

Is My Baptism Valid?

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin” (Romans 6:1–7).

This text sets before us the beauty, wonder and glory of water baptism. The Apostle Paul affirms several things of water baptism in this text. He says it brings us into union with Christ. In water baptism we are cleansed from sin by the blood of Jesus. When baptized our sins are washed away and remitted granting us freedom from sin and just condemnation. We are at baptism empowered by the grace of God to live a new life; the old man of sin is crucified with Christ and we are new creatures. We are no longer the slaves of sin but, rather, the servants of righteousness. In water baptism we are saved from our past sins and initiated into a new life of faith in Christ. Yes, baptism is indeed a beautiful, wonderful, and glorious moment to cherish all of our lives.

When one considers with some care the many religious bodies that exist, he soon learns that there are numerous and differing “baptisms” administered by these bodies. Some immerse, others sprinkle or pour; some consider infants appropriate candidates for “baptism”, while others limit it to adults; some “baptize” as an outward sign of salvation that has already taken place, while others “baptize” for the purpose of obtaining salvation. Are all of these various practices with differing designs and conflicting concepts approved of God?

The truth is God only recognizes “one baptism”. Listen to Paul in Ephesians chapter four verses four through six: “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Now, just as there is only one true God (v. 6), there is only one true baptism. Therefore, not all “baptisms” are valid

The one true baptism is that baptism which is commanded in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul wrote the Ephesians that “Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it [the church] with the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:26). Thus, the church is sanctified, or set apart for God, and its members are cleansed from their sins because their baptism was according to the teaching of the Word of God (see: John 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:22-23). Anyone desiring to obey God having received that which was called “baptism,” ought to ask himself this question: “Is my baptism valid?” In order to find the answer to that question we must turn to the New Testament.

Was my baptism by immersion?

In order for your baptism to be valid, it must have required the right “mode” or action. There have been numerous questions raised and many debates held regarding the correct “mode” of baptism. Some people assert that they have baptized when they pour or sprinkle water on their candidate for baptism. However, the word for “baptize” in the original language of the New Testament literally means to “dip, plunge, submerge or immerse.” As in John chapter 13 and verse 26 when Jesus said, “He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it.” Then Jesus “dipped the sop,” he baptized it, and gave it to Judas Iscariot. We all know that one does not dip or dunk a donut by sprinkling a few drops of coffee on it and neither does one baptize a man by sprinkling a few drops of water on his head.

Furthermore, God’s word describes baptism as a burial. In Colossians chapter two and verse twelve, Paul affirms that we receive the spiritual circumcision of Christ as we are “buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead”

(Colossians 2:12). It would certainly be a less than adequate burial that would sprinkle or pour a cupful of dirt upon a deceased person's body; truly it would be no burial at all. And truly it is no baptism at all that fails to immerse its recipient. As we read earlier in Romans chapter six, the entire imagery of baptism is that of a death, burial and resurrection. When Jesus was buried he was "in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40), overwhelmed and covered by the earth. When Abraham buried Sarah it was "out of sight" in the sepulcher of Machpelah (Genesis 23:4). Neither sprinkling nor pouring facilitates the concepts involved in the imagery of baptism.

That immersion is the only acceptable action for New Testament baptism is illustrated from the fact that it is the only action that actually makes sense of the language of the Scriptures. In the Greek language just as in English there are different verbs for the idea of sprinkling, pouring and dipping. All three of these verbs appear in one text of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, Leviticus chapter 14 verses 15 and 16. The text deals with the law for cleansing lepers which involved on the eighth day the application of oil. The text states, "And the priest shall take some of the log of oil, and *pour* it into the palm of his own left hand: and the priest shall *dip* his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand, and shall *sprinkle* of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD." It is apparent that when the words sprinkle or pour are used that the noun receiving the action of the verb, that is, that which is sprinkled or poured is the oil. However, that which is "dipped" or baptized is the priest's finger, which is immersed into the oil. If we were to substitute the word "baptize" for "sprinkle" or "pour" in the verse it would be nonsense. The priest shall baptize oil in the palm of his left hand and shall baptize of the oil with his finger! However, to replace the word "dipped," which is in the Greek the word translated baptize in the New Testament makes perfect sense. The priest shall *baptize* his right finger in the oil.

Now, consider a passage like Acts chapter eight verses 38 and 39. Luke writes of the conversion of the Eunuch, "And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." In the text the Eunuch received the action involved in baptism—"he baptized him." However, how could that be if the action is sprinkling or pouring? Did Philip scatter the Eunuch in drops like the priest when he "sprinkled of the oil"? Did Philip cause the Eunuch to flow forth as the priest did the oil when he "poured it into the palm of his left hand"? The questions are absurd, of course not. The only action that makes sense is immersion. Philip baptized the Eunuch—he *immersed* him. This is apparent when one notices that they came to the water, went down into the water and came up out of the water. The action in baptism is immersion: dipping, plunging or submerging in water.

Was my baptism in water?

While we are considering Acts chapter eight and the account of the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch, notice another essential attribute of New Testament baptism—water. Luke recorded that as the Ethiopian eunuch traveled in his chariot, listening to Philip the evangelist "preach Christ," they came unto a "certain water." Whereupon, the eunuch said, "See here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36) The eunuch recognized that water was essential to baptism and the first opportunity presented was the one which he took in order to accomplish the will of God (v. 38). Thus, New Testament baptism is water baptism.

However, some have the idea that the one baptism of Ephesians chapter 4 and verse five is "baptism with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5; cf. Luke 3:16; Matthew 3:11). Although Jesus administered Holy Spirit baptism to some, He never commanded anyone to be baptized with the Holy Spirit as a requirement of the new birth or kingdom citizenship (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; John 3:5). There are only two instances of Holy Spirit baptism recorded in the New Testament, that of the Apostles on Pentecost and that of Cornelius' household several years later. On both occasions water baptism was commanded of all present as necessary for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 10:47–48). In the case of the household of Cornelius, Peter asked, "Can any man forbid *water*, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." When Peter reported on his actions respecting the Gentiles to his brethren in Jerusalem he affirmed that to have denied water

baptism to these men would have been disobedience saying, "What was I that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17).

Holy Spirit baptism was a special promise of Christ for a limited time and for specific recipients. It was administered by Him directly without mediate agency. Being a promise, it cannot be commanded, neither can it be obeyed. Thus, the idea of "getting the Holy Ghost" or "praying through for the Spirit" cannot be involved in the "one baptism" of Ephesians chapter four. Jesus said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Peter commanded sinners on Pentecost to "repent and be baptized." Ananias instructed Saul of Tarsus to "Get up and get yourself baptized." These words are absolutely meaningless if Holy Spirit baptism is what is in view. However, if baptism in water is a command to be obeyed, and it is, then the power and hope in them is overwhelming.

The story is told of a man who went over and over, night after night in answer to the altar call during a revival. Each night he went home sad and fearful because he did not "receive the Holy Ghost". Finally, one night a preacher followed him down to the altar and whispered in his ear the words of Acts chapters nine and twenty-two.

"And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight...And...Ananias...came unto [Paul] and stood, and said unto [him]...And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord... And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."

The "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5 is clearly water baptism.

[We have been answering the question: Is my baptism valid? Let's continue that line of thought this morning. As a basis for our study, let's read from Acts chapter eight verse 36 through 39.]

And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

Was I a proper subject for water baptism?

As previously mentioned, baptism is the point at which one enters into a saved relationship with Jesus Christ (Mark 16:16). It is the moment when we receive the benefits of his shed blood because we have been baptized into His death (Romans 6:3-4). In baptism we become sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:27) and new creatures in Christ raised to walk in newness of life (I Corinthians 5:17).

Baptism is not just simply or merely immersion in water. Rather, it is the immersion in water of a specific person for a specific purpose. The Scriptures are quite definite about who may and should be baptized. Therefore, one must be certain that he is a proper subject for water baptism if it is to be valid.

Baptism is a requirement only for those who are actually sinners. While that may seem obvious to some, there is a lot of confusion on this matter. Some have the idea that baptism is for those that are already saved. These think that baptism is necessary for membership in a particular denomination, but that it is not necessary for salvation. However, when Peter preached on Pentecost to the Jews that had killed the Christ, he told them to, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). He did not tell them to repent and be baptized because they were saved; nor did he say, "Repent for the remission of sins and be baptized because you are forgiven." Peter said, "Repent *and* be baptized for the remission of sins." The Jews on Pentecost were to do it because they were sinners in need of forgiveness.

Likewise, Jesus himself said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). He did not send the Twelve out to preach the Gospel to those who were not in need of salvation. Christ came to save the world (Luke 19:10) and sent the Twelve out to preach salvation to the lost (Mark 16:15). Those who believed that message of salvation were to be immersed. According to Jesus, all that believed *and* were baptized "shall be saved."

These texts are sufficient to demonstrate that baptism is for those that are lost in sin and in need of salvation. Now, that being the case, infants are certainly not proper candidates for water baptism because infants and children are not sinners. Jesus Himself taught that little children are innocent and pure before God, when He said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14). Our Lord describes *children* as possessing a nature that the citizens of God's eternal kingdom *must* possess. Jesus told His disciples, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, *and* become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). To hold that children are born guilty of Adam's sin, and therefore, totally depraved, has Jesus saying a prospective disciple must become as one wholly wicked and dead in sin in order to be converted. That is nonsense. Rather, Jesus is describing his disciples as those who as innocent, trusting and pure remain spiritually alive. No infants and children are not in need baptism because they have no sins to remit. Therefore, if you received "baptism" as an infant or child, it is not the one baptism of the New Testament (Ephesians 4:5).

Baptism is a requirement for those that have been taught the Gospel. During his personal ministry Jesus said that all those who were "taught of God" would come unto Him (John 6:37, 44-48). As we noted earlier in Mark 16:15, Jesus sent the Twelve to "preach the Gospel to every creature" and He commanded that those who

believed the Gospel should be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:16; cf. Acts 2:38; I Peter 3:21). Certainly then only those who have been taught the Gospel may be baptized.

The eunuch, about whom we read at the beginning of our study, had been riding in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah concerning the prophecy about the Suffering Servant. When Philip joined the eunuch in the chariot, he began at the same Scripture, Isaiah chapter 53 verse seven, and “preached unto him Jesus (Acts 8:35). Philip identified Jesus of Nazareth to the eunuch as the Christ who died for his sins. The eunuch believing confessed Christ to be the Son of God and was baptized. This same scene was repeated in Philippi years later; on that occasion it was a man and his family who wanted the answer to the question: “What must I do to be saved?” The story is recorded in Acts chapter 16. Paul tells the man that he must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved; immediately then Paul preaches to them the word of the Lord (Acts 16:31). That same hour of the night the man and his household were baptized into Christ. These two examples demonstrate that none were baptized who had not believed and there are none who believe apart from hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In Romans chapter one verse sixteen Paul attributes saving power to the word of God, he says, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for *it is the power of God unto salvation.*” In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul professed of the preaching of the Gospel, “Unto us which are saved, *it is the power of God*” (I Corinthians 1:18). Every scriptural baptism requires that its recipients be taught and believe the Gospel of Christ. Now, if the baptism you received was administered to you without your ever having been taught the Gospel then it is not valid.

Please consider this point carefully. Most religious ordinances called “baptism” are not administered following the preaching of the Gospel, but rather they are given either to infants who have no faith at all, or to those who have been instructed in denominational doctrine rather than the simple Gospel of Christ. Did you like the eunuch or the jailer and his house hear the Gospel and believe before you were baptized?

Before one may be baptized into Christ he must repent of his sins. We have already established that baptism is for the remission of sins, that is, it is in order to be saved from past sins. However, what is the sinner’s view of his sins at the time of his baptism? When Peter commanded baptism on Pentecost, he commanded those who had believed to “*Repent and be baptized...*” (Acts 2:38). Thus, the proper candidate for baptism is the sinner who believing in Christ repents of his sins.

What is repentance? This is a topic that is losing its appropriate place in preaching about Jesus. The Son of Man came to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32; Mark 2:17; Matthew 9:13). He preached a message of repentance; saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand...Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish” (Matthew 4:17; Luke 13:3, 5). Repentance is essential to salvation and one has not been properly baptized who was not called to repentance. Repentance is not just remorse for sin, neither is it a resolution to do better. Repentance is a “change of mind,” a turning of the will from serving self and sin to serving God (cf. Revelation 9:20–21). Repentance is induced by the Gospel; it is the goodness of God that leads men to repent (Romans 2:4). The goodness, grace and love of God is declared to us in the word of God which when believed causes men to be sorry toward God which works repentance (II Corinthians 7:8–10).

The fruit of repentance is the obedience of faith. This is illustrated from the parable of the two sons. A father asked both of his sons to go work in his vineyard. The first said, “I will not.” However, afterward he repented and went. The second said, “I will go.” But, he did not go. Jesus asked His audience which of the two sons did the will of his father. They all answered, “The first” (Matthew 21:28–31). Jesus then said that the prostitutes and tax collectors were entering the kingdom of heaven before the religious teachers and leaders. Why, because they had believed the preaching of John the Baptist. They were amending their ways turning their will toward the will of God. One’s baptism is not what it ought to be if he has not determined to turn to put the old man of sin to death in Jesus Christ.

In order for ones baptism to be valid it must be received by a penitent believer in Jesus Christ.

Was I an accountable age when baptized?

Another point that ought to be made that is closely related to this idea of certain prerequisites or qualifications which must exist in order to be baptized is the idea of accountability. While there is no clear numerical age one must reach in order to be scripturally immersed, there is a point of mental maturity one must reach. Surely one must understand what he is doing when he is baptized. And, in order to understand what one is doing, he must have attained an age where he is capable of understanding both the need for and purpose in being baptized. Therefore, young children are certainly not candidates for baptism.

I have already pointed out that infants are not fit subjects for water baptism because they are not guilty of sin. They obviously have not committed any transgression of their own simply by entering the world. The Bible clearly says, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father" (Ezekiel 18:20). Therefore, the guilt of Adam's transgression is not imputed to them. They are innocent of sin and safe in the arms of Jesus. However, the Bible does speak of "the sins of youth." David prayed, "Remember not *the sins of my youth*" (Psalm 25:7). Jeremiah the prophet wept that "our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, *from our youth* even unto this day" (Jeremiah 3:25). Job complained that his enemies reported the secrets of his younger days, "For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess *the iniquities of my youth*" (Job 13:26). Thus, the Bible recognizes that it is the experience of mankind that sin begins to make its appearance in our youth. All of the words translated "youth" imply vigor and strength and are understood to refer to the time of juvenility or adolescence. This is the time when boys and girls are transformed into men and women. Thus, there is a time after birth and before adulthood, where children remain innocent and pure before God.

The apostle Paul recognized this truth and stated it concerning himself in Romans chapter seven verse nine, "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Paul, being a Jew, was born under the Law of Moses—the "commandment came" to him when he was capable of understanding it and keeping it, then, and only then was he accountable to it. Paul "died," spiritually speaking, after that when he was found to be in sin and condemned by the Law. Paul knew when that moment for him was because he was smitten in conscience and knew in his heart that he was guilty before God. Listen to him describe that painful day in Romans chapter seven, "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."

Young people are often desirous of receiving baptism. This is truly a wonderful thing because the best life one may live is one in service to God. No better beginning could be made than to dedicate our life to God when we are still young and strong. However, God does not call any to be baptized who are not truly convicted by the word of God that they are sinners. Baptism is not for young boys and girls who cannot possibly have a soul that has been stained by the black mark of sin.

Is your baptism valid? Well, if you were an infant or a small child who had neither sin nor faith and received something called baptism, it was not the one baptism of the Bible.

[We have been answering the question: Is my baptism valid? Let's continue that line of thought this morning. As a basis for our study, let's read from Acts chapter two verses 36–41:

[And Peter said unto them,] "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 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 Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

[In our studies thus far, we have observed that there are many ordinances administered by the denominations that are called "baptism;" however, the Bible recognizes that there is only one baptism (Ephesians 4:5). Therefore, the diversity in practice concerning this subject causes us to question whether or not what has been received is truly valid as far as the Bible is concerned. We have learned that baptism in order to be valid New Testament baptism must have the right action, immersion, and the right subject, a penitent confessing believer, and the right element, water. Infant baptism by sprinkling or pouring, and "so-called" Holy Spirit baptism involve actions, elements and subjects unauthorized by the Scriptures.]

[Let's continue our study and explore further the one baptism about which we read in the New Testament."]

Was my baptism "for the remission of sins"?

In order for anything called "baptism" to be valid New Testament baptism it must have been received by the subject according to the purpose and design revealed in the Scriptures. The apostle Peter clearly stated the purpose of baptism in Acts chapter two and verse 38, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." The word "for" is used in this text "to denote purpose." Therefore, the phrase "for the remission of sins" could just as well be translated, "so that sins might be forgiven" (as it is in the NRSV).

Christ's purpose in ordaining baptism was for the salvation of men's souls. When Jesus sent the Twelve Apostles out to preach the Gospel, He said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). What Jesus required in order to be saved would seem to be a simple matter. Everyone who believes the Gospel and is immersed will be saved. Yet, some unwilling to submit to baptism seeking to avoid the import of the Lord's command have objected that Jesus did not say, "He that does not believe and is not baptized shall be damned." Rather, that Jesus only said, "He that does not believe shall be damned." The conclusion is that faith is the only thing essential since unbelief condemns and not a failure to be baptized.

In the first place, the Lord was not telling people what to do in order to be lost; He was revealing what to do in order to be saved. I am always amazed how folks just ignore that simple fact. The Lord came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).

In the second place, do those that read Jesus' words observing that *he did not say* in Mark 16:16 conclude that repentance is not necessary to salvation because Jesus did not say, "He that does not believe, and does not repent shall be damned"? Do you believe that one may remain impenitent and still be saved? Well, of course not, because Jesus said *elsewhere*, Luke chapter 13 and verse three, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Surely, you do not conclude that confessing Christ is not essential to salvation because *Jesus did not say* in Mark 16:16, "He that does not believe and does not confess Christ shall be damned." We know that Jesus said *elsewhere*, Matthew chapter ten and verse 33, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." There is no doubting that one must confess Christ in order to be saved. It is as Paul said in Romans chapter ten and verse nine, "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." Why then conclude baptism is non-essential on the basis of what Jesus *did not*

say in a text where He specifically did say, "He that *believes and is baptized* shall be saved." If we are not willing to reject repentance or confession of faith on that basis, why then should we reject water baptism? We will not because, Jesus said *elsewhere*, John chapter three and verse five, "Except a man is *born of water and of the Spirit* he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." Now, ladies and gentlemen, that should settle it. You cannot be saved, if you do not believe, if you do not repent, if you do not confess Christ AND, if you do not get yourself baptized.

Finally, a failure to be baptized does not cause a person to be condemned. Let me say that again, a failure to be baptized does not *cause* a person to be condemned. As a matter of fact, a failure to believe on Christ does not *cause* a person to be condemned. Jesus did not come to condemn the world, but rather, as He said in John chapter three and verse 17, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Men are condemned already on account of their sin and wickedness. Faith, repentance, confession and baptism are not the cause of mans condemnation, and failure to obey God on these matters does not cause a saved man to be lost, but disobedience makes it impossible for a condemned person to escape the damnation which is prepared for him.

Therefore, from Pentecost onward the Apostles preached faith, repentance and baptism into Christ. In the very first sermon Peter declared, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). As I noted earlier, that phrase "for remission of sins" indicates the purpose for which baptism is commanded. It is not difficult to understand that purpose when we consider that Jesus stated the same of His death in Matthew chapter 26 and verse 28: "*This is my blood shed for many for the remission of sins.*" What was the purpose of Jesus' death? Jesus died so that sins might be forgiven (Colossians 1:14; Ephesians 1:7), we are baptized into His death according to Romans chapter six verse three and four, "so that sins might be forgiven."

Now man's purpose in receiving baptism must be the same as that for which it was given in order to be the baptism of the New Testament. If one is baptized believing that his sins have already been forgiven, he is not baptized with the "one baptism" of the New Testament. If one is baptized with his object being other than the remission of his sins, he is not baptized with the "one baptism" of the New Testament. While the religious world administers many different baptisms for many different purposes, the apostle Peter clearly stated the purpose of the "one baptism" of the New Testament—"for the remission of sins."

Did I "obey from the heart"?

Another important consideration with respect to whether or not the baptism one has received is valid pertains to the nature of obedience. The Bible teaches that men are saved by grace through faith. Yet, the faith that saves us is an *obedient* faith, a faith that works. Paul wrote in Galatians chapter five verse six, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love." In Peter's first letter, chapter one verses 22 through 23, he says, "You have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever." Again Paul, this time in the sixth chapter of his Roman letter, writes specifically concerning water baptism:

"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

Each of these texts rests salvation on a foundation of obedient faith. This obedience comes from the heart—there because trusting in Christ it acts out of genuine love for the Saviour in willing submission to His Gospel.

Therefore, obedience to the Gospel in baptism requires a sincere motivation proceeding from the heart; the seat of one's intellect, emotion, and will. Therefore, one must ask himself, "Did I know what I was doing?" It is impossible to obey the truth without having understood it (Matthew 13:19). This goes

directly to the issue involved in infant baptism. Not only does an infant not have any sins to be remitted, but an infant cannot possibly be rendering obedience from the heart. Every society recognizes this principle. That is why we punish rapists and not the victim; it is why we punish bank robbers and not the tellers who give them the money at gun point; it is why we make exceptions for those with mental disease or defect in applying the law. One cannot will if he is under duress or lacks mental capacity to understand. Likewise, the "baptism" of an infant cannot possibly be regarded as the obedience of faith since he lacked both the capacity and the will to obey. The infant is "baptized" as a result of the will of his parents and upon the faith of his "godparents".

Similarly, one has not obeyed the Gospel in baptism, if at the time of his baptism he believed and was obeying error on the subject. Some want to justify what was called "baptism" which when examined in the light of New Testament doctrine is found to be something other than that baptism. Many sects immerse in water but those whom they immerse are taught and confess that they were saved before and without water baptism, in other words, their immersion is an outward symbol of an already existing spiritual reality. However, the Bible says that baptism is "for the remission of sins" and to be "saved" (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21). One may as well try and make a silk purse out of a sow's ear as argue that immersion preceded by instruction that baptism does not have anything to do with salvation and a confession that one is saved before he is immersed is "baptism for the remission of sins".

Into what church was I baptized?

Most religious bodies in this matter of "baptism" regard their particular baptism as putting one into their denomination. Thus, Methodist baptism makes Methodists and Baptist baptism makes Baptists. No denomination believes that their "baptism" makes Christians. As a general rule Baptists do not accept those who have been baptized as Methodists and vice versa. I have known some who wanted to change denominations to be offended at this reality because the sect which they wanted to joined regarded them as saved but would not accept them because they had not subscribed to their party distinctions.

In Acts chapter two, we read, "those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them...and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." Those that the Lord added to the church were those that were being saved, but those that were being added were those that were being baptized. Thus, those that were being saved were those that were being baptized (Acts 2:41, 47). You cannot read about denominational affiliation in the New Testament. Baptism was not a sect making process. It was the moment that God pardoned your sins and made you a member of His spiritual house.

Many preachers urge folks to answer an altar call and then "join a Bible believing church," in other words join a denomination. But that is not what was practiced in the beginning of Christianity. Baptism was never intended to divide the one body of Christ, rather, according to I Corinthians chapter 12 at verse 13, "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." Baptism is a unifying event. It makes us one with Christ and one with each other. New Testament baptism is based upon a common faith in a common Saviour it unites us in a common death for the remission of the sins of the whole world. It is a common action in a common element for a common purpose resulting in a common fellowship in a common love. There is nothing sectarian, divisive or carnal about it.

Is your baptism valid? Only if you from the heart obeyed Christ seeking His will and intent, the remission of sins in order to be saved, whereupon He added you to His body the church of Christ.