

Is Baptism Essential to Salvation?

The question, whether the Gospel of Christ enjoins baptism as essential to salvation, is of serious importance, as it involves the fate of every man and woman on earth; and it is to the interest of all not to rest satisfied until they have a correct understanding in regard to it.

There is considerable trouble and diversity of opinion on this subject in the professed Christian world; and it seems that the sayings of uninspired men in relation thereto, have only tended to bewilder the mind. But while men may cling to their own opinions, and wander from the truth, the sincere seeker after salvation will prefer to believe the revealed word of God.

In St. Luke's writings, we read that John the Baptist, a servant of the Most High, taught and administered baptism; the Lord said that those who received of this baptism justified God, but that there were others who "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Luke vii: 29, 30). Now, men cannot be saved by rejecting the counsel of God against themselves. Then, as it is the counsel of God for men to be baptized, they cannot be saved without it; therefore it is essential to salvation.

The Lord sent His angel to Cornelius, and told him to send for Peter, who would tell him words whereby he and all his house should be saved (Acts xi:14). Cornelius did so, and when the Apostle came, "he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts x:48). If Cornelius had rejected baptism as non-essential, could he have been saved? No; for the angel informed him that Peter would tell him how to be saved, and the Apostle "commanded them to be baptized." According to this, baptism must be essential to salvation.

The Apostle Paul, speaking to the Galatians, says: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. iii:26, 27). If it is necessary "to put on Christ" to obtain salvation, then it is essential to be baptized, for we put on Christ by baptism.

The Lord Jesus, in sending out His Apostles, said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not (and consequently is not baptized) shall be damned" (Mark xvi:15, 16). Here the Lord positively declares that it is the baptized believer who shall be saved. Then baptism is essential to salvation, and who will dare to set the Lord at naught by denying it?

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water (that is, baptized in water) and of the Spirit (that is, baptized in the Spirit) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii:5). If entering the kingdom of God is essential to salvation, the being "born of water," or being baptized, is essential also, for by doing the latter we make the former possible.

The Apostle Peter, in the third chapter of his first epistle, says that in the ark there were eight souls "saved by water, the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us." Then Peter plainly teaches that baptism is essential to salvation.

On the day of Pentecost many persons were convinced that Jesus was the Christ, and were thereby led to inquire of God's servants what they should do. Peter replied: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts ii:38). The chief Apostle commanded them to be baptized because baptism was essential to salvation.

When John was in the wilderness he preached the "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark i:4). He preached the same doctrine in all the country about Jordan (Luke iii:3). Peter commanded the people to be baptized "for the remission of sins" (Acts ii:38). Ananias said to Paul, "Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts xxii:16.) From these quotations it will be seen that baptism is "for the re-

mission of sins." Is the remission of sins essential to salvation? If so, baptism must be, for one is obtained through the other.

The Scriptures state that it is those who do the will of God that will enter the kingdom of heaven. That it is the will of God for people to be baptized, no believer in the Bible will deny. Then they who say, "Lord, Lord," and reject baptism, will surely receive that woeful doom, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

If baptism is not essential to salvation, why does the Lord require it? The fact that he requires it is enough to prove that it is essential, for no one can be saved by disobeying God's commandments.

Some have supposed that the thief who was crucified beside the Lord went to heaven, and it is believed that he was not baptized; therefore it is argued that if one can be saved without baptism others can, and consequently it is not essential to salvation. But this supposition is incorrect, for Jesus said to the thief, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise," and three days afterwards said to Mary, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father." By this we learn that paradise and heaven are two distinct places, and as Jesus did not go to heaven on the day he was crucified, neither did the thief; for they were both together in paradise.

Here the seeker after truth may properly inquire: "If it is necessary for all men and women to be baptized, what will become of the good people who have died without that privilege?" To this the reply of the Scriptures is that the dead who died without hearing the Gospel will have it preached to them (I Peter iv:5, 6). They who obey it will be saved, but they who reject it will be condemned, as though they were in the flesh.

"But a dead person cannot be baptized," says one. Very true; but God is just. In His infinite wisdom He has provided a way in which the dead can be baptized for, by those who are in the flesh, as shown by the Apostle Paul in his questions: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? (I Cor. 15:29.) Paul was not speaking about baptism for the dead, but the resurrection of the dead, and brings up baptism for the dead

as a proof of the resurrection, by asking why they were "baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all." His questions plainly show that "baptism for the dead" was both believed in and practiced by the early Christians.

These Scriptural references prove conclusively that baptism is essential to salvation. It is a law of the Gospel of Christ, which is "the power of God unto salvation." Let those who desire to be saved prepare themselves and be baptized, under proper authority, for the remission of sins, that they may enter into the kingdom of heaven; "for what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus Christ in Jordan, came to Joseph Smith, Jr., and Oliver Cowdery in the year 1829 in Susquehanna Co., Pa., and conferred upon them the authority to baptize in water. Later in the same year came Peter, James and John, Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, and conferred upon Joseph and Oliver the right to lay on hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost.

This is the authority of Jesus Christ to baptize in water, and also with fire and the Holy Ghost, and this authority is held by the elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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