.

A Covering in Christ

The vital need of baptism is illustrated by the record of what took place when sin first entered the world. At that moment of disgrace and fear, Adam and Eve recognized their nakedness, and attempted to provide a man-made device to hide it (Genesis 3:7). Now nakedness is representative of a state of sin (Revelation 16:15), and God deemed that their man-made covering was insufficient to blot out sin. He therefore stripped them of it, and provided a covering of His own, from a lamb slain for that purpose (Genesis 3:21). That was "*the lamb slain from the foundation of the world*" (Revelation 13:8), foreshadowing "*the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29), even Christ Jesus.

As Adam and Eve were covered with the covering provided by God, so we must "put on" Christ. Baptism is the means divinely appointed:

"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..." (Galatians 3:26).

Paul limited those "in Christ" to "*as many of you as have been baptized*". That indicates the importance of the ordinance. A person "in Christ" has a mediator through whom he can approach God in prayer (1 Timothy 2:5), and continue to receive forgiveness of sins (1 John 1:9). As this is only efficacious when sought "in Christ's name" (John 14:13), and as we can only take on Christ's name through baptism, so baptism is absolutely essential to salvation.

A believer who refuses baptism is like Adam after transgression – naked in sin; a person who has been sprinkled, or immersed, but not Scripturally baptized, is like Adam with his fig-leaf device – unacceptable to God; a man of faith who has been baptized properly is like Adam when his nakedness had been covered by God – elevated to a condition of favor by having his sins forgiven.

Baptism into Christ, therefore, accomplishes three things:

1. It provides a cover which blots out past sins by forgiveness;
2. It inducts one into Christ Jesus providing a basis of fellowship with God;
3. It provides a means of access to the divine throne of mercy ensuring the continued forgiveness of sins after baptism, when such are confessed and forsaken.

The baptismal formula given in Matthew 28:19 expresses a beautiful truth which the believer must try and transmit into action. It is: "*Baptize in [or into] the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*"

The Name of the Father was revealed by the Son in that he manifested divine characteristics (see John 17:6, 11, 26). This was through strength derived from the power of the Spirit by which he was begotten (Luke 1:35), and which directed his mind towards the Word (Isaiah 11:1-2). Thus the Name of the Father was manifested by the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is by the Spirit Word that the believer is empowered to spiritual life (John 6:63). God was manifested in Christ to the fullest extent, so that in thought, word and deed, he reflected the will of his Father. That ideal now is set before us (Acts 15:14, 1 Thessalonians 1:1) though, through weakness, we never attain unto it fully.

Were All Baptized?

In refutation of our claim that baptism is essential for salvation, it is sometimes urged that the repentant thief upon the cross received assurance of forgiveness without having been baptized (Luke 23:39-43).

That, however, can only be urged on the grounds that his baptism is not specifically stated.

Are we to infer, therefore, that he was not baptized? Far from it.

It is recorded that vast crowds were baptized by John and even greater numbers by the disciples of the Lord (Matthew 3:5-6, John 4:1-2). It is also obvious that the thief had heard of Jesus before he was impaled upon the cross, and, doubtless, had been previously baptized. His crime was probably a minor one, if it was not a complete miscarriage of justice as in the case of Jesus.

Was the baptism of John valid in such a case? Certainly it was if the one baptized "*believed on him which should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus*" (Acts 19:4). John's baptism was remarkable, not because baptism then was something new, but because he called upon Israelites to be baptized. Actually, all Israel had been nationally baptized "into Moses" by the people passing through the waters of the Red Sea when escaping from Egypt (1 Corinthians 10:2). After this, a believing Gentile, desiring to embrace the hope of Israel, was required to be baptized.

But John called upon Jews to be baptized "*believing in him who would come after him, that is on Christ Jesus*" (Acts 19:4). His baptism was anticipatory of that accomplished through Christ's offering; whereas baptism today is commemorative of it. Both are valid according to their times and circumstances.

A Change Of Allegiance

In Romans 6, Paul shows that man is naturally under the dominance of what he calls "sin" (a metonymy for the flesh with its lusts), and he personifies it as a Monarch reigning over the

sphere of death (Romans 5:21). Opposed to this Monarch is another Ruler, which he styles Grace (or divine favor) which reigns through righteousness (or justification) unto eternal life by Jesus Christ.

He stresses the urgency that we should change our allegiance from King Sin to King Favor; for the wage of the former is death, whereas the gift of the latter is life eternal through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23).

Baptism, the first act of obedience, is the means provided for us to change our allegiance. Paul describes the act as "*obeying from the heart that form of doctrine delivered unto you*" (Romans 6:17). Baptism is an outward manifestation of an inward knowledge and cleansing of the intellect, and through it, the believer crosses over from the path of death to that of life.

Paul makes the appeal:

"Let not sin [the flesh with its unbridled desires] reign [as a king] in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments [lit. weapons – see margin] of unrighteousness unto [King] Sin; but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments [weapons] of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:12-13).

This is a telling figure of speech. The Apostle is showing, that under normal conditions, mankind uses the attributes of the body – thought, sight, speech, feeling and so forth, as weapons of unrighteousness in the cause of King Sin, by fulfilling the desires of the flesh; but having changed allegiance to Christ, those same weapons can be used in a warfare in his service.

Later, in the same chapter (verses 16-18), he changes the analogy. He contrasts Sin (the flesh with its lusts) and Righteousness as two slave-owners to whom people are in servitude: they are either serving Self or God!

By obeying the demands of the flesh irrespective as to the will of God, men show that they are servants (Greek bond-slaves) to it; but in the death of Jesus, God paid the price of release, and those who submit to baptism are represented as having been purchased by God from the slave-owner Sin (1 Corinthians 7:23; 6:20).

The flesh pays wages (what a person earns), and that is death; but God offers the gift of life eternal (Romans 6:23). It is a gift for we cannot earn it. But though we cannot earn it in the sense that we cannot pay the price commensurate to its value, God has set down conditions upon which alone His gift will be made. They constitute the three steps to salvation: belief, baptism, obedience.

A person Scripturally baptized is purchased by the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-9), and therefore obligated to fulfil his will. Paul wrote:

"But now being made free from sin [the slave-owner], and become servants [slaves] to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:22-23).

A slave of Sin (the flesh with its lusts) is one who obeys its will, and is governed by its thought-promptings. He believes the flesh which tells him that it is not necessary for salvation to come to a proper understanding of the purpose of God and submit to baptism.

On the other hand, a servant or slave of God is one who seeks to understand and obey Him. He will heed the message of Jesus Christ to "*believe the Gospel and be baptized,*" and in doing so will demonstrate that he, like Jesus, is ready to subordinate his own will to that of the Father in heaven.

Save Yourself From This Untoward Generation

God asks so little of us, but gives so much in return. Of that little, he requires of us that we understand and believe the Gospel, and submitting to baptism, commence a new life of service unto Him.

The reward for so doing is life eternal upon earth at Christ's coming. The signs of fulfilling prophecy indicate that that time is near at hand. A crisis is impending that will sweep present civilization into oblivion, and replace it with the Kingdom of God.

Then God will reward with life eternal those who have obeyed His will.

Jesus warned of these days of crisis. He declared: "*As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man*" (Matthew 24:37). The days of Noah (Genesis 6) were noted for widespread rejection of divine principles, for increasing violence and immorality. Similar conditions exist today. Moreover, as in the days of Noah so today: men are indifferent to the impending crisis and appeal of God, and but few are prepared to heed the Word, and by a sane approach to its requirements, place themselves and their families in the way to salvation.

At the direction of God, Noah built an ark of refuge in which he and his family sheltered. The Scripture likens this to baptism:

"The long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh [i.e., it does not change us physically, we still sin!] but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:20-21).

The water saved Noah because it lifted him in the ark high above the destruction that swept the world of the ungodly at that time. That is true also of baptism into Christ. It will help to save us in a time of crisis. Christ is to return to this earth to rid it of wickedness, at which time we shall obtain salvation, if we are found sheltering in the ark that he provides.

Baptism is the divinely appointed means of entrance into that symbolic "ark of refuge."

When the people on the day of Pentecost asked the Apostle what they should do in view of his preaching of the Gospel, Peter replied: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation"

(Acts 2:40). More, he showed them how to do it: by believing the Gospel of repentance, and being "*baptized for the remission of sins*" (v.38).

We appeal to you, dear reader, to carefully consider the advice of Peter and act upon it.

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