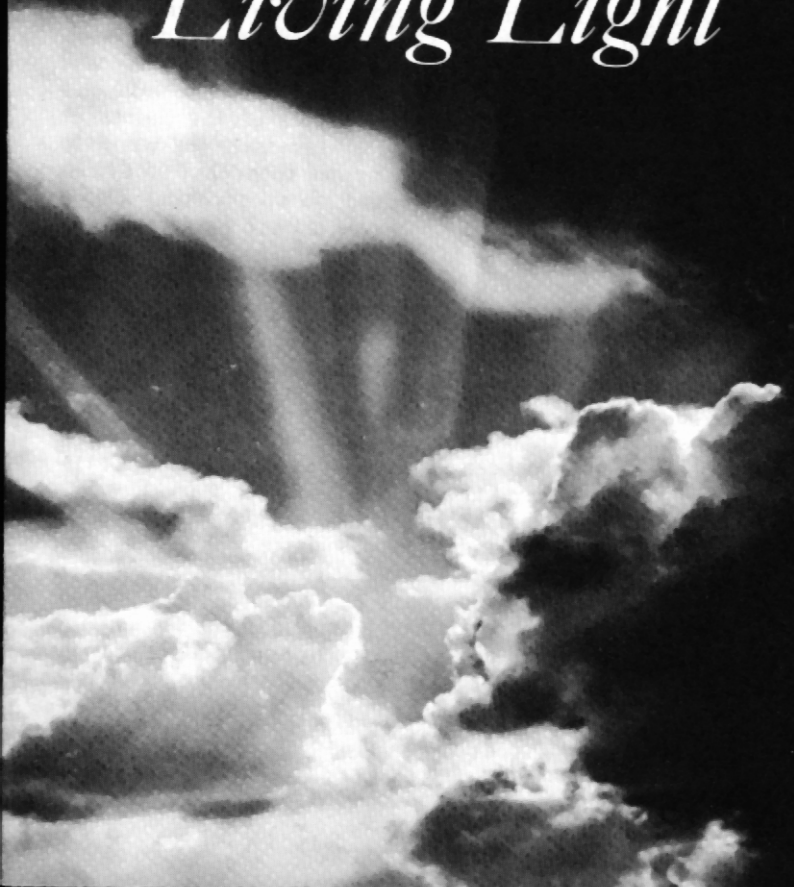


BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

*Rays of
Living Light*



BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

BY PRESIDENT CHARLES W. PENROSE

A NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE

“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?”¹ This was an argument used by the Apostle Paul with the Corinthians, who doubted the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. It is evident that they were familiar with baptism for the dead. For, the apostle was reasoning with them from what they knew. The influence of Greek philosophy affected the minds of the Saints at Corinth, and the apostle found it necessary to write to them his splendid treatise, to convince them that as Christ was actually raised from the dead, so all mankind should be brought forth from their graves, as the Savior himself declared. And appealing to their good sense, he asked the question why they were baptized for the dead, if, as some among them maintained, there was to be no resurrection of the dead.

NOT UNDERSTOOD IN MODERN TIMES

This doctrine, that the living could be baptized in behalf of the dead, has not been understood in the so-called Christian world for many hundreds of years. It was known to the early fathers, but became obsolete when the authority held by the apostles and their associates was taken from the earth and spiritual darkness settled upon the world. Yet, if that was part of the doctrine of Christ in the Apostolic age, it is part of it now. But who among all the sects of the age teaches it? Who has authority to administer it? Who knows anything of the manner in which the ordinance should be solemnized? It is because of the profound ignor-

¹1 Corinthians 15:29.

ance of modern teachers of religion on this important subject that they endeavor, whenever the text given above is quoted, either to cover it with a cloud of meaningless explanation, or treat it as unworthy of attention, or to set it aside as something "done away."

NEW REVELATION ON THE SUBJECT

In the revelation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ anew in the present age, baptism for the dead was made known to the Prophet Joseph Smith as a necessary part of the doctrine of Christ. Its purpose, the form of the ordinance, who should administer it, who should receive it, how it would affect both the living and dead and everything to render it acceptable to God and efficacious to the departed, was made known to the Prophet of the nineteenth century.

OUTWARD ORDINANCE TO BE PERFORMED ON EARTH

It has already been demonstrated, in previous tracts, that the Gospel preached by our Savior and his Apostles to the living was also preached to the dead, that is, to the spirits of those who had once dwelt in the body on earth. Also that such persons are capable of receiving the truth, of faith, of repentance, of obedience and reform. It has been further shown that baptism for the remission of sins and the reception of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, both ordinances to be administered by actual divine authority, are essential to salvation. But it will be evident to the thoughtful reader that while the internal or spiritual requirements of the Gospel can be complied with by disembodied persons, the outward and material ceremonies are of the body, and can only be performed on the earth. Water is an earthly element or composition of material elements, and pertains to this mundane sphere. It is for this reason that the living must be baptized for the dead. If those who died unbaptized are to obtain salvation the necessary ordinances will have to be attended to by proxy.

SALVATION BY PROXY

If any professing Christian objects to the idea of salvation by proxy, the all-important fact that the entire plan of salvation hinges on that principle should be sufficient to sweep away the objection entirely and forever. "The wages of sin is death." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Jesus of Nazareth died instead of sinners. The just was offered for the unjust. The innocent Christ was a substitute for guilty men. The whole doctrine of the atonement rests upon the principle of salvation by proxy. Jesus is called the Captain of our salvation. He is the head of the host of the army of saviors. It was predicted by Obadiah the prophet that "Saviors shall come up on Mount Zion" in the last days, and "the kindom shall be the Lord's."² And the inspired writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, speaking of those worthies who through faith performed great wonders and prevailed and obtained witness from God in olden times, declared, "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."³ Thus the work of human redemption is to be carried on until all the people of the earth shall be judged according to the Gospel, every soul having had an opportunity of receiving or rejecting it, either in the body or in the spirit state, and of obeying the ordinances thereof, either in person or vicariously, the living acting for the dead.

BEAUTIES OF THE DOCTRINE

At the first glance, this doctrine may strike the modern Christian mind as new and dangerous, but the more it is investigated in all its bearings, the clearer its truth is made apparent, and the more glorious it becomes. The thought that those who receive and obey the Gospel of Christ in its

²Obadiah 21.³Hebrews 11:39-40.

fullness while in the flesh, can aid in the work of redemption for their ancestors who are in the spirit world, is most delightful to the reverent soul. It shows the value of those genealogies which Israel, the covenant people of God, were moved upon in olden times to preserve. It stimulates the faithful in Christ to good works that they may become "saviors on Mount Zion." It explains how the nations composed of millions upon millions of souls that never heard the Gospel or the name of Christ Jesus, many ultimately be redeemed and made heirs of salvation.

ORDINANCES, HOW ADMINISTERED

The ordinances for the dead, as revealed from heaven to the Prophet Joseph Smith, must be attended to in the way provided by the Lord or they will not be accepted of him. They must be administered in sacred places, built according to a heavenly pattern, and administered by those who have authority to loose on earth and it shall be loosed in heaven, to seal on earth and it shall be sealed in heaven. Persons who have themselves complied with the requirements of the Gospel may be baptized and administered to in other necessary ordinances for and in behalf of their departed kindred and ancestors, as far back as their line of progenitors can be ascertained. This work must be attended to in Zion. This necessitates the gathering of the Saints, "the elect of God," from all parts of the earth. They are commanded of the Lord to come out of Babylon, that they be not partakers of her sins, and that they receive not of her plagues.⁴ In compliance with this requirement they are gathering from all nations, to the mountain of the house of the Lord, in the tops of the mountains, where they can learn of his ways and walk in his paths, and build up Zion, where they can officiate as saviors and prepare for the coming of the Great King.⁵

⁴Revelation 18:4.

⁵Micah 4:1-4; Isaiah 2:2-5; Psalm 102:16.

GATHERING OF JUDAH

The gathering of Judah is also to be accomplished in this dispensation of the fulness of times. Their gathering place is Jerusalem. They will return to the land of their forefathers chiefly in unbelief. A few of the race will begin to believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, but the masses of that people will not receive him in that light until he comes and "his feet shall stand again on the Mount of Olives." He will then appear as their Deliverer from the hosts that will assemble against them for a spoil and a prey. They will then look upon him whom their forefathers have pierced, and beholding the scars of the wounds he received when "he came to his own and his own received him not," but hung him upon the cross, will come to the understanding that Jesus is indeed the Son of God as well as the Son of David, and is their Messiah, their Redeemer, and their King. They will then receive his Gospel, the only plan of salvation: "a nation will be born in a day unto the Lord"; and in the Temple that will be reared to his name they will officiate for their dead until all the links in the chain of ancestry, back to the time when the Gospel was on the earth previous to the enunciation of the Mosaic code, the law of carnal commandments, are made complete. All the promises made to Israel and Judah through their prophets will be fulfilled and Christ will "reign in Mount Zion and Jerusalem" and fill the earth with his glory!⁶

GATHERING OF THE DISPERSED OF ISRAEL

The descendants of the House of Israel which was scattered and dispersed among the nations, will gather as the elect of God to the latter-day Zion upon the land of Joseph in the top of the mountains, where the house of God is "exalted above the hills," and where the revelations of his

⁶Zechariah 14:8-23; Jeremiah 23:3-8; 32:37-44; Ezekiel 34:13-16; 38:8-23; 39; Isaiah 24:23.

will are made known and the ordinances of his house for the living and the dead can be administered. The blood of Israel, though mixed with that of the Gentiles, is counted as the seed of Abraham to whom the promises of old were made, and not one of them will fail. The gathering place is on "the land shadowing with wings" which Isaiah saw in vision "beyond the rivers of Ethiopia," where the Lord has "lifted up an ensign on the mountains," and from which his "swift messengers" are now going forth as "ambassadors" of the great King and are bringing Israel from afar to "the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion." There, in the Temple built to his name according to the pattern he has revealed, baptisms and all the ordinances necessary on earth in the work of salvation for the living and the dead, are performed by divine authority, and there the Spirit of God is poured out in rich effusion, bearing witness to the humble of heart and contrite of spirit that they and their labors of love are accepted of him and sealed and recorded in heaven.

THE DESERET SHALL BLOSSOM AS THE ROSE

There "the wilderness and the solitary place have been made glad" because of them. The parched ground and the thirsty land have brought forth springs of water, the desert is made "to blossom as the rose." There the ransomed of the Lord have come to Zion with songs of everlasting joy. "The place of their defense is the munition of rocks," and they are looking for the time, which is near at hand, when they shall behold "the King in his beauty."⁸

SALVATION UNIVERSAL

From the foregoing it will be seen that our Heavenly Father is not bound by the small notions and narrow creeds

⁷Isaiah 18.

⁸Isaiah 35; 32:13-20; 33:15-17; 49:22-23; 52:7-12; Psalm 107:1-7, 33-43; Isaiah 41:18-20.

of modern religious sects and teachers. "His ways are not as man's ways, nor his thoughts as their thoughts." "As high as the heavens are above the earth," so is his plan of salvation above the inventions of the worldly wise. The Gospel is to be preached to every responsible and accountable creature. They who do not hear it while in the body will hear it in the spirit world.

WORK NOW IN PROGRESS

This glorious work for the salvation of the human family is now in progress under the revelation and authority of the Most High, and no matter how much it may be opposed by ignorance or malice, by Satan or foolish men, it will go on to complete and glorious victory. Evil will be overcome, darkness dispersed, Satan and his hosts be bound, the earth and its inhabitants be redeemed, the earth will be renewed, Christ will reign as King, the Tabernacle of God will be with men, and all things above, beneath and around, will sing praises to the Most High, to whom be glory and dominion forever. Amen.

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