
BAPTISM
HAMILTON & HELENA
FILMALTER
THE BLESSINGS
OF
BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

Believer’s Baptism in Water

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INTRODUCTION

It was somewhere in the late 2000's. Yearning for revival was foremost in my mind. Ever since the outpouring of the 90's, I had longed for a revival that would sweep America. The typical picture filled my mind - large crowds gathering every night, stadiums filled, great miracles, the lost streaming to the altar - when suddenly I heard the Holy Spirit ask me, "Why isn't baptism part of your picture of revival?"

I had no answer. I could only acknowledge the truth. It was indeed absent, but shouldn't revival include large numbers of people moving through the waters of baptism? Why had I never thought of revival in terms of baptism?

I thought back of an Easter service of a very large evangelical church a few years earlier. To combine all their campuses, they had rented the local basketball stadium. As I walked in, looking down from the bleachers, what a sight met the eye! It didn't look like an Easter service, it looked like a swimming pool expo! Five very large pop up pools with sparkling blue water stood down below, two flanking the pulpit and three in the back. Instantly I was excited. These people meant business. Hundreds will be baptized today. Sure enough, at the end of the service, each pool had five couples (yes, husbands and wives) baptizing hundreds of people. Like a line of ants, people went up and down the ladder into to pool, got baptized, and up and down the exit ladder. Some came prepared, others just joined in with no spare clothes on a very cold spring morning.

Sometime later I saw an old video clip of Jesus People baptizing in Southern California. Hundreds of hippies were streaming down the cliffs onto the beach and into the ocean. Hippies baptizing hippies - beards, long hair, kaftans and all! In my heart I knew that from this point forward, baptism has to be as important as salvation if we want to see a soul saving revival sweep America.

With new vigor we started working towards baptism as one of the first goals of discipleship in all our evangelistic efforts, whether in large crusades, revival meetings, church services or one-on-one evangelism. We learnt a lot, especially working one-on-one. We worked with all kinds of people and religious backgrounds at home and abroad. The battle over baptism is fierce, and we had much to learn about how to communicate baptism effectively and how to deal with the powers and principalities that oppose baptism. We studied the Scriptures anew and this book is an attempt to communicate what we learned from the Word of God and from practical experience.

CHAPTER 1

Communicating Baptism

A key to effective ministry is communicating the truths of the Word of God in a way that conveys the life of God. The Holy Spirit testifies to the Word and brings conviction. Conviction is necessary for spiritual action.

Now, baptism is often referred to as

- A step of obedience
- A public confession of your faith
- An outward demonstration of an inward work

These are very familiar phrases, but believer's baptism is much more than that. It is not merely a "symbolic step". It is a very real and very deep spiritual transaction that grounds the new believer in the Lord Jesus.

In Hebrews 5, the writer, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, expresses exasperation that is every believer is not yet able to teach the basic principles of the faith:

> For although by this time you should be teachers, you again need to have someone teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the revelations of God.
> (Hebrews 5:12)

A few verses later in Hebrews 6, the first principles are listed as

> a foundation of repentance from dead works, of faith toward God, of the teaching of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.
> (Hebrews 6:2 - 3)

"Teaching of baptisms" is third on the list, so we need to pay attention to it. The plural form "baptisms" is used, because there is believer's baptism in water (Matt 28:19) and the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). These are separate events, both of which are extremely important in the life of every believer.

These Scriptures are the eternal Word of God and is just as true for us today as when they were first written to the Hebrews: Every believer should be equipped to teach baptism well, with spiritual weight, emphasizing everything the Word of God teaches about it. It is done to us according to our faith, and faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Entering the waters of baptism with little faith caused by little knowledge, is running the risk of reducing baptism to a mere ritual performed by men.

We have seen time and again that new believers, who were instructed well concerning baptism, came with hearts prepared, full of faith, and had a profound experience with the Lord Jesus. On the other hand, many have come to us after hearing an in-depth teaching on baptism, confiding that they never really understood what happens during baptism and did it more out of tradition than anything else, and want to be baptized again.

Through our work in the harvest, we quickly gained experience. We worked with many new believers firmly rooted infant christening as well as with many newly saved from non-Christian backgrounds in Asia and the Middle East. The spiritual battle over baptism is fierce. Mountains have to be leveled to reach the waters of baptism. We faced the same battles over and over and we sought the Lord in prayer to become stronger and more effective.

In our search to become more effective, I felt the Lord prompt us to speak about baptism in a fresh way. What we say and how we say it should to create a desire in the heart of the new believer to want to get baptized. The usual phrases of "a public confession of your faith," etc. suddenly sounded rather dry and proved to be uninspiring to the newly saved, many of whom had never even seen a baptism. We pondered this – how do we communicate baptism so as to create a desire in the heart of the new believer to want to get baptized? How do we touch the heart in a way that inspires faith and the obedience

that comes from faith? It was then that the Lord spoke to us about the “Blessings of Baptism.” Baptism may look simple, but many spiritual things are happening simultaneously, each a tremendous blessing in the life of the believer.

- The Blessing of Obedience
- The Blessing of Placing Your Life under the Full Authority of the Godhead.
- The Blessing of Deeply Associating with the Death and Resurrection of Jesus
- The Blessing of a Clean Conscience
- The Blessing of a Decisive Cut-Off Point from your Old Life of Sin
- The Blessing of Spiritual Insight

As we started explaining these blessings from the Scriptures, we immediately saw a much greater breakthrough in baptism. Principalities came down as faith rose in the hearts of the new believers as they saw real reasons to want to get baptized.

CHAPTER 2

The Word “Baptism”

Our English word, “baptism,” is a transliteration of the Greek word “baptizo,” which means immersion. "Baptizo" means to be put into water and to be completely submersed. In ancient Greek writings, the word “baptize” was used to describe how a piece of fabric is submersed into a dye solution, or vegetables into brine for pickling. It never had any connotation with sprinkling. It has only one meaning and that is full immersion in water.

When we observe believer’s baptism, we see two things:

- The person baptizing speaking these words,
  “I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”

- At this point the person is completely immersed in the water and raised up again.

There is spiritual meaning to both the words and the action. Both carry spiritual realities that cannot be attained in any other way. In the next chapters we will explore what is actually happening in the spiritual realm as we speak these words and immerse the new believer in the water.

CHAPTER 3

The Blessing of Obedience

The first blessing of baptism, is the blessing of obedience. Baptism is not the idea of man or of a denomination, but the very origin of believer's baptism is with God. Jesus gave us the command to baptize:

> Jesus came to them and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
> (Matthew 28:18 - 20)

> He said to them, "Go into all the world, and preach the Good News to the whole creation. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who disbelieves will be condemned.
> (Mark 16:15 - 16)

In these passages, the Lord Jesus institutes baptism for all of His disciples (Matt 28), or put slightly differently in Mark 16, for all who believe in Him. It is very clear that salvation comes before baptism. You have to be saved first to be baptized. Put otherwise, the unsaved or the unbelieving cannot be baptized. Baptism does not save, but it unlocks many blessings for the born again believer.

So, when we are baptized we are obeying the Lord, not man or church or denomination. Jesus said we must teach others to obey Him (Matt 28:20), and not merely for the sake of an increase of knowledge. Obedience brings a great blessing.

Even Jesus was obedient to the Father in baptism when John baptized Him in the River Jordan. He demonstrated the obedience He wants from us. John was somewhat unwilling to baptize Jesus, maybe out of reverence for the Lord, but Jesus insisted to be baptized by him for all righteousness to be fulfilled.

> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water.
> (Matthew 3:13-17)

Obedience brings blessing. It fulfills righteousness and brings peace. Just think of your children when they obey you. There's peace in the house. The children are productive, busy with the little activities necessary for their development. When disobedience comes, there's crying and fussing, their little lives disrupted. In the same way, obedience to the Lord Jesus brings the blessing of peace upon our lives.

There are two kinds of obedience. One comes from the law to escape punishment. This is the kind where we obey not to get the parking ticket! But there is the obedience that springs from love. Think back of your favorite teacher when you were little – you were eager to obey, because you loved her and wanted to please her. This is the kind of obedience Jesus seeks, the kind that springs from love.

In John chapters 14, 15, 16 and 17 we find everything Jesus said at the Last Supper. He is speaking at the table where he had just broken the bread and passed the cup introducing the New Covenant. This conversation presents the new order of the New Covenant very clearly:

> If you love me, keep my commandments.
> (John 14:15)

> One who has my commandments and keeps them, that person is one who loves me. One who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will reveal myself to him."
> (John 14:21)

> Jesus answered him, "If a man loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our home with him. He who doesn't love me doesn't keep my words.

(John 14:23 - 24)

But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father commanded me, even so I do.
(John 14:31)

Even as the Father has loved me, I also have loved you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and remain in his love. I have spoken these things to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be made full.
(John 15:9-11)

You are my friends, if you do whatever I command you.
(John 15:14)

These words were spoken at the Last Supper. Over and over Jesus impressed upon his disciples the obedience that comes from love and the manifold blessings of that accompany it. The Lord notices those who obey. His eye is on them and He draws close to them.

CHAPTER 4

The Blessing of
Placing Your Life under the Full Authority of the Godhead

Baptism is a change of authority. Previously, in our unsaved state, we were ruled by the sinful nature and we were under the authority of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is at work in those who are disobedient (Eph 2:1-3), but with baptism we are placing our lives under the full authority of the Godhead, as we are baptized in the Name of the Father and on the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Jesus gave us these words by which to baptize in Matthew 28:

> Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
> (Matthew 28:19)

The name of a person carries of the authority of that person. A check written or contract typed has no power until it is signed, but when you sign your name, your authority is placed upon it. In the same way, when we are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, a change of authority takes place. We are placing our lives under the full authority of the Godhead. Every old authority of sin, addiction, idolatry, false religion and dead tradition is cut off. The power and authority of the devil is broken off our lives. From this point forward, Jesus is unequivocally Lord of our lives.

In John 17, just before He was arrested, Jesus prayed,

> Holy Father protect them by the power of your name - the name you gave me . . . While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me
> (John 17:11 – 12)

The power of His name protects us from the evil one, and with baptism, we are placing our lives under the full authority of the Godhead. There is great protection therein.

It is important to see that where baptism is spoken of in the Scriptures, it is very often accompanied by a statement of authority. The Great Commission in Matthew 28 starts with Jesus declaring the highest authority:

> “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.” Go, and make disciples of 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 that I commanded you.
> (Matthew 28:18 - 20)

Consider the totality Jesus’ authority: ALL AUTHORITY in heaven and on earth! From this statement of total authority the command of baptism flows.

We find the same in Mark 16. The command to baptize is in verse 16, and the statement of authority follows in verse 19, where Jesus is received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God, the highest position of authority:

> “Go into all the world, and preach the Good News to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who disbelieves will be condemned . . . So then the Lord, after he had spoken to them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.
> (Mark 16:15 - 16 & 19)

Again in Colossians 2, baptism is linked to authority. In verse 12 we read about baptism, and it is followed shortly after in verse 15 by how Jesus stripped every evil principality and power of its authority:

> 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead . . . 15 Having stripped the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
> (Colossians 2:12 & 15)

In 1 Peter 3, baptism is again linked to authority:

> when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, while the ship was being built. In it, few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. 21 This is a symbol of baptism, which now saves you—not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him.
> (1 Peter 3: 20 - 22)

The words “I baptize you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” should not be treated lightly. It may sound so simple and we have heard it so many times, that we can almost treat it as a rhyme, not discerning the power and authority under which we baptize. When we speak these words, it must be done with our full attention and focus on all authority belonging to the Lord Jesus. In other words, say it like you mean it with the authority given by the Lord out of reverence for the Lord. Those words reverberate through the heavens, authorities and powers being stripped of the holds they had, and the authority of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit coming fully upon the life of the new believer.

It is said that on the mission field 90% of believers who are baptized will never backslide, whereas a very high rate of falling away happens when new believers are not baptized. Why is this so?

> What am I saying then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God, and I don’t desire that you would have fellowship with demons.
> (I Corinthians 10:19 - 20)

Idol worship is a direct participation with demons. These demons gain control over the lives of those who worship them. In systems of idolatry and false religion, the heathen priest or spiritual leader holds tremendous control over society. This control is often at state level too with “blasphemy” and anti-conversion laws. At a family level, parents keep this demonic authority in place over children, prohibiting anyone from leaving the ways of their forefathers. The new believer still has a great battle with all of these “hands” trying to grab him from behind and pull him back. It is a fight with demonic principalities working through people and society. The hold of these authorities is cut off in baptism.

A person who has been baptized will not visit a heathen temple again. They will be able to stand up to the pressure of society, religious leaders and family. They will stand firm even when ostracized and persecuted, because the hold of the demonic rulers have been broken, just as Peter wrote about of baptism, “angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him.” (I Peter 3:22).

These spiritual dynamics are easy to see where religion is expressed through idol temples, but the same dynamics are at work much closer to home. The same spiritual forces are at work where Christianity has become mixed with idolatry, or where a form of Christianity as if it were by works and the goodness of man is practiced. On a personal level, idolatry is found in worship of ourselves, our education, money, status and achievements; the list can go on and on. Atheism is just another expression of idolatry of man and nature. Drug addiction and sexual sins too are very strong demonic strongholds. No matter what the background of the new believer, baptism is a powerful deliverance.

For this reason, be faithful with baptism at home and in all missionary work in the nations, including short term missions and evangelistic crusades. Whatever the emphasis of the mission, include baptism – teach it, make the invitation and work with the local leaders to get it done. A deeper understanding of baptism is a lasting deposit placed in the hands of the local pastor and his people. It will continue to bear fruit long after you have left.

CHAPTER 5

The Blessing of
Deeply Associating with the Death and Resurrection of Jesus

Now that we understand the meaning of the words better, what is the meaning of immersing the person? When we are immersed, we deeply associate with the death of the Lord Jesus as we go under the water, and with His resurrection as we come out of the water. It is not merely symbolic; Romans 6 says in baptism we are united with Him in the likeness of His death and united with Him in his resurrection. That is why we go under the water – it simulates death and the grave as we are under the water, cut off from oxygen. This association with the death and resurrection of Jesus is a very powerful spiritual transaction, in which we die to our old sinful self, and rise to a new life in Jesus.

> 3 Or don't you know that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?
>
> 4 We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.
>
> 5 For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will also be part of his resurrection;
>
> 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be in bondage to sin.
>
> 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.
>
> 8 But if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him;
>
> 9 knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no more has dominion over him!
>
> 10 For the death that he died, he died to sin one time; but the life that he lives, he lives to God.
>
> 11 Thus consider yourselves also to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
> (Romans 6:3 - 11)

Nowhere in the New Testament is the mystery of baptism more clearly revealed than here through the pen of Paul. Each of these verses describes what happens spiritually during baptism. We are not merely immersed in water, we are immersed in the death of Christ Jesus (verse 3). We are not merely under the water, we are buried with Him (verse 4). We are united with Him in the likeness of his death to be part of His resurrection (verse 5). Why all this death? The old man of sin is crucified; the body of sin is done away with (verse 6). And the result? We are no longer in bondage to sin, for he who has died has been freed from sin (verse 6 & 7). We will live with Him (verse 8), Death has no more dominion over us! (verse 9).

In the time of John the Baptist, dealing with sin was at the heart of baptism. John preached "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin." John came before Jesus, and John's baptism pointed to the Messiah, but it did not yet have the full association with the death and resurrection of Jesus, because these events had not yet taken place. John's baptism stressed repentance. Repentance is still a necessary preparation of the heart for baptism today. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached the gospel for the first time after Jesus had died, risen and ascended. Peter told those who were cut to the heart, "Repent and be baptized every one of you." Paul recounts his testimony in Acts 22, with Ananias telling him, "What are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His Name" (verse 16). These Scriptures confirm that baptism deals with sin, and that we need to come with repentant hearts to be baptized.

The good news is that the Lord wants to set us free from every sin, every source of guilt and shame, every false god, idol or wrong pursuit in life. Baptism is a tremendous deliverance. Come with a repentant heart. Do not miss out on the opportunity to put the ALL of the old man to death. Some sins are easy to see, others we need the Lord to show us. Ask the Lord what He requires of you in repentance. What things in your possession do you need to get rid of in this process aligning your life with the full authority of the Godhead? Do you go to the laundromat without the laundry? No, you take care to find all the laundry in the house, load it in the car and put everything in the washer, down to the last sock! The same with baptism. Bring everything to the Lord, and make Him Lord of your entire life.

CHAPTER 6

The Blessing of a Clean Conscience

Baptism is a washing - your conscience is washed clean before God.

> when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, while the ship was being built. In it, few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. This is a symbol of baptism, which now saves you - not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him.
> (1 Peter 3:20 - 22)

Sin leaves a mark on your conscience. When we go into the waters of baptism, it is not to wash dirt from the outside of the body, as water normally does; it is to cleanse us from a guilty conscience. Your conscience is washed clean in baptism. What a blessing to have a clean conscience, to be cleansed in the inner parts of all we feel guilty of! I have often seen new believers take the decision to get baptized on this point.

CHAPTER 7

The Blessing of
A Decisive Cut-Off Point from Your Old Life of Sin

> For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.
> (1 Corinthians 10:1-2)

Paul is writing about the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt as an example to us. The symbolism here is three-fold:

- Baptized into Moses = Believing in Jesus
(Moses was their deliverer just as Jesus is our Deliverer)

- Baptized into the cloud = Baptized in the Holy Spirit

- Baptized in the sea = Water Baptism

Egypt symbolizes a life of slavery to sin and Pharaoh is a type of the devil. The Israelites packed their belongings, applied the blood of a lamb to their doorposts, and ate the Passover. The angel of death passed them over that night, and in the morning they left on their way out of Egypt. By evening they had come as far as the Red Sea, but they were still on Egyptian territory!

By this time, Pharaoh had changed his mind. The Israelites were very valuable to him - they were the slaves who built his kingdom. He pursued them with his army and found them trapped at the Red Sea, hemmed in by mountains. They were still on Egyptian soil where he had authority.

God did a miracle, the Red Sea parted and the Israelites walked through as on dry ground, but when Pharaoh and his army tried to follow, they were drowned. Their might sank to the depths of the sea, and the Israelites walked free, their former slave masters drowned! Miriam and the women sang a song of deliverance. (Exodus 15)

In the same way, the waters of baptism bring the blessing of a decisive cut-off point from our old life. It is here where the redeemed leave the territory and authority of the kingdom of darkness. A powerful deliverance takes place!

CHAPTER 8

The Blessing of Spiritual Insight

> All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.
> (Luke 7:29 - 30)

John’s baptism prepared the people to recognize Jesus. When they heard Jesus, they acknowledged that God’s way was right. On the other hand, the religious leaders who had refused to be baptized by John, had no insight into who Jesus was and rejected God’s purpose for themselves. A spiritual blindness remained on them, which neither the miracles nor the words of Jesus could erase. Baptism brings the blessing of spiritual insight, of recognizing the Lord, and discerning His purpose for your life.

CHAPTER 9

The Attitude of John the Baptist

The baptism of John prepared the way for the ministry of Jesus. John's message was repentance of sin to receive the Messiah. To color the picture in, if John had to ask two questions to his candidates for baptism, we could imagine the following:

> "Do you repent deeply of your sins?"
>
> "Do you believe that the coming of the Messiah is imminent?

Although the baptism of John involved full immersion, it did not yet have the revelation of the death and resurrection of Jesus (these were still future events), nor was it done "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." It was a baptism unto repentance, telling the people to believe in the One to come (Acts 19:4).

There is, however, a key principle for us to learn from John the Baptist, namely his attitude in baptizing people.

> After these things, Jesus came with his disciples into the land of Judea. He stayed there with them and baptized. John also was baptizing in Enon near Salim, because there was much water there. They came, and were baptized; for John was not yet thrown into prison. Therefore a dispute arose on the part of John's disciples with some Jews about ceremonial washing. They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, he baptizes, and everyone is coming to him."
> John answered, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. You yourselves testify that I said, "I am not the Christ," but, "I have been sent before him." He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This, my joy, therefore is made full. He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all. He who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.
> (John 3:22 - 31)

John's heart was set on the Bridegroom. He never baptized to gain a following for himself. When more people were going to where Jesus and his disciples were baptizing, John's disciples were upset that they were losing influence. Speaking deep from the heart, John masterfully settled the dispute. He is only the friend of the Bridegroom, but the bride belongs to the Bridegroom. In other words, the people did not belong to John by virtue of him having baptized them.

Just as inappropriate as it would be for a best man to make a pass at the bride, it would be for us to use baptism to gain a following for ourselves, or to place our authority on those we baptize. We are merely servants of Christ Jesus performing a service of ministry, freely, with no strings attached. Our joy is in seeing the new believer deeply associating with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus as he is placing his life under the full authority of the Godhead. Baptism is not a vehicle to establish our own authority, or by proxy, the authority of a denomination, organization, congregation or head of a ministry. Neither is it a vehicle of church membership.

We see this principle in the first letter to the Corinthians. Divisions and factions had developed in the Corinthian church after Paul left.

> Now I beg you, brothers, through the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been reported to me concerning you, my brothers, by those who are from Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," "I follow Apollos," "I follow Cephas," and, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one should say that I had baptized you into my own name. (I also baptized the household of Stephanas; besides them, I don't know whether I baptized any other.) For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Good News
> (1 Corinthians 1:10 - 17)

Some claimed to follow Paul, others Apollos and so on. In fighting the divisions that had developed, Paul writes that this situation did not arise because of how he baptized people. He baptized only a few households, and did not baptize them

“into his own name” (verse 15). What Paul is saying here is that he did not baptize to slip his own authority in along with that of the Lord Jesus. He did not baptize people to create a loyal following for himself. This tells us that Paul had the same attitude as John the Baptist and that he was well aware of the fact that baptism can be used by man to establish his own authority.

Why does Paul write, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Good News”? Does it mean that preaching of the gospel, with a powerful demonstration of signs and wonders as in the life of Paul, no longer had baptism as a goal, as Jesus instructed in Matthew 28 and Mark 16? It seems as if the New Testament Church was drifting away from the example in Acts 2, where Peter preached the gospel on the Day of Pentecost and 3000 people repented and were baptized that same day. This apparent contradiction is resolved in Acts 18:

> He departed there, and went into the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house. Many of the Corinthians, when they heard, believed and were baptized. The Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, “Don’t be afraid, but speak and don’t be silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many people in this city.”
> (Acts 18:7 - 10)

It says in verse 8, “many Corinthians believed and were baptized.” How did this happen if Paul baptized only three households? Once baptized, these households baptized others! From the very start, Paul released the right to baptize into the hands of very new believers.

Why was Paul so liberal with baptism allowing very new believers to immediately start baptizing others? It is so different from how we treat baptism today. Clearly, he had the same understanding and attitude as John the Baptist. Paul was consumed with believers being conformed to the image of Christ. As a bond servant of Christ Jesus, he was called to prepare a spotless bride for the Bridegroom. He was far more concerned with new believers being baptized, than he was hung up on who was doing the baptism.

The Lord also told him in verse 10 “I have many people in this city.” Keeping the right to baptise to himself would create a bottleneck in the harvest, and what would happen once he leaves? How would baptism keep up once the harvest multiplies through the testimony of the newly saved? What would happen when the gospel starts spreading into neighboring towns? Paul released baptism to move with the harvest.

In Charismatic and Spirit-filled churches we are still dealing with the remnants of organized religion instituted by Constantine 1700 years ago. There are many unwritten rules about who may baptize. Ordinary believers are released in many other works of ministry (healing, prophetic words, evangelism to name but a few), but not in baptism. We do not find this distinction in the Great Commission. Baptism is a responsibility given to all who follow Him, just as the preaching of the gospel, the healing of the sick and the driving out of demons. Practically it means there should be no hindrance to baptizing those whom you have led to the Lord.

Where do women fit in? May they baptize too? The Great Commission was given to all. If a woman can lead someone to the Lord, why can’t she baptize too? Nowhere in the Scripture is baptism put in a category of its own. It was only in 2005, 21 years after I was saved, that I saw a woman baptize for the first time. I almost fell off the pew! The thought had never even occurred to me. That was the time that the Lord started using us greatly in the harvest and stirring our hearts concerning the importance of baptism. The door was opened that day, and I have baptized many since, and have taught many women to do the same. What a joy! (Helena’s Testimony)

Even in churches where the authority of women to baptize is recognized, we rarely see it happen. Mostly we just see men baptize. Practice often speaks louder than principle. The fivefold ministry is there to equip all the believers for their works of ministry. Baptism is a work of ministry, and women too need to baptize.

CHAPTER 10

Baptism in the Book of Acts

In the Book of Acts, we see the disciples walking out the Great Commission. We find baptism closely linked to evangelism, just as Jesus commanded in Matthew 28 and Mark 16. Believers were often baptized on the same day they got saved!

1. The Day of Pentecost

Peter preached the Gospel for the first time on the Day of Pentecost to the very people who had crucified Jesus. They were struck in their hearts and asked, "What shall we do?" Peter replied,

> "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call."
> (Acts 2:37 - 38)

> Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.
> (Acts 2:41)

They were baptized that day! Peter and the Apostles would not allow these people, who were incited by Satan to crucified Jesus, to walk around another day without placing their lives under the full authority of the Godhead.

2. Philip in Samaria

> But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.
> (Acts 8:12)

Again, baptism is closely linked to evangelism.

3. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

> As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.
> (Acts 8:36 - 38)

Even in the desert, Philip found an oasis to baptize the Ethiopian. He did not send him back to Ethiopia saved, but not baptized.

4. Saul is Baptized

Saul got saved on the road to Damascus. He is struck with blindness, not eating or drinking for three days. Then the Lord sent an ordinary believer by the name of Ananias to baptize him:

> Ananias departed, and entered into the house. Laying his hands on him, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord, who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me, that you may receive your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he received his sight. He arose and was baptized.
> (Acts 9:17)

Years later, Paul recounted his testimony to King Agrippa:

> “Those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they didn’t understand the voice of him who spoke to me. 10 I said, “What shall I do, Lord?” The Lord said to me, “Arise, and go into Damascus. There you will be told about all things which are appointed for you to do.” When I couldn’t see for the glory of that light, being led by

> the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus. One Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews who lived in Damascus, came to me, and standing by me said to me, “Brother Saul, receive your sight!” In that very hour I looked up at him. He said, “The God of our fathers has appointed you to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. For you will be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard. Now why do you wait? Arise, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
> (Acts 22:9)

5. Peter and Cornelius

> “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.
> (Acts 10:47 - 4)

Peter baptized the first gentile believers on the same day they were saved.

6. Paul and the Philippian Jailer

> He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.
> (Acts 16:30 - 33)

We think of the jailer as a somewhat noble man, because of his quick salvation and how he washed Paul and Silas’ wounds. In reality he was a very sadistic man. He was the torturer and the executioner, but he got dramatically saved. Paul baptized him in the middle of the night, in the middle of the jail! He did not wait to first introduce him to the church in Lydia’s house, baptizing him there to “make him part of the church.” Paul did not allow the sun to come up with this man still under the old authorities that ruled his life.

7. Paul in Corinth

> Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.
> (Acts 18:5)

Paul baptized Crispus and his household, immediately releasing baptism into the harvest.

8. Paul in Ephesus

> Paul, having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples. He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They said to him, “No, we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”
> He said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.”
> Paul said, “John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in the one who would come after him, that is, in Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke with other tongues and prophesied. They were about twelve men in all. On hearing this, they were baptized”
> (Acts 19:1 - 7)

In Acts 19, Paul arrives in Ephesus where he finds twelve believers. He immediately enquires about how they were baptized. They were baptized with John’s baptism, because Apollos, who had preached the gospel to them, knew only of the baptism of John (read Acts 18:24-26). Without wasting any time, Paul teaches them correctly and baptizes them in the Name of Jesus. He would not start the church in Ephesus without the people being baptized correctly.

Compare that with our practice today. Are we really concerned about how long a person has to wait to be baptized? Any significant teaching about baptism is often buried deep in a membership class. The new believer has to drill very deep into

the system and show a very high level of commitment before they are even exposed to baptism. Shouldn't it be the other way round?

With the attitude of John the Baptist and the urgency of Paul, we need to uncover baptism and bring it to the fore. It is one of the greatest treasures and one of the most significant steps in the Kingdom of God. It should be plain to see and easy to reach for every new believer. Every person in the pew should be equipped to teach baptism well from the Scriptures and have the permission to baptize freely those whom they disciple.

CHAPTER 11

A Price was Paid
The Story of Felix Manz

On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. This was the start of the Reformation. One year later, Zwingli was preaching similar ideas in Zurich, Switzerland. Felix Manz and a small group of believers under Zwingli openly began questioning infant baptism, refusing to have their infants sprinkled. On January 21, 1525 they went one step further baptizing one another by full immersion. This was the start of the Anabaptist movement, or Radical Reformation, and it spread rapidly under the leadership of Felix Manz. Tremendous persecution broke out against the Anabaptists. Protestants and Catholics agreed to kill any Anabaptist found in their territories. Tens of thousands were killed.

Felix Mans was the first to pay the price of a martyr's death:

> On 7 March 1526, the Zürich council had passed an edict that made adult re-baptism punishable by drowning. On 5 January 1527, Manz became the first casualty of the edict, and the first Swiss Anabaptist to be martyred at the hands of other Protestants. While Manz stated that he wished "to bring together those who were willing to accept Christ, obey the Word, and follow in His footsteps, to unite with these by baptism, and to purchase the rest in their present conviction", Zwingli and the council accused him of obstinately refusing "to recede from his error and caprice". At 3:00 p.m., as he was led from the Wellenburg to a boat, he praised God and preached to the people. A Reformed minister went along, seeking to silence him, and hoping to give him an opportunity to recant. Manz's brother and mother encouraged him to stand firm and suffer for Jesus' sake. He was taken by boat onto the River Limmat. His hands were bound and pulled behind his knees and a pole was placed between them. He was executed by drowning in Lake Zürich on the Limmat. His alleged last words were, "Into thy hands, O God, I commend my spirit." His property was confiscated by the government of Zürich, and he was buried in the St. Jakobs cemetery.
>
> Felix Manz. (2016, July 15). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 20:57, September 14, 2016, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Felix_Manz&oldid=729939580

I am always deeply moved by the account of how his mother implored him to stand firm and not to recant in the face of his execution. The restoration of believer's baptism came at a price. Let us not make light of it.

CHAPTER 12

Infant Christening

Infant baptism or christening is so wide-spread that no book on baptism will be complete without examining this practice. A good portion of the harvest comes from this background. Every new believer faces a battle to get baptized. This battle is with the demonic forces that oppose baptism and we need to understand the underlying spiritual forces we are dealing with in the harvest to be effective.

When the disciples were unable to cast a demon out of a young boy, Jesus told them,

> When the strong man, fully armed, guards his own dwelling, his goods are safe. But when someone stronger attacks him and overcomes him, he takes from him his whole armor in which he trusted, and divides his plunder.
> (Luke 11:21 - 22)

The same principle applies to baptism. The new believer is sitting in a house guarded by a strongman vigorously opposed baptism. A spiritual battle starts the moment you start speaking of baptism. The forces opposing baptism will lie dormant until the subject of baptism is brought up. All can seem very peaceful with the new believer until the subject of baptism is brought up. We should not shy away from difficult subjects, but be prepared to deal effectively with this strongman.

What lies behind this opposition? Does infant christening line up with Scripture? As we have seen earlier, Jesus commanded "those who believe" to be baptized. Faith in Jesus as Savior is necessary for baptism to take place. In other words, baptism belongs to the saved, the born again company of believers. Babies do not yet have the ability to believe.

The most common practice of infant "baptism" involves sprinkling of water on the forehead. The word "baptize" means to immerse in water, whereby we deeply associate with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus according to Romans 6. Even when Jesus was baptized by John, Scripture says, "He came up out of the water." (Matt 3:16)

What actually happens with infant sprinkling is that the parents make vows on the head of the baby to the church. They vow the baby to the authority of the church and promise that they will bring up the child according to the doctrines, traditions and practices of the church. By these vows the baby is officially registered as a member of the church, her spiritual life having been placed under the authority of the church.

Infant sprinkling is also firmly attached to false doctrines of salvation. In both Catholic and Orthodox traditions it is believed that the baby is "born again" when christened. Churches birthed in the Reformation (Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian, Anglican, Episcopal) did not move away from the Catholic practice of infant sprinkling and the attachment of a doctrine of salvation to it, although the "salvation" of the baby might be described from slightly different theological angles. Mostly it is believed that the act of sprinkling "brings the baby into the New Covenant." But how can anyone enter the New Covenant without faith in Jesus, without the cleansing power of His blood, only through a ritual involving sprinkling of water upon the vows of the parents? Throughout the Bible, covenants were cut with blood (of animals, but now for us the Blood of the Lam, Jesus our Savior), never through the sprinkling of water.

Well-meaning parents have their babies christened because this tradition has been handed down for generations. However, vows are powerful, even those made in ignorance. These vows perpetuate false concepts of salvation, which is no salvation at all. This is where the religious principality becomes ingrafted on the next generation. People who have never put their faith in Jesus believe that they will go to heaven because "they were christened and belong to a church." Why seek salvation if you already have it? False assurance of eternal life is at the root of the religious spirit. There is no greater deception.

We recognize that despite this wrong theology, there are those in these traditions who have come to Jesus in a personal way and are truly saved. However, this is the minority. Far more common are church members who are not saved.

For those in the harvest who do get saved from this background, the authority of the church to which they were vowed as infants is still a huge force in their lives. Through catechism and confirmation they too consciously vowed their lives to the authority of the church, its doctrines and practices. This represents a significant principality standing between them and believer's baptism. People instinctively know that when they get baptized they are leaving the church where they were sprinkled as babies. Breakthrough at this point will not only affect them, but will open the door to every generation after

them. Total rejection and persecution by one's own family is a real possibility for many at this point. It comes at a price. That is why there is such a battle over baptism.

This battle is true for every religious background. We have seen these principles in action in every society, whether Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Atheistic, etc. We have evangelized and baptized amongst all these groups in many different countries. As we have seen, it is at the waters of baptism where the hold of religion and idolatry is broken, but it is here too that persecution can really kick in.

Many in believers in America come from backgrounds where the battle over believer's baptism was won generations ago. We walk in a freedom passed on to us, not even knowing what the price was for the first person in our family line to be baptized as a believer. As workers in the harvest, we need to understand the different backgrounds new believers come from, what spiritual forces are at work, and how to effectively move towards baptism.

To many new believers, Jesus is part of their life, but not yet all in their lives. Discipleship is about Christ increasing in us. Although we see new believers often baptized on the day of their salvation in the Book of Acts, working in the harvest, in the US, at the time of writing, this is easier said than done. The Word of God needs to increase in the new believer to the point where the whole structure of religion and the "lifestyle of lostness" with all its accoutrements can be brought down at the waters of baptism. We are still learning. If you move too quickly, you can lose the people. The same if you wait too long. It is only by laboring in the harvest that we learn to sail into the winds opposing baptism and reach the harbor of obedience to the Lord.

One last point: What do we do with people who were once baptized as believers, but who had totally backslidden, not serving the Lord for years (sexual sin, drugs, etc.)? When they come back to the Lord, they need a fresh washing and alignment of authority through baptism. They took a trip back into Egypt and need the deliverance that baptism brings. We have baptized many people in this situation, leading to great deliverance from ungodly lifestyles and the peace and joy of forgiveness and freedom from sin.

CHAPTER 13

Dedication of Children

What then shall we do with our babies and little ones since we love them and want God's hand of blessing and protection upon them? We follow the example of Jesus where He laid hands on little children to bless them.

> Then little children were brought to him, that he should lay his hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Allow the little children, and don't forbid them to come to me; for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to ones like these." He laid his hands on them, and departed from there.
> (Matthew 19:13)

> In that hour the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" Jesus called a little child to himself, and set him in the middle of them, and said, "Most certainly I tell you, unless you turn, and become as little children, you will in no way enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever therefore humbles himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever receives one such little child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him that a huge millstone should be hung around his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depths of the sea . . . See that you don't despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost.
> (Matthew 18:1 – 6 & 10)

This practice of blessing little children through the laying on of hands is often called a "baby dedication," although children of any age may be included. As they grow up, we will tell them the gospel of Jesus, have them pray to ask Jesus into their hearts, and prepare them for their own baptism as a believer.

Practically, at the dedication of children, parents will come forward with their children. It is fitting for the person in charge to share from the Scriptures about bringing up children in the ways of the Lord. After this, hands are laid on the children to release the power of God as a prayer of dedication and blessing is prayed. Family and friends may be invited to the front to actively participate, while the congregation stretches out their hands. It is a joyous occasion in the Lord, one of spiritual weight and substance, and should not be rushed "to move on with the service." Give the proper time to lay this foundation firmly in the Lord.

Can young children be baptized at all? Yes, they can if the biblical requirements are met. Children who are saved should be taught about baptism. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Born again children who understand baptism and express a desire to be baptized meet all the biblical requirements and should not be hindered.

A word of caution though. Children who have the Jesus in their hearts from a young age will grow and mature in the Lord at different rates. Even Jesus grew spiritually, or "in favor with God."

> And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.
> (Luke 2:52)

Not all children will reach readiness for baptism at the same age. It might even happen that younger children are ready before their older siblings are. No child should be forced into baptism by a parent or anyone in authority. The door should be opened, but we cannot force them through.

I have seen too often in the church that newly saved parents who get baptized want all their children baptized at the same time. Such enthusiasm is understandable – these parents have seen the work of destruction the enemy wreaked in their lives before they were saved and now they want their children to become "attached" to God as soon as possible. I have seen children in tears and clinging to their parents at the baptismal pool, yet being coaxed through. Personally I have had requests from parents to hold their little ones, even babies, to their breast as they are being baptized themselves.

None of this is the answer to a genuine desire to see the Lord's blessing upon our children. The answer is the dedication of our children through the laying on of hands, as Jesus did in Matt 19:15. As we work with parents in the harvest it is necessary to teach the dedication of children at the same time as baptism so that the right decision can be made for every child in the

family. Children of all ages can be dedicated to the Lord. It is recommended to set aside time at a baptismal service to dedicate the children of those who are being baptized, or to do it at the earliest convenience.

For children born into saved homes, the requirements for baptism have not changed, but tradition can easily sneak in in how baptism is practiced. Some denominations baptize at a specific age, maybe 12 or 14. Ready or not, all the teenagers will be baptized! It is an age where peer pressure is huge and no one wants to be the odd one out, so all are baptized. Some of these young people are in the right place to be baptized, but others are not. Full membership in the church and denomination is often the motivation behind this practice. I have had many people come to me after hearing a teaching on baptism, confiding that they never knew what baptism really meant – they just got baptized because "everyone else did." We have baptized many people in this position, for the first time really, for baptism is not merely a ritual involving water.

The other hand, baptism of the youth can be neglected. It would behoove any youth program – teen and pre-teen – to have baptism as a major discipleship goal. In shepherding his charges, the youth leader should know exactly who has been baptized and who not, and work towards it through biblical teaching and regular opportunities to be baptized. Each young person should have a clear grasp of what happens at baptism, desire to obey the Lord, and understand that it is not about age or peer pressure. Baptism must come from a relationship with the Lord.

We visited a church in Thailand, where all the children, even as young as six, were saved, baptized in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, and baptized in water! We quizzed them - all of them loved the Lord and had a very clear understanding of what happened at baptism. This would not have been, if it was not for the vision and leadership of the pastor. The importance we place on baptism determines what happens to the next generation.

Parents often struggle with the question, "Well, what will happen if babies and young children die without having been baptized?" Remember, baptism does not save. Young children have not yet reached the age understanding and accountability before God. Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to little children. His kingdom is eternal and I believe Jesus will receive them into heaven just as He did on earth. They are not dependent on the unscriptural practice of infant sprinkling to assure them a place in heaven – it is Jesus who saves them by His sacrifice on the cross and through the power of His resurrection. King David said of his baby son when he died,

> I will go to him, but he will not return to me.
> (2 Samuel 12: 23)

We know King David is with the Lord, and this baby, born out of an adulterous affair with Bathsheba, is where David is! We can trust God with our little ones.

CHAPTER 14

Practical Arrangements

Practical arrangements are important too. We need water and suitable clothes.

Water

Baptism can be done in the sea, a river, lake, swimming pool, jacuzzi, or large bathtub, or anywhere where the water is deep enough for immersion. There needs to be enough water to cover the person completely, no arms or legs sticking out.

A wonderful solution is a kiddie pool. It portable and can be set up right in a Harvest House. A “Harvest House” is a house where a number of people have come to the Lord as we evangelize neighborhoods. Baptism needs to be released into the harvest, there where it is needed most. Unsaved friends and family are far more likely to come if it is done here. We are after multiplication in the harvest.

We have traveled to several countries with a blow-up kiddy pool, battery operated pump and all. Many countries are arid, or the water is too polluted. It also solves the problem of where and how to baptize in countries where believing differently from what you were born into is prohibited by law, even punishable by death. It is a great gift to leave behind.

Clothes

Once you have the water sorted out, it is important to give very clear instructions on exactly what is expected. Even in the US, many people have never seen believer’s baptism by full immersion. Do not make any assumptions about what you think people should know.

Some denominations believe that you need to wear a white robe when baptized. Again, this creates an obstacle in the harvest. What we do need is sensible clothes. I often advise jeans or knee length shorts with a dark T-shirt that won’t turn see through when wet. Consider cultural norms when ministering in foreign countries. If everyone is on the same page, with the whole process discussed and demystified, no one will be embarrassed, and the focus will be where it should be, on the Lord Jesus and His work on the cross. That being said, we have never turned anyone away from being baptized, no matter how they were dressed.

Don’t forget to make it clear to bring a towel and a dry change of clothes.

How to Baptize

- Baptism is a deep spiritual event and should not be rushed. The point is, don’t get into the water without first sharing from the Word. You will be too rushed, especially if the water is cold.

- First, speak about baptism from the Word (the blessings of baptism, a summary of which is given in the next chapter). It is a testimony to all in attendance, also to the children. The Word stirs faith and we often see onlookers deciding to get baptized too, as they hear the teaching.

  It solves the problem that develop in many churches where, after their own baptism, most believers never hear solid teaching on the subject again. This leads to a fading away of the understanding of baptism amongst the congregation, a low value placed on it for our children growing up in the church, and many missed opportunities for the saints to be equipped as effective workers in the harvest.

- Demonstrate the mechanics. If the water is shallow or the person has never seen a baptism, we will often demonstrate a “dry run” on the floor so that everyone knows exactly what to expect and how to work with us. The person needs to know that everything must be immersed. Show how to hold the nose closed and how you will hold his arms and pull him out. Have someone work with you to make sure knees, legs and arms go completely under too, especially if the water is shallow.

- Every baptism is an opportunity to train others to baptize too. If someone is baptizing for the first time, have him (or her) first practice saying the words. Baptizing for the first time can be a bit overwhelming, the moment so great

that you forget what to say. People speak with much greater authority if they are confident. For this reason, have each person first say the words just before they actually baptize

"I baptize you
in the Name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit,
in the Name of Jesus."

[The Name of Jesus is the Name of the Son, so you are not adding anything to the command of Jesus in Matthew 28, just illuminating the Name of the Son. We do this because in the Book of Acts they baptized in the Name of Jesus. Jesus died for us and we are associating with His death and resurrection, so we say "in the name of Jesus" too.]

- Now, have first person share his testimony of why they want to be baptized. Baptism is personal, not a formula.

- Get into the water and baptize.

- Then the next person shares his testimony and gets into the water.

- We often baptize the first person, and then let him baptize the next one, modeling what Paul did in Corinth and equipping workers for the harvest.

One baptism that I remember vividly took place on a beautiful summer day. We had done the Harvest Training that week and the church had a pool party and barbeque after the Sunday morning service. When the time for baptism came, most of the congregation were already in the pool enjoying the water. As they were hanging from the sides, we spent about 10 minutes speaking about the blessings of baptism from the Scriptures, and more people decided to get baptized. This baptism was accompanied with deep and public repentance, with each candidate spontaneously sharing the bondages and sins they were repenting from for the Lord to set them free. Once baptized, each one baptized the next person, showing multiplication in the harvest. It was so beautiful, such a natural setting and such sincerity of heart.

CHAPTER 15

Quick Summary

Why get Baptized?

There are many blessings in store for those who get baptized after they have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior.

The Greek word “baptize” means to be completely immersed into water. Jesus set the example:

> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. But John would have hindered him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?” But Jesus, answering, said to him, “Allow it now, for this is the fitting way for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed him. Jesus, when he was baptized, went up directly from the water.
> (Matthew 3:13 - 17)

1. The Blessing of Obedience

> Jesus came to them and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, and make disciples of 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 that I commanded you.
> (Matt 28:18 - 20)

The blessing of obedience is the blessing of peace. When we obey, the struggle is over and peace comes. Baptism is a command of Jesus and He calls those who obey Him, “My friends”:

> “You are my friends, if you do whatever I command you.”
> (John 16:14)

2. The Blessing of Placing Your Life under the Full Authority of the Godhead.

All authority has been given unto Jesus. When we are baptized *in the name of* the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, a change of authority takes place. We are placing our lives under the full authority of the Godhead, cutting off every old authority of sin, dead religion and the evil one under which we used to live.

3. The Blessing of Deeply Associating with the Death and Resurrection of Jesus

A powerful spiritual transaction takes place as we are united with the death of the Lord Jesus as we go under the water, and with his resurrection as we come out of the water.

> Or don’t you know that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will also be part of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be in bondage to sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. But if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him; knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no more has dominion over him!
> (Romans 6:3 - 9)

4. The Blessing of a Decisive Cut-Off Point from your Old Life of Sin

When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, Pharaoh pursued them to the Red Sea. They were still on Egyptian territory where Pharaoh had authority! The sea parted and the Israelites walked through on dry ground, but Pharaoh and his whole army drowned when they tried to follow. Pharaoh’s power over the Israelites was completely broken at the Red Sea. Egypt symbolizes our old life of slavery to sin and Pharaoh is a type of the devil. That is cut off with baptism.

> Now I would not have you ignorant, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;
> (1 Corinthians 10:1 - 2)

Believer's baptism is compared to being baptized in the sea, i.e. passing through the Red Sea. It is the cut-off point from our old life of sin where all power and authority of the devil is broken off.

5. The Blessing of a Clean Conscience

Baptism is a washing, not of the body, but sin is washed away and our conscience is washed clean before God. What a blessing to have our conscience washed clean from everything we are now ashamed of!

> Now why do you wait? Arise, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.
> (Acts 22:16)

> God waited patiently in the days of Noah, while the ship was being built. In it, few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. This is a symbol of baptism, which now saves you - not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him.
> (1 Peter 3:20 - 22)

6. The Blessing of Greater Spiritual Insight

> When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they declared God to be just, having been baptized with John's baptism. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law rejected the counsel of God, not being baptized by him themselves.
> (Luke 7:29 - 30)

When those who were baptized by John heard Jesus, they understood his message and declared that God's way is just and right. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law who refused to be baptized by John showed no spiritual insight and rejected what Jesus said. Some translations say "they rejected God's purpose for their lives."

Water baptism will open up greater levels of spiritual insight to you. You will understand the Word of God better and you will have greater insight into God's purpose for your life.

Go and make disciples
of all nations,
baptizing them . . .

(Matthew 28:19)