

BAPTISM FOR REMISSION OF SINS FOR JEWS ONLY

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

WE SHOULD make quite a marked distinction between the Atonement Day arrangement for Israel with its cancellation, and any other arrangement for cancelation of sin. The sacrifices of the Day of Atonement typified the "better sacrifices" for the putting away of Original Sin. Original Sin was Adam's sin, which has descended to all of his children. The entire race is by nature under the dominion of that Original Sin and under its penalty. God purposes to do away with both the sin and its penalty, through the great High Priest, Jesus. Jesus has already died and has now nearly completed the offering of the "better sacrifices" than those offered by the typical high priest of Israel. We see that the time is coming when there will not be a mere imputation of the merit of Christ, as there has been during the Gospel Age for the Church; for during the incoming Age His merit will be applied absolutely for the sins of the whole world, and the sins of the world – the Adamic sin – will be canceled forever. The condemnation of Original Sin will be no more upon any one, anywhere; and all who will may be assisted up to all that was lost by Adam and redeemed by Christ Jesus.

But there are other sins besides Original Sin, and the culpability of these is proportionate to the amount of knowledge enjoyed. Those which are unintentional are in our Lord's prayer called "trespasses." But prayer to God would not set aside Original Sin – only the death of Jesus as a Ransom could set this aside. There are certain ones who through faith in His redeeming blood and by consecration of heart and life to the Lord have become children of God. Because of

inherited imperfections these children of God commit trespasses. When they recognize these trespasses, they should come to the Throne of Heavenly Grace "that they may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Others than those who have become children of God have no standing with Him and have no right to make petitions. The only ones who have a hearing with God are those who have become disciples, or followers, of Christ and who have been accepted by Him as His followers. For such He has become the surety and has inducted them into a blessed relationship with the Father – the relationship of sons.

The Israelites were God's people, in covenant relationship with Him through typical arrangements. The time had not then come for Christ to die for sinners, so God gave them a system of *types*, pointing forward to the *real Sacrifice* for sins to be offered "in due time." He arranged that those who came into this covenant relationship with Him should be treated as though their sins had been actually forgiven and canceled. "Year by year continually," as the Apostle Paul says, they were to repeat these Atonement Day sacrifices, and thus have, typically, a fresh cancellation of Adamic sin for another year, for the sacrifice was good only for one year. Because of this arrangement their *unwitting* transgressions were typically set aside, and they continued to be God's Covenant people. During each year, however, they might through more or less weakness fall into errors of thought, of word and of conduct. These would be trespasses.

THE OBJECT OF JOHN'S BAPTISM

When John the Baptist began his ministry, he came preaching that the time was now at hand when Messiah would appear, and the invitation to come into the real Kingdom of God be given. His exhortation was that all the people should get ready for this, otherwise they would not be prepared to receive Messiah. He said in substance, Examine your life. Are you living to the best of your

ability according to the Law? If not, if you are living according to a lower standard than the best of which you are capable, you are guilty. To whatever extent you are not living up to your highest possibilities, you are in disfavor [R5963 : page 291] with God and untrue to your covenant. If you desire from now on to do your best, show this by being baptized in water. This will be an acknowledgment that you *repent* of sins, and you will thus *wash away* your sins.

The people washed away their own sins, typically. John the Baptist did not wash them away. Those who had not been living in harmony with their Law Covenant, but who heard John gladly and turned from sin, were largely the very ones to whom the Message respecting the coming of Messiah appealed. Thus they became, with those who had kept themselves in God's favor and blessing, "Israelites indeed, in whom was no guile." This washing away of sins was not an *actual* cleansing from guilt; for only the blood of Jesus, the merit of His Ransom-sacrifice, could actually take away sin.

SAUL OF TARSUS BAPTIZED WITH JOHN'S BAPTISM

Some have asked, With what baptism was Saul of Tarsus baptized? with Jesus' baptism or John's baptism? Saul had lived "in all good conscience" before God during his previous life; how, then, did he have sins to wash away on the occasion of his conversion to Christ? We recall the incident of his conversion. While engaged in persecuting the Christians, Saul, on his way to Damascus, [R5963 : page 292] had been stricken down, and the Lord had manifested Himself to him. Then as St. Paul afterward said, he saw Jesus shining above the brightness of the sun at noonday and, as the result of this glorious manifestation, his eyes were blinded. His companions then led him to Damascus, where for three days he neither ate nor drank. Then Ananias, a servant of God, was sent by the Lord, to restore Saul's sight. After Saul recovered his sight Ananias said to him, "And

now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins."

St. Paul apparently never entirely recovered from this injury to his eyes. The Lord refused to fully restore his sight. Certain Scriptures seem to imply that his weakness of eyes was what he called his "thorn in the flesh." But the Lord declared that He would give him what would be more than an offset to his poor eyesight – the riches of His grace. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10.) Although He was highly honored by revelations, this affliction served to keep him humble, and to remind him that at one time he had been injurious to the Lord's people.

The Apostle declared that what he did was done "in all good conscience," verily thinking that he was doing God service when he persecuted the followers of Jesus. He said that he had received mercy because he "did it ignorantly through unbelief." He declared, "I am the least of saints, not worthy to be called a saint, because I persecuted the Church of God." In his previous life he had been very careful to keep the outward forms of the Law, being, as he said, "a Pharisee of the Pharisees." But he had neglected the spirit of the Law – mercy and justice. In his zeal for the Law he had energetically persecuted those in harmony with God. He was, therefore, a sinner, without having been conscious that he was doing wrong. But his sin was declared by the Lord through Ananias, who reproved Saul and called on him to realize his sins and wash them away by baptism.

NO SINS ACTUALLY REMITTED BY BAPTISM

This leads us to consider in what way baptism could wash away sins. The Scriptures show us that there is no baptism that washes away sins so far as the Gentiles are concerned. All of us who were Gentiles have had our sins washed away, not by water, but by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. To us baptism signifies something different from the washing away of sins, as was the baptism of John; namely, a burial into, an induction into, the Body of Christ, the Church.

However, this does not signify that St. Paul and other Jews were not properly inducted into Christ. The Jews were "baptized into Moses, in the sea and in the cloud." Moses was the mediator for the whole nation of Israel; he stood between God and the people. Because this was so, God entered into a covenant with them; and Israel entered into a covenant with God, declaring that all His commandments they would keep. Throughout the Jewish Age some of them kept these commandments without any serious break. Amongst these were a number of the Apostles, we believe. They had been living good, honest, upright lives, in harmony with the Lord, so far as they were at that time able to live.

Others of those who came to Jesus were such as realized that they had been sinners; but they had repented. We remember that this was the very object of the Father's plan in sending John the Baptist. John taught the Jews that the Messiah was about to come to them, and that all who desired to be found in harmony with the Kingdom He would proclaim, should see to it that they were in harmony with the Law. Some had nothing to repent of and nothing to wash away by baptism. Many of those who realized that they had been unfaithful to their covenant with God were baptized in water, symbolically washing away the sins they had committed. This act of repentance brought them back under the blessings and favor of their Law Covenant. But although the blood of bulls and goats shed according to their Law did not actually take away sin, yet properly received by faith these sacrifices kept the people in covenant relationship with God. So likewise, neither could water baptism remit sin; but it restored them to full harmony with God's arrangement for Israel.

So the Jews who recognized that they had been living out of harmony with God, took the opportunity of being baptized by John. Washing away their sins symbolically in water, they publicly declared that they intended thenceforth to live in accordance with God's Law. Others, the religious leaders, were hypocritical. They were sure that if God purposed to bless any of His people at the

coming of the Messiah He would bless those who had kept themselves in harmony with His Law – *themselves*. The Scribes, the Pharisees, and the Doctors of the Law of that time, as well as the Sadducees, all had a light opinion of John's work. Jesus said that this was because they were unwilling to repent and wash away their sins, unwilling to acknowledge that they had any sins to wash away. Therefore, as they received not John, they were equally unready to receive the One of whom John was the forerunner, the One who came to take away sin actually by making His own life the Sin-Offering.

HOW JEWS WERE TRANSFERRED FROM MOSES TO CHRIST

Gentiles could not by repenting *get back* into relationship with the Mosaic Law; for they had *never been under* that Law. Moses was a type of Christ. As the Jews were all baptized into Moses, so when Jesus took the place of Moses, the baptism into Moses was counted as baptism into Christ to all who accepted Jesus as the Messiah. As the Apostle pointed out (Acts 3:22), "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me. Him shall ye hear in all things." Christ was this Prophet like unto Moses, only far greater – like unto him in that He was to be the Representative of God to "all the people," the world of mankind, as Moses was His representative to all the people of Israel.

Any Jew who was in proper relationship to God through Moses was brought over into Christ upon the exercise of faith, so that he was in Christ as soon as he recognized Christ as the antitype of Moses and realized that his baptism into Moses meant typically his baptism into the great Antitype of Moses. In referring to the typical relationship of Israel to Christ, the Apostle Paul declared that when they drank of the water from the smitten Rock, "they drank of that Spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." They drank of it in *type*. Hence when in due time the faithful ones of Israel accepted the Messiah by faith, they died to that typical relationship,

and thenceforth drank *actually* of the Spiritual Rock – Christ Jesus. They came into vital relationship to Messiah.

Baptism for the remission of sins is no longer effective for the Jews, because their opportunity is closed, the way by which they might have a preference over the Gentiles. There is no provision now by means of which the Jews are privileged to come into Christ by any easier way than are those of any other nation or people. As a nation the Jews were left desolate five days before the crucifixion of Christ, until their "double" of disfavor should be fulfilled. See SCRIPTURE STUDIES, Volume 2, pp. 216-228. We understand that special favor even to individual [R5963 : page 293] Jews ended three and a half years after the Cross, at the close of their seventieth week, as foretold by the Prophet Daniel. (Daniel 9:24-27.) See SCRIPTURE STUDIES, Vol. 2, pp. 63-71.

The Apostle explains (Romans 11) that while the Israelites had been the natural branches in the olive tree, of which the Promise to Abraham was the root and the Lord Jesus Christ was the Antitypical trunk, nevertheless the time came when many of these branches were broken off. A broken-off branch could not be restored by any different process than that by which a wild branch could be ingrafted. These branches had already been broken off when the Apostle referred to the matter in his letter to the Church at Rome. Hence any Jew coming into Christ then would have to be grafted in the same as a Gentile. He would have no precedence.

IMPROPER BAPTISM OF THE TWELVE EPHESIANS

We note the case of the Ephesians mentioned in Acts 19. Apollos had preached at Ephesus and had baptized twelve brethren. But Apollos himself had not then been clearly informed as to the difference between the baptism of the Jews and that of the Gentiles; and he performed on them the baptism of John, which was for the [R5964 : page 293] remission of the sins of the Jews against their Law Covenant, including later their sin of rejection and crucifixion

of Messiah. But God would not recognize this baptism for a Gentile. The Gentiles had never been in covenant relationship with Him.

When St. Paul came to Ephesus and perceived that these men had none of the gifts of the Spirit then common to all believers, he inquired what baptism they had received. They answered, "John's baptism." Then he required them to be baptized again, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This brought them into full relationship with God, as were the remainder of the disciples. The Lord probably permitted this mistake in order that the Apostles might more clearly understand, and that thus the truth of the matter might come down to us. These things give us a clear conception of how particular God is in all His dealings. There is a definite way in which we may come into covenant relationship with the Lord, and He insists on the recognition of the conditions which must be observed to this end.

NATURAL BRANCHES BROKEN OFF

The Jewish people have been broken off from favor and fellowship with God for a long time, a period of disfavor equal to the former period of their favor – 1845 years, as we have shown in **SCRIPTURE STUDIES**. They are severed from the original olive tree. But God is able to "graft them in again," as the Apostle declares. So during the Gospel Age the Jew has had the same privilege of coming into the Body of Christ as the Gentile. The fact that one is a Jew does not hinder him from entering into the enjoyment of all the privileges of Gentile Christians. The only thing that has hindered is the great gulf of prejudice and misconception of God.

The Jewish nation are cast off from favor "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." We believe the "fulness" is now about completed. St. Paul declares that the Jews, Israel after the flesh, shall be restored to favor with God. "They shall obtain mercy through your [the Gospel Church's] mercy," he assures us. They shall be brought back through the ministration of the glorified Church. As a nation they failed to avail themselves of the privileges of this Gospel Age

to have their sins put away by accepting Christ; but the Jews will come into favor under the most favorable conditions when the New Order of things shall be established – when by the application of the merit of His sacrifice Christ shall have made atonement for the whole world. This will include the sins of the Jews. Their "double" of disfavor having ended, as we understand, in the spring of 1878, God's favor is gradually being manifested to the Jews, and will continue to increase until their full restoration, though their chastisement is not yet fully completed.

SPECIAL PRIVILEGES FOR NATURAL ISRAEL

At the inauguration of the New Age of blessing Natural Israel will be granted a special place and privilege; "for the gifts and calling of God are not things to be repented of." We see how in another way, also, this special privilege will come to them; namely, in that the Law has been more or less of a restraint upon them in their daily lives as a people. They have had more or less of loyalty to God, which has kept them separate from other nations. This special privilege of preeminence in the Messianic Kingdom, however, will not be granted to all who are Jews by blood; but only to those who prove loyal to the Law and the Prophets – those who are Jews at heart, and not merely outwardly. All others are merely Gentiles. – Romans 2:28,29.

The earthly phase of the Kingdom will be composed of the Ancient Worthies of the ages preceding the First Advent of our Lord. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, and the Hebrew Prophets and other faithful ones will be in power as "princes in all the earth." (Psalm 45:16.) The orthodox Jews will be more ready to receive the blessing of the New Dispensation promptly than will any other people. Therefore they will have the first blessing – not by reason of partiality on God's part in showing favor to these people, but by virtue of the fact that He made a covenant with them as the posterity of faithful Abraham.

BAPTISM IN THE NEXT AGE

We have no reason to think that baptism will be practised in the New Dispensation. We have no Scriptures that tell us it will be introduced. Yet it will not be surprising if it shall be reestablished; for baptism is a very beautiful picture of consecration to God, the full giving of the life to His service. It may be introduced as a symbol of washing away sin or as a symbol of consecration. What we do not *know* we think it best not to discuss. We do see that the Church was baptized into Christ by being baptized into His death; and that baptism is, therefore, to the Christian, a symbol of death. But it need not be a symbol of death always. This beautiful figure might be transmuted to signify a baptism into the family of Christ, a manifestation of the adoption of this new Father, in contradistinction to the old father, Adam – a rising to newness of life through the Lord Jesus Christ. We should not be surprised if this would be the case, but it is not wise to speculate in advance. It is better to leave those matters not yet clear, until the Lord shall open them up fully.

John's Baptism was called by that name because John was the first one who used baptism; and he, as the forerunner of Christ, used it to do a preparatory work. Not only John and his disciples, but also Jesus and His disciples, practised this baptism among the Jews. (John 4:1-3.) This rite called to repentance of sin and the getting into harmony with the Messiah who was about to come. It was very necessary that Jesus should be recognized as the great Anointed One; for although His baptism was to bring the Jews back into accord with Moses, into harmony with the Law, nevertheless it was to prepare them to accept the Messiah. **[R5964 : page 294]**

The baptism of Jews after Pentecost was the same – for the remission of sins; but they had charged against them, in addition to their other sins of unfaithfulness, the crucifixion of the Prince of Life. Many acknowledged their guilt when they realized what had been done. They saw that the whole nation was guilty of what the people

had done through their rulers, the high priest, the under priests, the Sanhedrin, the Scribes, the Pharisees and the Doctors of the Law.

Those Jews who were contrite of heart were prompted to ask what they should do to escape the condemnation which was upon the whole people. St. Peter answered, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." In a measure extenuating their sin of crucifying the Messiah, he said, "I wot, brethren, that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." (Acts 2:37,38; 3:13-15,17.) He reminded them that they were the children of the promises; and that as Israelites they had a special claim on this arrangement which God had made through His Anointed Son, in that it must come to them *first*; and that their repentance would bring them forgiveness and remission of sins.

The Apostle was not speaking, however, of a new immersion into the Body of Christ which would be applicable only to Gentiles; for Gentiles could not be received in the same way, by remission of sins and a restitution to God's favor under the Jewish Law arrangement to which they had never been subject. Gentiles had never sinned against the Law; therefore they could not be dealt with as the Jews.

WAS JOHN'S BAPTISM CHRISTIAN BAPTISM?

Again, it is asked, Was the baptism of John Christian Baptism? If not, when did Christians begin to baptize with the Christian baptism? We reply, John's Baptism was not Christian baptism, but merely a baptism for the washing away of sins, as we have shown. Few of those baptized by John knew anything about Christ. It could not, therefore, have been a Christian baptism. However, it would *amount* to Christian baptism to the Jews who observed it, because by coming back into Moses and recognizing Christ as the

antitype of Moses, they would thus be transferred into Christ after Pentecost.

But Christian baptism to the Gentiles was a new thing. It symbolized the grafting of wild olive branches into the Israelitish olive tree. It was an immersion of aliens into the Body of Messiah, making them fellow-members with the Jews of the twelve tribes of Spiritual Israel, whose entire number was to be 144,000 – twelve thousand from each tribe. (Revelation 2:9; 3:9; 7:1-8; 14:1-5.) Those taken from among the Gentiles were the wild olive branches grafted into the good olive tree, making up the number which lacked to complete this Body of Christ.

SHOULD WATER BAPTISM BE PRACTISED NOW?

Some friends seem to have been in doubt as to whether it is proper to practise water baptism since October 1st, 1914, and if so, as to what words should be used by the administrator in immersing the candidate, especially if he has but lately made a consecration.

To this we reply; firstly, Just when the membership of the Body of Christ will be consummated is not a matter that we are capable of determining with positiveness. Up to that time we may be sure that any one presenting himself in the proper way was eligible. Secondly, Some of those who now present themselves for immersion have made a complete consecration previously; they may be symbolizing a consecration made five, ten or twenty years ago. Thirdly, Even if we were sure that the Body of Christ is now completed, we see no reason why consecration [**R5965 : page 294**] to God should not be symbolized by water baptism; for this rite represents the surrender and burial of the individual will into the will of the Lord, and this is the proper course for every one to take. We could not imagine a different course for all to take during the Millennial Age. The difference will be that the Lord will not accept them then to a change of nature, but to His favor under the Restitution privileges of that Dispensation – an uplift to perfect human nature on the earth.

Those who will come into harmony with God's arrangements for the world during the Millennium, now about to dawn, are to be the children of Christ – He is spoken of as their "Everlasting Father" – their Life-giver. He is not the Father of the Gospel Church, but their Elder Brother. They are the children of God. The life that will be given to the world will be the earthly life, the kind which Jesus surrendered on their behalf. They are referred to in 1 Cor., chapter 15, as they that are His, who become His, during the thousand years of His presence.

The Common Version rendering is obscure. Verse 23 should read, "But every man in his own order: the anointed First-fruits; afterward, they that are Christ's in His presence" – during His Parousia, the thousand years of Christ's Reign. "Then cometh the end, when He [Christ] shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father," "that God may be all in all." (Verses 24-28.) All of the restored world will belong to the general family of Christ. Jesus the Bridegroom and the Church His Bride will have the regenerated human family as their children on the earthly plane of being. Mankind will become Christ's children by the consecration of themselves. The Father's will for them will not be the spirit nature, but human restitution to all that was lost in Adam.

For all these reasons we see that it is proper that we should make no change at this time either in the symbolic baptism or in the language used in connection with the same. We think it a fitting picture of consecration to God and His service on whatever plane of life one may spend eternity, whether spiritual or earthly.

REST

"For we which have believed do enter into rest."

The rest of *faith!* How wondrous sweet,
Each trial and each grief to meet,

Upheld by that sufficient grace,
That trusts Him where it cannot trace.

The rest of *peace!* With mind so stayed,
That as the sea-birds, unafraid,
Upon the stormy deep do sleep,
My soul an inmost calm doth keep.

The rest of *love!* What holy bliss,
That He is mine, and I am His!
It sweetens every bitter cup,
It bids my tear-dimmed eyes look up;

It satisfies my hungry heart,
And makes this life of Heaven a part;
Oh! blessed rest of *faith* and *peace*,
Oh! rest of *love* that ne'er shall cease.

GERTRUDE W. SEIBERT.

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