

Basic Bible Doctrines

In this book the author presents the major doctrines of the Bible In a basic and concise way from a Pauline perspective.

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Day of Grace Ministries, Inc. Is a not-for-profit corporation organized In 1990. Its purpose Is to spread the gospel of the grace of God so that all men might have the opportunity to "be saved and come unto a [full] knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

Day of Grace Ministries, Inc. Publishers

11118E 675N

West Lafayette, IN 47906-8004

Preface

Do we really need another book on Bible doctrine? What about all the other books on doctrine; aren't they good enough? I could easily answer these two questions by simply saying that *Basic Bible Doctrines* approaches Bible doctrine from a Pauline perspective. This means that Paul's words in Romans 11:13 are taken literally. "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office." Paul is the Apostle of God for this dispensation of grace, and that makes Paul's Epistles the key that unlocks the rest of Scripture. All Scripture must now be interpreted in light of the Pauline revelation—the revelation given to him by the risen, glorified Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's writings are the only place in the Bible where we can read about this present dispensation of grace—the interim between the stoning of Stephen and the coming time of Jacob's trouble. Yes, we do need another book on doctrine.

There is a continuing need for exposition and proclamation of the truths of Scripture. To expand our understandings of the great truths of the Word of God is what I have endeavored to do, I trust with God's help. I have sought to present the basic doctrines of the Bible in a concise and yet thorough way according the light and help God has given. May it not be the last such book written or read to gain further understanding of the Word of God.

To that end, may the volume itself draw you closer to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God, the Father, in your knowledge and appreciation of Him. May it result in a living testimony to Him, in accordance with the revelation so wonderfully committed to us.

Donald Webb

January 1996

Chapter 11

Baptism

Perhaps no other doctrine has caused so much division and contention within the ranks of fundamentalists as the subject of *baptism*. Even among the many denominations there is great disagreement as to many details in the administration of this ceremony.

The confusion is not with the clarity of the subject in the Word of God; it is with the failure of many believers to recognize both the meaning of the word in Scripture and the *right division* of Scripture on this subject.

We of the “grace movement” are certainly in the minority when it comes to the stand consistent with the Pauline revelation for us today: Israel’s water baptism has *no place* in this present dispensation of grace.

Our stand has caused many to “turn us off,” so to speak, and to be unwilling to hear what we believe the Scriptures teach on this subject. We believe this subject is of utmost importance to believers today.

The Pauline Epistles have much to say about the importance of believers’ baptism. We do believe in baptism. However, we believe in a specific baptism that is unique to this dispensation of grace—one that has nothing to do with a water ceremony.

We believe that water baptism had distinctly to do with Israel’s kingdom program, which is not the program God is administering today. This then becomes the major bone of contention between us and all the baptizing denominations.

We will cover our study of this subject in four basic points:

- The word *baptism*
- Israel’s water baptisms
- Baptism under grace
- Common objections to our view

THE WORD *BAPTISM*

First, let us look at the word itself. The word *baptism* in our English Bibles is what is called a *transliteration*. This means that in many of its occurrences the word has been brought over from the Greek by letter equivalents only and has not actually been translated. A *translation* is when a word is brought from one language into another *by its meaning*. Therefore, the word *baptism* has not really been translated so that the basic meaning is clear.

In the Greek the word *baptize* is *baptizo*. It is a form of the primary verb *bapto*. *Bapto* means *to dip*, but usually means a *temporary condition*—that is, to dip and then to take out again. *Baptizo* means to *immerse permanently*; this is a *permanent change*. It means a *thorough identification*—to be thoroughly identified with something so as to completely

change it. Therefore, while *bapto* and *baptizo* are related verbs, they do not share the exact same meaning.

The word *baptism* is *baptisma* (a neuter word). The masculine of *baptisma* is *baptismos*. This word *baptismos* is translated *washings* three times in the New Testament.

Bapto is found only three times in the New Testament and is translated *dip* each time (Luke 16:24; John 13:26; Revelation 19:13).

Baptizo is transliterated *baptize* 76 times. It is translated *wash* in Mark 7:4 and Luke 11:38.

The primary meaning, therefore, of the word *baptism* is *thorough identification—so as to completely and permanently change something's character and condition*. We will seek to show conclusively from Scripture that this is an accurate definition.

There are at least twelve different baptisms mentioned in Scripture. Of these twelve, only five involve water. These twelve baptisms fall into approximately five different groups or categories:

- *Water baptisms*, as in Mark 1:4
- *Death baptism*, as in Luke 12:50 and Romans 6:3
- *Fire baptism*, as in Matthew 3:11
- *Spirit baptism*, which itself has two categories: one in Acts 1:5 and the other in 1 Corinthians 12:13
- *National identity baptism*, in 1 Corinthians 10:1–4

We will say a word about each of these, but for the point of definition, we want to look first at two references in particular.

But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I constrained till it be accomplished (Luke 12:50)!

Here, as the Lord spoke to His disciples, He spoke of an event which He called a *baptism* that was future to that present time. This, of course, cannot be a reference to a *water baptism* for Christ had already been baptized by John over a year previous to this account. The Lord was clearly referring to the future day of His death on the cross.

He said that until that day He was constrained or restricted in the sense that the work which He came to accomplish (the fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers and the establishment of the kingdom) depended upon the work of the cross being completed. The main point here for our study, however, is that the word *baptism* is used to describe an event that had nothing to do with water. It was clearly a *death baptism*.

What this means is that Christ was to taste death for every man. He literally was going to be identified with death. He was going to die for our sins. That this baptism was gloriously accomplished is the whole focal point of the Scriptures.

Christ was cut off from the land of the living. He was baptized or placed into death and gloriously raised again the third day. This reference alone is enough to demonstrate the true meaning of the word *baptism*, but let us look at another reference that is equally revealing. In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul delivered a series of exhortations about godly living,

and he made an example of the nation Israel when they were in the wilderness and sinned against God. He started the chapter in a very interesting way:

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual food; And did all drink the same spiritual drink... (1 Corinthians 10:1–4).

The main point of these verses is that the nation Israel, at this time, enjoyed a number of blessings from God. These were blessings that should have caused them to yield their hearts to God in joyous obedience. But the record goes on to show differently:

But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:5).

In other words, because of their murmuring and disobedience (which happened in spite of their blessings), God was displeased and had to judge them—not once, but many times during their wilderness journey.

Let us look at just what these blessings were in relation to this word *baptism*. Verse 1 says that they were all under the cloud. This cloud represented God's presence and daily guidance. Then the verse says that they all passed through the sea. This means that they all experienced God's mighty deliverance which was a blessing. The verse says they were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Moses was God's spokesman among the people, and he represented the Word of God in their midst.

Many miraculous signs had been given through Moses to verify that God's promises of deliverance were true and sure. This verse is telling us that the whole nation was *baptized* or *identified* with this man, his leadership, and the blessing he represented. This cannot be a reference to any *water ceremony*. It says they were baptized unto Moses, that is, *identified with or fully placed into* what Moses represented. They were identified with God's promises through him. The reality of this was *in the cloud* (that is, in the blessing and vindication that the cloud was to them) and *in the sea* (the blessing of deliverance that the sea was to them).

As to the thought of water here, recall from the Book of Exodus that it says the Israelites went through the sea on *dry ground* (Exodus 14:16,22). Indeed, it was the *Egyptians*, not the Israelites, that got wet (they drowned).

Though this reference may seem obscure, it is a perfectly accurate use of the word *baptism* according to its true meaning. *Baptism* is something that most believers have wrongly taken to mean only one thing—a ceremonial *water baptism*.

Paul's overall analogy here is that even though Israel had so many blessings, they did not appreciate them and, therefore, sinned and lived in disobedience. The Corinthians, too, were exceedingly blessed by God. In fact, they had been blessed in a way that far exceeded how Israel had been blessed in the wilderness. Yet, as we read the record of this Epistle, the Corinthians had been living in sin and dishonoring the Lord with their lives.

Paul warned them (and us) that God does not permit this kind of indifference to His blessing and that He is prepared to chasten believers for their disobedience. This exhortation is fitting to us all for we know of God's displeasure with sin in our lives. In

light of the wonderful spiritual blessings we have in Christ, it behooves us to live worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1,2).

We want to look at two examples in Matthew of the use of the word *baptism* that vindicate the definition of *identification*:

I, indeed, baptize you with water unto repentance, but He that cometh after Me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire (Matthew 3:11).

In this verse John is the baptizer, and he baptized them with water. But He tells them that they will be baptized by Christ at a later time and that He will baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire. These two baptisms were obviously not with water nor were they a ceremony at all. The Spirit baptism is when they would be identified with the Holy Spirit's ministry in Acts, and the manifestation of that identification was at Pentecost when they received the power of the Holy Spirit.

As to the baptism of *fire*, this is not the gift of tongues as some have thought but rather is when the nation Israel will be identified with or *placed into* the fire of God's wrath in the great tribulation. We trust that the basic meaning of this word is becoming increasingly clear. We are now going to take this definition and show how it sheds light on the other baptisms of Scripture.

ISRAEL'S WATER BAPTISMS

We continue to maintain that the primary meaning of *baptism* is that of *identification*. The Scriptures nowhere present or even suggest that baptism for Israel was a picture of burial or death, or that the Jews ever looked at it that way.

We do understand and teach that Israel's commanded baptism *was* a water ceremony. However, we believe that this ceremony represented a particular identification that was by no means new or different to them. In Mark we read:

John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4).

John 1:31 also says:

And I knew Him not; but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water (John 1:31).

John's ministry was to manifest Christ—the Messiah—to Israel and to make straight the path for His coming. John prepared the way for Christ to be revealed by baptizing Jews unto repentance for the remission of sins.

It is interesting to note several points here. John did not just baptize as he preached—he *preached* baptism. This means that for one to be prepared for the coming of Christ that one *had* to be baptized—it was not an option.

One verse that helps illustrate this is:

But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized by him (Luke 7:30).

As this verse indicates, a failure to submit to water baptism was a failure to receive the message of Christ. Someone has said that for the Jews water baptism was the door of faith into the kingdom. This statement is true.

We do not believe that the water itself actually saved anyone. Being baptized was an expression of faith in the message of the coming Christ and His kingdom. But as we have already read, water baptism was for the remission of sins. We believe this means that it was absolutely mandatory for the Jews to be baptized for the remission of sins, as a *ceremonial cleansing* from sins, *identifying them with their rational priesthood*. This particular fact, that baptism represented a ceremonial cleansing, is very important, and it is the key to understanding the whole significance of baptism in that kingdom program.

We mentioned before that baptism was not a new concept for the Jews. The reason for this is that their religious system was full of baptisms:

Which stood only in foods and drinks, and various washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation (Hebrews 9:10).

The word *washings* here is the word *baptisms*. The law of Moses contained many ceremonial baptisms of both people and inanimate objects. This was for sanctification—to set them apart for a particular reason. *Cleansing* unto identification is always in view.

The most important Jewish baptism of all was one that made it possible for a Levite to minister in the priest's office. This is the baptism that we will examine next. In Exodus 30:17–21 God gave Moses instructions to give to the children of Israel concerning a particular article of furniture in the tabernacle and its use. This article was called a *laver*, and it was like a basin that had water in it. It was for a particular use by the priests. According to verses 19 and 20, it was extremely important for them to use it as they were instructed. Beginning with verse 19 it says:

For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat. When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not... (Exodus 30:19–21).

Here is the first mention of Israel's water baptism. It was a ceremonial cleansing of the hands and the feet to prepare them to minister as priests. Without this cleansing there was no way that the individual could minister as a priest. Upon entering the holy place in an unsanctified condition, the priest would immediately die.

Thus, cleansing of the priests was common for the Jews, and it was a continual practice day after day. The tremendous significance of this in relation to the water ceremony commanded of the nation Israel is found in Exodus:

Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine: And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel (Exodus 19:5,6).

This promise that the nation Israel would be a kingdom of priests is of major importance to the prophetic kingdom program. This was one of the main promises that

the Jews were looking forward to all through their history. Of course, under the First Covenant (the law of Moses), Israel was unable to attain to this position of blessing. Under this covenant the priesthood was restricted to one family (the family of Aaron) in the tribe of Levi.

But God's promises to this nation were not to be fulfilled by the works of the law. It is under the terms of the New Covenant that all of God's glorious promises to them will be fulfilled. Thus we find in Hebrews 7–8 that once the covenant had changed so did the priesthood.

After the inauguration of the New Covenant at the cross, Christ took His position as the High Priest of a new priesthood, which was not after the tribe of Levi but after the order of Melchizedek. This is why Peter said, as he wrote to the dispersed Jewish believers:

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people of His own... (1 Peter 2:9).

This was one of the nation Israel's blessings under the New Covenant. They received it by accepting Christ as their Messiah and by believing the gospel of the kingdom. The believing Jews became a *kingdom of priests* with the Lord Himself as their great High Priest. However, like the priests of old, they had to be ceremonially washed before they were identified with their priesthood.

We believe that this is precisely the reason for, and the significance of, water baptism under Israel's prophetic kingdom program. This is why it could not be optional. For a Jew to refuse water baptism was for him to say "no" to the good news that Jesus was the Christ and that the kingdom was at hand. This is why John *preached* baptism. He was not just saying come and join the church; he was preparing the Jews to be a kingdom of priests because the kingdom of heaven was at hand!

Water baptism was in effect as long as God was ministering the kingdom program to the nation Israel. Furthermore, water baptism never ceased to be that ceremonial cleansing which identified the Jews with their national priesthood. Even in the Book of Acts after the Lord's ascension, when the Twelve went out under the kingdom commission, baptism still had this same significance. There we read:

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 ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

The kingdom gospel was still being preached to the Jew first, and the kingdom church was still being built. These Jews were being commanded to submit to that cleansing that would acknowledge their acceptance of the risen Lord as their Messiah. This would identify them with their national priesthood. This is one of the primary differences between the kingdom calling and our calling and hope in the Body of Christ.

We are not a royal priesthood but members of His Body, and He is not our High Priest but our risen, glorified Head. Today, God is not ministering the kingdom program but is ministering His secret program—the dispensation of grace. This is why we believe that the command of Christ to water baptize does not apply to this dispensation of grace.

As to the mode of Israel's water baptism, God has told us already in Exodus that it was a *washing* and *not* a burial. They did not get into the laver but no doubt stood in front of it and simply sprinkled the water on their hands and feet. In Ezekiel 36 we have an interesting verification of this, where the Lord speaks concerning His future regathering of the nation Israel into their own land as the millennial kingdom is established. Here we read:

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you (Ezekiel 36:25).

We believe that sprinkling the water on the hands and the feet was the scriptural method of administering water baptism. This also shows that it signified *a cleansing* and was not a picture of death in any sense. This is also brought out when Saul (Paul) was baptized in accordance with the kingdom program:

And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16).

W-A-S-H does not spell *bury!* We must insist that the view that water baptism was a picture of death or a burial in water is none other than a wrong correlation of Jewish baptism with such passages in the Pauline Epistles as Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27. The present practice of water baptism is no doubt a failure to follow the Lord's instructions to us through our Apostle—Paul (1 Corinthians 1:17)—and a complete misunderstanding of the meaning of the word *baptism* itself in relation to Romans 6:3,4.

BAPTISM UNDER GRACE

As we turn to the Pauline Epistles, we are going to notice a striking reference concerning *water baptism*:

For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect (1 Corinthians 1:17).

One important point should be made at the outset. Paul, *as an apostle of Christ*, says that he was *not* sent to baptize. It would have been absolutely *impossible* for any of the other Apostles to have said these words in light of the kingdom commission! Under that commission baptism was *part* of the gospel. They *had* to preach baptism. But here we see an Apostle who was sent to preach a gospel but *not* to baptize. This is because he did not preach the kingdom gospel but the gospel for a new dispensation—the gospel of reconciliation. Is it not obvious that he did *not* minister the same program as the Twelve? We believe it is obvious, and not just from this passage, but indeed this passage verifies that something has changed.

If we begin with this scriptural premise, that we are not under the kingdom program and that Paul's commission did not include water baptism, then we will begin to see the wonderful truth that the *one baptism* for today is that *Spirit* baptism into the Body of Christ. The one baptism we speak of is found in Ephesians 4:5, where we read that there is *one Lord, one faith, and one baptism*. This context is significant in that the *one baptism* here is one of the seven unities of the Spirit that we of this dispensation are to endeavor to

guard. These are the doctrinal truths that we are to uphold for the edification and doctrinal stability of the Body of Christ.

We should notice that all seven are *spiritual* in nature and involve our positional blessings in Christ. Would it not seem strange to find *one* of these seven referring to a physical ceremony? It would indeed, and the truth is that this baptism, too, is a spiritual blessing and has to do with our identification with the Body of Christ. This is when we were placed into Christ and partook of all the blessings of this passage.

There is *one body*, in which we are all united; *one Spirit*, which indwells all of us; *one hope of our calling*, at which the whole Body will be caught up to glory; *one Lord*, our risen, glorified Head; *one faith*, that body of truth that unites all believers in this program of grace; *one baptism*, which is the one divine means of entrance into this position in Christ; and *one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all and (because of this divine baptism) is in you all*.

The interrelation of each of these blessings one with another shows us that they are all part of a unique program for this dispensation of grace.

As to further clarification of just what this one spiritual baptism is, we quote again 1 Corinthians 12:13:

For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks [Gentiles], whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

This verse speaks of the agency¹ of the Holy Spirit as the *baptizer*, baptizing or, as we know this word means, thoroughly identifying us with the Body of Christ. This identification means we were actually placed into the Body of Christ. Turning to Romans we learn that this means we were identified with His death:

Know ye not that, as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death (Romans 6:3)?

Verse 4 continues:

Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that 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).

Verse 5 actually gives us the Holy Spirit's confirmation of the meaning of this word *baptism* by using a phrase that is an exact equivalent:

For if we have been planted together [this is the phrase that means the same thing as the word baptism] in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection (Romans 6:5).

¹ At Pentecost, it is the Lord Jesus who did the baptizing. *He* was the *baptizer*, and He baptized them *with* the Holy Spirit, or with the *power* of the Holy Spirit. Today, the *Holy Spirit* is the *baptizer*, and He places us into Christ upon believing. Water baptism has never been a type of Spirit baptism (or a type of death), whether Israel's baptism *with* the spirit or our baptism *by* the Spirit.

Colossians 2:12 is also an important verse on this subject. Here we learn two important aspects of this baptism:

Buried with Him in baptism, in which also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead (Colossians 2:12).

This phrase, *buried with Him in baptism*, means *buried with Him in identification with death*, literally, *placed into His death and burial*. This baptism is part of our threefold completeness in Christ. Verse 11 refers to our death with Christ by the word *circumcised*. Verse 12 refers to our burial and resurrection with Christ.

We also learn that this whole operation—our death, burial, and resurrection—was the *operation of God*—not of any clergyman! Furthermore, this baptism must have taken place *at the moment of salvation*, because verse 13 declares that this is when we were quickened together or made alive together with Him. This is the moment of spiritual regeneration of which Titus 3:5 speaks so clearly.

When we were planted in the likeness of His death is something that Scripture makes perfectly clear. It was at the moment of salvation—the moment we believed the gospel we were identified with Christ. This is when we were placed into Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit—all in one glorious instant.

This is something with which most fundamental Christians, including most Baptists, will agree. Most who hold to water baptism today do not believe that it is necessary for salvation. Nonetheless, the reasons men water baptize today are *unscriptural ones*—which were not even correct when water baptism was a part of God's program. Water baptism has never been a type of Spirit baptism, or a type of death, or a simple public testimony!

In this dispensation we are to guard the one baptism because of the glorious calling it represents, and we are to make a clear distinction between it and water baptism which represents the kingdom calling. There is only one baptism in this dispensation of grace and to add water would make *two* baptisms, which would be unscriptural. This would only confuse the truth for this present dispensation.

OUR IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST

Know ye not that, as 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).

The glory of our one baptism is seen as we realize it is this baptism that saves—the baptism that identifies (unites) us with Christ. This is a twofold blessing that demands our respect. Our salvation brings with it our victory over the penalty and power of sin—free from sin's dominion! Yes, free to live for Him—free to serve in newness of life—free to reckon the flesh dead indeed unto sin! Is this your view of baptism? I trust that it is—and more!

The second aspect of the glory of the one baptism is our relation to *one another*—we have been placed into Christ, into *one Body*!

For ye are all the sons 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 (Galatians 3:26–28).

The further practical truth of our baptism today is that it has to do with a unique oneness or unity that every believer has with one another. In this passage, we should think of verse 27 in this way:

For as many of you as have been baptized into [placed into] Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27).

Verse 26 tells us that we are sons of God by faith. We did not obtain this position by the law or by our works but rather by faith. Verse 27 then says that as many as have been identified with Christ have *put on Christ*. He is now our Head, and in Him we all have a new identity. All human class, nationality, and legalistic distinctions are gone. *Now* there is neither Jew nor Greek. Under the law there most certainly was Jew and Greek. *Now* there is no more bond or free, but under the law there was bond and free. *Now* there is neither male nor female, but under the law there were ceremonial rules to be maintained.

Because of the one divine baptism in this dispensation of grace, all who have placed their faith in the risen Christ as Savior and Lord have been placed into one Body. No one individual is more needed than the other. No one is more important than the other. No one is higher than the other. All are members one of another, each with his own particular function. Each is dependent on the other, each rejoicing alike—not in what we have done, but in *Him* our glorified Lord, the Head of the Body.

This is the true glory of our *one baptism*. This is the reason that each day we must guard the precious truth for which it stands. Never can we allow our *one baptism* to be reduced to an unscriptural, water ceremony. That would only veil the true work of God in this dispensation of grace—our identification with Christ and precious oneness and co-equality as members of the Body of Christ. Ephesians 2:14–18 directly speaks of this truth:

And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby (Ephesians 2:16).

This is what the one baptism is all about—our glorious identification with Christ. We are free from sin's dominion and penalty. We are one with each other as members of His Body. Our directive is to protect that truth, to proclaim it, and to glory in it lest it be nullified. We must guard it lest the members of the Body fail to appreciate their unity and lest the brethren are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. It is time that we realized the daily practicality of this precious truth, rejoicing as we conduct ourselves in the Body. We must humble ourselves before the Lord and one another, respecting one other, not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought, but remembering that we are all *one in Christ*.

We must never feel that we are making a needless issue in speaking against water baptism in this dispensation and in proclaiming these glorious aspects of our true baptism. We must speak against that which is unscriptural and does not edify the Body. Indeed, when put in this perspective, we have said far too little. We have been

intimidated into silencing our lips from proclaiming and teaching what is one of the greatest truths, both doctrinally and practically, of any dispensation—the one baptism!

COMMON OBJECTIONS TO OUR VIEW

One of the first objections to our view is that the Lord commanded water baptism:

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. Amen (Matthew 28:19,20).

This commission involves not this dispensation of grace but the dispensation of the kingdom. The Lord not only commands water baptism but *all things whatsoever He had commanded them*. This involves the whole gospel and walk of the kingdom program. It quite simply does not apply to the Body of Christ. This is exactly the commission that Peter was fulfilling in Acts 2:38 when he said, "...Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins..." The great majority of those who baptize today do not say what Peter said and, therefore, are not really following the Lord's commission here in Matthew at all.

This baptism was mandatory, and it was for the remission of sins. It was only *part* of the kingdom message that the Twelve were sent out to preach. This is precisely the verse that should be compared with 1 Corinthians 1:17, where our Apostle shows that he was not operating under the same commission. The other comparison that we should make then is with Romans 6:3 and Luke 12:50. There it will be seen that *our* baptism is an identification with the death of Christ and that the Lord Himself used the word without reference to water!

Another objection to our view is that since Christ was baptized we should want to follow Him in baptism. In Matthew 3:13–17 we have the account of the Lord's baptism:

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized by him. But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Permit it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he consented to Him (Matthew 3:13–15).

The main reason that Christ was baptized here is that it was part of the kingdom program. That alone should be reason enough why we would not seek to do it. The question here is: Why did the Lord submit to this sinner's baptism? The answer will show that it would be impossible for anyone to follow the Lord in baptism:

...Permit it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness... (Matthew 3:15).

John's dismay at the Lord coming to Him to be baptized was justified because this was a sinner's baptism and the Lord Jesus had no sin. But the Lord said that allowing it would fulfill all righteousness. The righteousness or *rightness* of Christ being baptized as a sinner seems obscure until we realize that it was according to God's righteous plan that Christ should bear the sins of the world.

Here He was quite simply being numbered with the transgressors, as it says in Isaiah 53. He was being identified with sinful man that He might become the sin bearer and die for our sins. If He had not submitted, He could not have been the sacrificial lamb that was substituted (by identification), and God could not have righteously forgiven our sins. We are reminded in this regard of Romans, where it says:

To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (Romans 3:26).

God was *just* in the way that He provided for the justification of the sinner through faith. Thus, the Lord's baptism was unique and could not actually be followed by anyone.

Another objection raised is that Paul also baptized. This introduces the concept of so-called *Christian baptism*—the teaching that baptism evolved from a Jewish baptism to a Christian baptism, which was not for the remission of sins but rather an outward sign of an inward faith.

But water baptism quite simply was never *Christianized* and reduced to a mere public testimony of inner faith. Under this false notion believers today think that baptism was not mandatory for salvation, may be submitted to any time after believing the gospel, and even administered more than once in a believer's life. But the Scriptures never teach any of these premises! Water baptism was never separate from the Jewish kingdom program. The reason that Paul baptized was that during the transition period recorded in the Book of Acts, God ushered in a new program through Paul and increasingly diminished the Jewish kingdom program. Every aspect of the kingdom program ceased by the end of the Acts ministry. While Paul never ministered the kingdom program, God permitted certain things to continue as a provocation to the Jews until God was ready for those things to pass away.

As 1 Corinthians 1:17 records, water baptism was one of the first things that Paul recognized had been removed from the present dispensation of grace. Acts 19:1–7 is commonly believed to be the first Christian baptism because it is believed that Paul re-baptized these saints in this new dispensation. But a careful study of this passage will reveal that Paul quotes John in verse 4 and the action of John's hearers *to John* in verse 5. Paul's action does not begin until verse 6. In other words, there was no re-baptism whatever in this passage.

Still another objection that many will suggest is that water baptism is one of the two ordinances of the church. The other ordinance they suggest is the Lord's Supper. We can promptly show from Colossians 2:14 that there simply are *no ordinances* in this dispensation of grace.

In fact, the Lord's Supper is not an ordinance at all but a privilege of the redeemed; water baptism is not for this dispensation at all.

While we do believe that water baptism was very much required under the prophetic program, it is in recognizing the distinctive Pauline revelation for this dispensation of grace that we understand the place of water baptism. Through Paul we received the Lord's instructions for us today. God is the one who changed the dispensation! The revelation of that change with all the instructions for obedience to the faith were given by God only through Paul. All the Word of God is for us but it must now be interpreted in

light of the Pauline Epistles! Once this is believed, the rest of these issues take on a whole new meaning and are easily put into their proper place.