

followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Jno. 8:12).

“Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm [Heb. *zeroa*], and the arm of thy father’s house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house” (1 Sam. 2:31). So spoke the man of God to Eli, but Isaiah prophecies: “he shall see his seed [*zera*], he shall prolong his days . . . He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (53:10,11).

Yahweh swore with an oath that the iniquity of Eli’s house should not be purged by sacrifice (1 Sam. 3:14), and so Eli died with a broken neck

like an unredeemed ass (Ex. 34:20). Previously God had sworn that the Christ would possess the gate of his enemies (Gen. 22:15-17), and subsequently “the God of peace . . . brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb. 13:20).

Types of Jesus Christ, both positive and negative, abound in the pages of Scripture. With the psalmist we should cry: “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law”; and: “I rejoice at Thy word, as one that findeth great spoil” (Ps. 119:18,162).

## “Baptized into Christ”

Trevor Maher

*“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mk. 16:16).*

**W**HEN JOHN the Baptist came from the wilderness preaching his stern message of coming judgement and the need for repentance, and urging people to “Prepare . . . the way of the Lord” (Mt. 3:3), his preaching was accompanied by the requirement to participate in the act of baptism. This prophet of God, clad in his rough camelhair coat and leather belt, drew vast crowds from Jerusalem, Judea and all the regions round about. Many of these people willingly confessed their sins and were baptized, including some whom Christ was to call as his apostles.

John preached “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mk. 1:4). Now forgive-

ness of sin is through Christ, so this baptism was a looking forward to the saving work of that one whom John described as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jno. 1:29). This act of baptism was a new ordinance that John was putting before the people, and it was one that they could only undertake on acceptance of the teachings of John, which contained much of what we term First Principles (see table below).

### A new ordinance

The Jews who knew the Law would be familiar with the practice of ‘washing’ and the ceremonial cleansing that priests had to undertake, and

The gospel of John the Baptist		
Mortality of man	“All flesh is grass”	Isaiah 40:6-8
Christ the sacrificial Lamb	“Behold the Lamb of God!”	John 1:36
Jesus as the judge	“He will thoroughly purge his floor”	Luke 3:17
Gift of the Holy Spirit	“Baptize . . . with the Holy Spirit”	Luke 3:16
The Kingdom	“All flesh shall see the salvation of God”	Luke 3:6
Repentance, baptism, remission of sins	“Preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins”	Luke 3:3
New life, discipleship	“Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance”	Luke 3:8

also those in the nation who became 'unclean' and were barred from society and worship. Most striking were the requirements for the high priest on the Day of Atonement, who had to wash himself (bathe, RV) before putting on special linen robes (Lev. 16:4). The washing represented moral cleansing (1 Cor. 6:11), and the robes of linen spoke of righteousness (Rev. 19:8).

All mentions of uncleanness or of cleanness in the Law were allusions to either the absence or the existence of a covenant relationship with God on the basis of the moral condition of those concerned. John's mission was spoken of prophetically by his father, who said: "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins" (Lk. 1:76,77). The call for repentance and the instruction in godly living, along with baptism, are the basis for the remission of sins. This new ordinance of baptism was firmly established in the ministry of John, and clearly pointed forward to Christ, even as our baptism looks back to the death and resurrection of Christ (Jno. 1:30; Rom. 6:3,4).

### Fulfilling righteousness

So it was that, as the crowds came to that desert place and listened, with many of them going down into the River Jordan to be baptized, the day arrived when amongst the people on the bank was our Lord himself. He had come from Nazareth to be baptized by John, his baptism marking the commencement of his ministry. John's first reaction was to decline, for by the power of the Holy Spirit he was able to see in Christ that sinless one for whom he was the forerunner. "I have need to be baptized of thee" (Mt. 3:14) was his initial reaction. The reply of Jesus confirms the necessity of baptism and the fact that it was, and still is, an essential element of salvation: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (v. 15).

The word "us" is important. The Luke account shows that Jesus was baptized along with other people: "when all the people were bap-

tized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized . . ." (Lk. 3:21). Whilst the word "us" could refer to Jesus and John carrying out the act of baptism, the narrative appears to support the concept that Jesus identified himself with those sinners being baptized, for these were the ones he had come to save. It also shows clearly

that Jesus needed to be baptized himself, for he was of that nature, flesh and blood, which required him to associate with that new life that his death and resurrection would bring. As the late Brother Harry Whittaker expressed it: "It was an acknowledgement that the great truth taught by John: 'all flesh is grass', applied to him also. He needed the benefits of his own sacrifice. Now, as well as at the end of the days of his flesh, he was 'numbered with the transgressors' (Is. 53:12)".<sup>1</sup>

So Christ entered into his ministry through the waters of baptism, and during his ministry this ordinance was continued both by Christ and his disciples, and by John until he was put in prison (Jno. 3:22-24).

The act of baptism was an integral part of the gospel message; consequently, when Christ gave his final commission to his disciples, it was based on belief and baptism: "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 shall be damned" (Mk. 16: 15,16). The New Testament record from the Acts of the Apostles onwards shows faithful adherence to this command of Jesus. Those with an understanding of "the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ . . . were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12).

### The first century

The Day of Pentecost saw a large number, 3,000, accept the need for baptism. These people were "pricked [emotionally stunned] in their heart" by the enormity of their action in crucifying the



**Baptizō = To cover wholly, immerse, dip. Used by the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment. Used in Mark 16:16.**

1. *Studies in the Gospels*, H. A. Whittaker, first edition, p. 65.

Messiah, and when they asked, “what shall we do?”, the answer from Peter was quite clear: “Repent, and *be baptized* every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins . . .*”; and so we are told that “they that gladly received his word were baptized” (Acts 2:37-41).

This set the pattern for what was to follow as the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Judea, then Samaria, then to the uttermost parts of the Roman Empire, and ultimately, in our day, to the far reaches of the earth. As we read through the Acts of the Apostles we see that there are no exceptions to the act of baptism for those who came to believe the gospel. The men and women in Samaria (including Simon the sorcerer), the Ethiopian eunuch travelling home, the jailer in Philippi experiencing a great earthquake (in more ways than one!), Crispus the leader of the synagogue in Corinth, and Cornelius in Caesarea (even after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit)—all went into the waters of baptism that they might share in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Imagine how Lydia, the native of Thyatira, plying her trade selling purple cloth in Philippi, would have felt. Her very trade involved the act of *baptizō*, to cover fully, to immerse the cloth, that it might become new in appearance. How she must have rejoiced as she passed through the waters of baptism, realising that this same transformation was now being symbolically experienced by her, that her sins were washed away and that she was indeed a new creature in God’s sight, born again, able to start a new life!

Even the great apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, had to be baptized. Blinded for three days following the vision of Christ on the road to Damascus, he was visited by Ananias. Through the laying on of hands his sight was restored and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. The words of Ananias, “why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (22:16), confirm that, even though Paul could now see spiritually as well as literally, it was essential for him to be baptized

as a sign of repentance and for him to receive the blessing of forgiveness of sins.

A moment’s reflection on the incident of the Ethiopian eunuch shows that full immersion was the practice. No man on a journey of the length he was undertaking, involving travel across arid areas, would do so without taking drinking water with him. Such could have provided the necessary water if sprinkling was all that was required.

However, it was when they reached an oasis that he was moved to say, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (8:36). We then read: “they went down both into the water” (v. 38).

From its introduction by John the Baptist, the act of baptism involved total immersion. The reference to Christ “coming up *out of the water*” (Mk.

1:10; cf. Mt. 3:16) after his baptism, along with the statement in John’s Gospel that “John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there” (3:23), support this. The practice of adult men and women being baptized, fully immersed in water, was thus a foundation activity of the early Christian believers, and must remain so today for those who seek for the remission of their sins. (It is interesting to note, in passing, that archaeologists have found at Emmaus, in what is believed to be a church building dating to after the time of Christ, a baptismal bath which measured ten feet long by three feet wide by five feet deep, indicating that adult immersion was practised in those early centuries of gospel preaching.)

### The meaning of baptism

When we read about baptism in Scripture we see that total immersion in water by the confessing sinner is the only way for baptism to be effective. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 6:4 that the believer is symbolically “buried with him [Christ]” and “raised up from the dead” with him through baptism. Total immersion is therefore necessary for this figure of sharing Christ’s death and resurrection to be fulfilled. This is strengthened by Colossians 2:12, which speaks of being “buried with him [Christ] in



**Rhantizō, rhantismos = To sprinkle.  
A different Greek word with a different  
meaning. Used in Hebrews 9:13.**

baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, Who hath raised him from the dead”.

As mentioned above, God has always required those who would come into covenant relationship with Him to be ‘washed clean’ symbolically. Israel were taught this in the rituals of washing and cleansing associated with the Law. To be ‘made clean’ so that we might have a relationship with God we must be associated with the sacrifice of Christ, with his death and resurrection. Baptism does this for us. It is an essential element of our faith, not an optional extra. It is the act by which we give witness to our belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and acknowledge that our only hope of eternal life is in Christ. By accepting the need for baptism we confess that we are sinners, and that only in Christ’s death can our sins be forgiven.

Prior to baptism we were in the state described by Paul as being “without Christ . . . aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). Having shared in the death and resurrection of Jesus by baptism, we believe that we are “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29), now “alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord”, waiting for the time when “we shall also live with him” (Rom. 6:11,8). Prior to baptism we were “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), but through baptism our sins have been removed.

The work of Jesus is spoken of in Revelation in words which refer both to cleansing and sacrifice: “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father . . .” (1:5,6). This work of Christ with which we become associated through belief and baptism is vividly described in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are *washed*, but ye are *sanctified*, but ye are *justified* in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”. These believers had been “washed”, that is, made clean, they had been “sanctified”, that is, set apart, and they had been “justified”, that is, made righteous in the sight of

God by their association with the death and resurrection of Jesus in baptism.

### Born again

When Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (Jno. 3:3-5), Nicodemus was a very troubled man because he did not understand, even though he was “the master” (v. 10, RV) in Israel, that is, the one responsible for the religious teaching. For baptism to have any validity it must be accompanied by an understanding of and belief in “the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ”. There is a necessity to be born again, and then to grow, as all newborn children do, into a mature adult, moving on from the milk of the Word to the meat.

The words of Jesus before he ascended to his heavenly Father, when he gave the instruction to baptize, carry with them this aspect of understanding. He said it was “he that believeth” who should be baptized, and this implies that an understanding of the gospel preached by his followers was necessary before baptism. It would not be right to baptize people who are ignorant of the purpose and promises of God on the basis of a statement such as, “I believe in Jesus”, or, “I believe that Jesus is my saviour”, as some evangelicals do today.

For Nicodemus, the call to repentance that John had issued, and the act of baptism that was undertaken by those who responded, was something he had not been able to understand.<sup>2</sup> After a person has been born of water in baptism following belief, the new life is sustained and nourished by the ‘Spirit Word’ in anticipation of that day to come when the power of the Spirit will change the corruptible body into an incorruptible one and so complete the birth of the Spirit. Paul says in Titus 3:5 that God has “saved us, by the washing of regeneration [rebirth]”. The word “washing” in the original is the word ‘laver’, so directing our thoughts back to the laver in the tabernacle and the ceremonial cleansing under the Law. The work of Christ for his ecclesia is also described as a “washing with water with the word” (Eph. 5:26, RV), and again the word “washing” is ‘laver’.

---

2. Although the record in John 19:39 seems to indicate that he did eventually.

God has always required that those who would draw near to Him should be cleansed, and both by the Law and through the gospel it is the mind, the conscience, the morality, of the individual that has to be renewed or reborn, for in doing this the actions will then be those of the spirit and not those of the flesh. This is why Peter says that baptism is in fact “the answer of a good conscience” (1 Pet. 3:21). The word “conscience” refers to moral consciousness and perception. In this verse Peter states that baptism saves because it links us to the resurrection of Christ, and it is our conscious awareness of our need for salvation that brings us to God.

What creates this awareness within our minds? Romans 6:17 refers to those who had been “the servants of sin”, but have now believed and been baptized, as those who “obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you”. For the mind to see the need to repent, to change (repentance means a change of mind), it is necessary for the first principle doctrines to be heard, accepted and believed. To have a change of mind is to change one’s understanding. The word ‘converted’ means to turn about, so when Peter appealed to those who witnessed the healing of the lame man to “Repent . . . and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19) he was showing that a change of mind is necessary to bring a turning round of our lives, so enabling our sins to be forgiven.

And so the gospel of the crucified Christ, the resurrected Christ, and the returning Christ, with all the attendant teachings concerning sin and death and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth, was preached to, and believed by, those who entered the waters of baptism.<sup>3</sup> Ecclesias today have the responsibility to ensure that those who apply for baptism have indeed understood the doctrines, and have as a consequence repented, changed their mind, their attitude, and desire to set their affections on things above and not those of man’s making on this earth. As the time of Christ’s return draws near, the distance between the thinking of man and the ways of God is enormous, and the pressure to overlook or to reduce standards or expectations is continuous. The instruction to baptize as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 contains the injunction, “teaching them to observe all things

whatsoever I have commanded you”, and that is still the position today.

### **Baptized into the Name**

We are familiar with the concept that when a woman marries it is the normal practice for her to take the name of the bridegroom. Together then they carry the same name and are known by it. This is what we see in the declaration by Christ that his followers should baptize in “the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28:19). It is an invitation to join a new family, one that God is creating in Christ. The words of Paul to the Galatians confirm this: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (3:26-29).

The children of Israel are described by God as “My people, which are called by My name” (2 Chron. 7:14). Circumcision, faith in the promises, and the principles of the Law, established this covenant relationship. Paul links circumcision to baptism (Col. 2:11).

So the believer, having ‘put on Christ’ in baptism, is shown to have put on “the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”. Jesus is the manifestation of the Father by means of the Holy Spirit. Through the act of baptism the believer becomes a son or daughter of the living God (1 Jno. 3:2), and as a consequence becomes a brother or sister of Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:11-15).

With regard to the Holy Spirit, Paul speaks of the new relationship as the “fellowship of the Spirit” (Phil. 2:1), and makes reference to the brethren of Christ as living “in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). We understand from Romans 8:5-9 that this describes those who strive to put away ‘carnal’ thinking and to become ‘spiritually minded’, seeking the will and ways of God and Christ. We also see in the New Testament that the word ‘spirit’ can be synonymous with the word ‘angel’ (Acts 8:26-29). These spirit beings are the ones by whom the will and power of God and Christ are exercised.

Through the Spirit Word (Jno. 6:63; 1 Pet. 1:23-25) and the ‘ways of providence’ the Spirit influences the lives of those in the family of God. These have been “born again” through the water

3. Acts 2:42; 3:13-26; 4:1,2,7ff.; 8:4-13,29-36; 10:34-43; 13:16-39; 17:22-32; 28:30,31.

and the Spirit. Such people look forward in faith to that day when, in God's grace, they will no longer be flesh and blood but the embodiment of the Spirit itself, with that granting of the incorruptible state, even immortality. Baptism is of vital importance, because by it we give witness to our belief in the death and resurrection

of Jesus, so acknowledging our need for the remission of sins, testifying that only "in Christ" can we hope to share those great and precious promises made to Abraham. Baptism is of vital importance, because "there is none other name under heaven . . . whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

## "By grace are ye saved"

Geoff Walker

**T**HE PHRASE that forms the subject of this article is found in Ephesians 2:5,8; it is a key sentence in the letter. In order to grasp the correct meaning of the phrase, we need to appreciate the message of this letter.

Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers, not simply because he owed them a letter, but because he had a serious reason to write, the need to strengthen them against the opposition they were facing in Ephesus. This opposition is spoken of later in the letter, where they are exhorted to "stand against the wiles of the devil . . . against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (6:11,12). They faced what was truly a formidable opposition, one that was mounted "by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness" (4:14).

In order that they should withstand such onslaught from the enemies of the Truth, and not be "carried about with every wind of doctrine" (v. 14), Paul exhorted them to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (6:10). It is worthwhile noting here the use of three closely related words ('strong', 'power' and 'might') in one short sentence; the main emphasis of the sentence surely lies in the reference to the source of that strength, power and might, that is, "the Lord" (Jesus). Paul had already had much to say in the epistle about Jesus.

The problem that concerned these Ephesians was the danger of returning to the teachings of the world in which they lived, and from which they had come out: ". . . wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (2:2). However, to help them stand fast, they could with enlightened eyes know "the exceeding greatness of His [God's] power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of

His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead, and set him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named . . . and hath put all things under his feet" (1:18-22).

This letter, then, was written to instruct these Ephesian brethren in the mighty ways of "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 17), so as to guard against a return to former ways. It is in this context that the apostle uses the sentence, "by grace are ye saved".

### The meaning of 'grace'

In encouraging the Ephesian brethren to hold fast, Paul uses one phrase, "heavenly places", to describe two very different situations. On the one hand, he uses it to describe the wicked ruling authority under which the Ephesians lived (6:12, mg.); on the other hand, he uses the same phrase to depict the situation in which the believers found themselves in Christ (1:3; 2:6)—sitting, as it were, together with their Master in his exaltation, ruling the earth for his Father.

This contrast is drawn to impress the Ephesian brethren with the wonder of the calling to which they had been called (4:1). Their position in Christ was in no way inferior to the apparently powerful and despotic rule of men under which they suffered. Indeed, it was vastly superior. Therefore they should never succumb to the wiles of the "devil"; as we have quoted above, this "devil" was identical to the "spiritual wickedness in high places" (6:11-13).

Paul therefore lays great emphasis on being "in Christ". After he has saluted the Ephesians in the first few verses of the letter, the following eleven verses all mention the close relationship that the brethren and sisters had with Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ (1:3) is continually set before them, his name exalted above every name