



# **Why Believer's Baptism**

*By E.R.T.*

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# WHY BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

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Scripture references used in this Pamphlet.

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### I.—WHO SHOULD BE BAPTISED?

Matthew 28: 18-19.	1 Corinthians 16: 15.
John 4: 1.	Acts 8: 35-38.
Matthew 10: 24.	Acts 9: 17, 18.
John 6: 2, 60, 61, 66.	Acts 10: 24, 43, 45, 47, 48.
Acts 9: 1.	Acts 16: 14, 15, 31-33.
Acts 11: 26.	Acts 18: 8.
Acts 2: 37, 38, 41, 44.	Acts 19: 4, 5.
Acts 8: 12, 13.	Mark 16: 15, 16.
1 Corinthians 1: 16.	Acts 16: 15, 32-34.

### II.—HOW SHOULD BAPTISM TAKE PLACE?

Matthew 3: 5.	Acts 8: 38, 39.
John 3: 22-23.	Romans 6: 4.
Mark 1: 9.	

### III.—WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTISED?

John 3: 16, 36.	1 Corinthians 15: 3, 4.
Ephesians 2: 8, 9.	Romans 6.
Matthew 28: 19.	John 7: 17.
Matthew 3: 15.	

### IV.—FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIFFICULTIES.

Ephesians 2: 8, 9.	Acts 8: 3.
Acts 10: 44-48.	Acts 9: 1, 2.
Acts 2: 37, 38.	Acts 22: 16.
Acts 9: 9, 18.	

## WHY BELIEVER'S BAPTISM?

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By Rev. E. ROBERTS-THOMSON, B.A., L.Th.

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"Philip preached unto him JESUS." These are the words we read in Acts 8: 35 concerning Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch. The very next verse tells us that "as they went on their way they came to a certain water: and the Eunuch said, 'See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised?'"

How did the Ethiopian know about baptism, seeing Philip preached unto him Jesus! It is not mentioned in the record in the Acts of the Apostles. But obviously, part of the preaching of "Jesus" included the subject of His teaching on and commandment concerning baptism. Hence the Ethiopian's statement, "here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptised?" The subject of baptism must have been very important to be emphasised so much and to have concerned so greatly the new convert to the Christian faith. Let us see, therefore, what we can discover for ourselves about this matter.

### I.

#### WHO SHOULD BE BAPTISED?

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The New Testament, interpreted by the Holy Spirit, is the Christian's chart. It is there that we seek our guidance on the subject of baptism, as on all subjects of Christian conduct. Let us see then what it has to say on the subject.

#### (1) Baptism is for DISCIPLES.

In Matthew 28: 18-19 we read our Lord's great commission and command: "All authority is given unto Me in



heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

So then, our Lord's command is, first, "make disciples," and then "baptise" them. (See also John 4: 1.)

A "disciple" is a learner—one who comes to be taught. (Cf. Matt 10: 24. "A scholar is not above his teacher.") He is also a follower. (Cf. John 6: 2; 60; 61; 66).

## (2) Baptism is for BELIEVERS.

We learn, further, that the word "disciple" is used in the Acts of the Apostles ONLY of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were the "disciples of the Lord." (Acts 9: 1). As such they were given the name "Christians" by the people of Antioch, that is, followers of and believers in, Christ. (Acts 11: 26).

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter said to those who were convicted of their sin and wanted to know what they should do: "Repent ye, and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." We read then, that "they that gladly received his word were baptised." (Acts 2: 37; 38; 41; 44)

When Philip, the Evangelist, went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto the people, and called on them through Him to enter into the Kingdom of God, "They believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the Name of Jesus Christ, and were baptised, both men and women. Then Simon (the Sorcerer) himself believed also, and when he was baptised, he continued with Philip." (Acts 8: 12-13).

So also was it in the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8: 35-38); Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9: 17-18); Cornelius and his relatives and friends (Acts 10: 24, 43, 45, 47, 48); Lydia and the Philippian Jailor (Acts 16: 14-15; 31-33); Crispus

the Jewish Rabbi (Acts 18: 8); and the disciples of John at Corinth (Acts 19: 4-5).

These incidents all indicate very clearly that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the pre-requisite to baptism. Where faith is wanting, baptism, in the New Testament sense, cannot take place.

Because FAITH, is required, we refer to baptism as BELIEVER'S BAPTISM, not, as is sometimes affirmed, adult baptism. Provided the requirement of faith in Jesus Christ is present, the age of the person is of little account.

(Dr. Alexander MacLaren was only eleven years of age, and Spurgeon only fifteen years old, when they were baptised. "If thou believest" is the condition of the Word of God.)

## (3) From this it follows that baptism is NOT FOR BABIES.

Infants cannot fulfil the condition of faith. That many babies are baptised, or christened, is true. But for that act there is no Scriptural warrant. In fact, infant baptism is expressly contradicted by the command of our Lord which we have studied already. (Matt. 28: 18-19; see also Mark 16: 15-16).

Some people try to justify their insistence on the baptism of babies by referring to the "households" mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and in 1 Corinthians. They avow that these "households" would include infants. But:—

(a) In the case of LYDIA (Acts 16: 15) we are not given any indication that she had either husband or children. Her household consisted, most likely, of her assistants in the dyeing business which she owned. To build a doctrine on the argument of silence is to invite disaster.



(b) The case of the PHILIPPIAN JAILOR reveals clearly that he was "Believing in God WITH ALL HIS HOUSE." (Acts 16: 32-34). While

(c) that of STEPHANAS, according to Paul's unequivocal statement, reveals a household laying itself out to serve the saints, (1 Cor. 1: 16 and 16, 15). Thus we see that there is no justification at all for inferring infant baptism from these instances.

#### (4) A striking testimony.

Dr. J. H. Rushbrooke relates that, in his student days at Berlin, he was listening to the great Church Historian, Professor Harnack, lecturing on the Mediaeval custom of celebrating "The Eucharist for Children." Harnack declared that the "Reformers made short work of that custom merely by asking the question: 'What value can there be in a rite apart from intelligent and personal faith?'" Then Professor Harnack turned to the students and asked the following question which he left unanswered: "Gentlemen, if they had raised the same question about infant baptism, what would have happened to the standard of our Church?" Dr. Harnack made one of the greatest arguments against Infant Baptism in that statement, namely, that where there is no faith on the part of the recipient, there is no baptism. The greatest argument of all, however, against Infant Baptism, is that it is not Scriptural.

So then, our first study has revealed this to us from the Word of God. Baptism is for those who have repented of their sin, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of their soul. If you are a BELIEVER then baptism is for you. It is our Lord's command. "If ye love ME keep my commandments," He said.

## II.

### HOW SHOULD BAPTISM TAKE PLACE?

#### (1) The mode of Baptism is by IMMERSION.

The word used in the New Testament for Baptism is BAPTIZO. To-day there is almost complete unanimity as to the meaning of the word. At one time there were a few scholars who claimed that affusion or pouring were possible meanings of the word. But now it has been settled beyond doubt that the word means TO IMMERSE.

Dr. A. T. Robertson in his booklet: "Modern Scholarship and the Form of Baptism," has gathered together the evidence from a wide variety of modern sources, to prove conclusively that BAPTIZO means to "dip in or under water." His array of authorities in Greek Lexicons, Bible Dictionaries, and Bible Commentaries, places the matter beyond dispute.

If we need any evidence outside the New Testament it should suffice us to know that the Greek Church has all along retained the word BAPTIZO in its language, and has always understood it to mean nothing else but immerse. In such a manner they baptise, still. And we may justly claim that the Greeks understand their own language.

#### (2) In the New Testament the sense of the word BAPTIZO is made doubly clear by the manner in which the word is used.

(a) In Matthew 3: 5 we read that: "There went out to him (John the Baptist) Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the country round about Jordan. And they were baptised by him IN Jordan."

(b) In John 3: 22-23 we are told that John the Baptist



baptised in the Springs near Salim, for there was much water there. If immersion were not the method used, there would be no point in such a statement, for a little water out of a bottle would have sufficed.

(c) In Mark 1: 9 we note that "Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptised INTO the Jordan by John, and immediately coming UP OUT of the water . . ."

(d) In the Acts of the Apostles when Philip baptised the Ethiopian Eunuch we read "They went down both INTO the water . . . and . . . they came UP OUT OF the water."

**(3) St. Paul's teaching concerning baptism emphasises the fact of immersion**

St. Paul declares that the object of baptism is to show forth the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. "All we who were immersed into Jesus Christ were immersed into His death. We were buried therefore, with Him through the immersion unto His death; that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." Commenting on this passage in the "International Critical Commentary," Sanday and Headlam have this to say: "Baptism expresses symbolically a series of acts corresponding to the redeeming acts of Christ:—

Immersion	— — —	Death
Submersion	— — —	Burial
Emergence	— — —	Resurrection."

Thus from the New Testament we learn that baptism is IMMERSION, the dipping of a person under the water, and the raising up of him therefrom.

"Sense and Scriptures and Scholarship agree in saying that there is no New Testament baptism save where there is a dipping, an actual immersion," says Dr. John Clifford.

(NOTE:—The Abyssinian Church of which the Treasurer of Queen Candace was undoubtedly one of the first members, has all through its history said that baptism is by immersion, and it has acted on that profession.

Very different has been the practice of the Anglican Church, which, in its rubric prescribes baptism by immersion, but which, in practice, performs the act by sprinkling. Different, too, from John Calvin, who although time and again he insisted that baptism was immersion, popularised sprinkling, which his successors continue until this day).

**(4) TRUE baptism is by IMMERSION ONLY.**

In our first study we saw that baptism is for BELIEVERS ONLY. We see now, that baptism is by IMMERSION ONLY. Sprinkling or pouring will not suffice. The whole meaning of the service is spoiled unless immersion takes place. By no stretch of imagination can the sprinkling of a few drops of water symbolise death to sin, burial with Christ, and resurrection to newness of life in Him.

Nor can we argue that the amount of water is of no importance, but that it is the spirit in which the act is performed that matters. Such an argument is irrelevant. If our Lord had not given clear guidance on this subject, such reasoning might have force. But we have seen already that immersion is the Scriptural meaning of the term baptism. To use the term, but in a way different from its connotation and still call it baptism is to do despite to the Word of Truth. If our Lord had decreed otherwise well and good. But He has not. He has given a specific command, as clear as language can convey.

If we are His, then He is our Lord, and as such must be obeyed. "Not the hearers of the law are righteous before God, but the doers of the Law shall be accounted righteous." So then, "Why call ye Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things which I say?"



### III.

## WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTISED?

Why should I be baptised? We have seen already that baptism is for believers only, and that therefore baptism cannot save a person. Our Lord Himself said time and again that "faith" alone is necessary for salvation. "He that believeth on the Son hath life." "Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish." And Paul says that "By grace are ye saved through faith." What then is the use of baptism? Why should I be baptised? It is of no real value, but is only a meaningless form.

But wait a minute. Let us look more closely at this matter

### (1) Jesus Christ COMMANDED it.

If we say baptism is meaningless we are contradicting our Lord Himself. Dare we do such a thing? God forbid. He said, "Go ye and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them . . . (Matt. 28: 19). Where He commands how can any follower of His withhold obedience to Him and yet affirm his discipleship. That is not the spirit of a believer. Can anyone find the faintest trace of reluctance about the Christians of the New Testament? No. They were glad to respond to baptism. "Then they which gladly received His words were baptised." It is the Christian's privilege to obey Christ's commands. And His commands are not grievous. Love leaps to obey, even though the whole reasoning of the Loved One is unknown.

### (2) Baptism EXPRESSES OUR LOYALTY to our Lord.

He Himself was baptised, and He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps. Baptism was not necessary to save Him. "He knew no sin." Yet it became Him to be baptised, "That He might fulfil all righteousness." "In effect, if not in words," writes Dr. John Clifford, "The Leader and Example of all souls adopted the language of the Baptist, and said, I HAVE NEED TO BE BAPTISED." No wonder the saintly Dr. Meyer exclaimed, "If there were no other reasons for Believer's Baptism would not this be enough? His footprints lead down into the deep, clear waters, and if we would follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth, we have no alternative but to follow Him there."

So, when we come to the baptismal waters we sing gladly, "Follow, follow, I would follow Jesus. Anywhere, everywhere, I would follow on!"

### (3) It is a DRAMATIC PRESENTATION OF THE GREAT CHRISTIAN TRUTHS.

(a) It is a declaration of the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord. In that act we are declaring that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, that He was buried, and that He rose again." (1 Cor. 15: 3-4). Every baptismal service then is a most powerful proclamation of the "truth that makes men free." It is preaching the fundamentals of the Christian Faith by means of symbols.



(b) It is also a public declaration of what the believer himself has experienced. In this act he is telling the world that, with Jesus Christ, he had died to sin. (Sin is no longer his Master), and that henceforth he is alive unto God, a new creation, with Christ as his Master, walking in newness of life. (See Romans 6. Espec. vv 3-6)

(c) In this act, too, the believer declares the resurrection hope of all Christians, that Christ is risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that sleep. Further, that in Him shall all His followers be made alive after the body has been laid to rest in the grave.

So the service of Believer's Baptism becomes a great and eloquent preaching service of the highest order, taking in the past, present, and future of the believer's life.

(4) It is a PUBLIC ADVERTISEMENT of the BELIEVER'S faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this act he announces that "I am His and He is mine, for ever and for ever." He says by act, and it is to be hoped by word also, that "Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God, and My Saviour." Such a public declaration is a source of strength and courage to the Christian in following on to know the Lord.

(5) Baptism is also a MEANS OF BLESSING to the BELIEVER.

We are certain that there is nothing magical about baptism, and that it has no saving merit. But it is a means of grace to the Believer. Every act of obedience to Jesus Christ brings its blessing to the one who obeys. "By confining Baptism to believers, we make it always a sacrament of faith. . . . When baptism is regarded in this way, it takes its true place alongside the Lord's Supper as an act of faith which helps to establish a new degree of contact

with God in the Holy Spirit," thus declares Dr. H. Wheeler Robinson.

Here then are valid reasons why the Believer should be baptised. Every onward step in the Christian Life will bring its own blessing. There is in this act, assuredly a blessing for you. Face the matter carefully and prayerfully. Ask with the Apostle Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Look again into the New Testament, and see what the Scriptures say. If you are in deadly earnest in your desire to follow your Lord—and I believe as His disciples you will be—He will make His way known to you. "If any will to do His will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God."

Buried with Christ! Our glad hearts say,  
Come see the place where once He lay.

Risen with Him! Allured by Love,  
Henceforth we seek the things above.

Walking with Him A life how blest,  
Strengthened with might, girt round with rest."

#### IV.

#### FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIFFICULTIES.

Perhaps you have some difficulty about the matter. Then let us look at some of the common excuses for not being baptised.

(1). "I am not a Baptist."—That has nothing to do with the matter. Believer's Baptism is for all people of whatever denomination. Christ's command was not to a limited part of His Church, but to all His followers everywhere.



- (2) **"It is not necessary. I can be just as good a Christian without it."**—True, it is not necessary for salvation, for "by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast." But to say that something our Lord has commended is not necessary, "I can be just as good a Christian without it," is an extraordinary thing in one of His followers. Dare any Disciple of Him Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life suggest that He was mistaken when He submitted to baptism Himself, and when He commanded His followers to "make disciples . . . and baptise them?" Such a thing would be unthinkable.
- (3) **"I have been baptised already as an Infant."**—This question has been dealt with in our studies. Such baptism as an Infant was not "Believer's Baptism," as enjoined by the Word of God, and therefore is no reason for refusal to follow Christ in His way now. Besides it was not your act at all. It was something done for you, and without any knowledge of your own. In it, faith, without which baptism is meaningless, was lacking.
- (4) **"The Baptism of the Holy Spirit has superseded Believer's Baptism."**—That is not so. Both experiences are mentioned in the New Testament, and neither invalidates the other. In Acts 10: 44-48 both are spoken about, and Peter declares "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" (See also Acts 2: 37-38).
- (5) **"I don't feel ready for it. I will wait until I am sure I**

**can live up to it."**—This is a real difficulty with many earnest Christians. But it is a false difficulty. It is an over-emphasis of the teachings of Romans Chapter 6, without consideration of the life of the writer. When St. Paul wrote those words he was a Christian of many years standing. With him baptism had taken place three days after his conversion. (See Acts 9: 9-18). Was he good enough? Think of his earlier life and bitter hostility to Jesus Christ and His followers, and the "havoc he made of the Church." (Acts 8, 3. 9, 1-2).

In terms of Christian goodness he had a very dark past. But his teaching in Romans, chapter 6, was the outcome of years of reflection, in which the wonder of his conversion and the significance of his baptism had deepened and clarified. He was there explaining the experience into which he had entered, and which he saw now to be "death unto self, and life unto Christ." It is always thus. Experience precedes the explanation of it. The act of baptism always comes before the full realisation of all it implies. First we obey. Then we interpret our act. And as we increase in spiritual growth, our interpretation of the experience through which we passed will increase both in depth and wonder. If we wait until we are good enough we will wait in vain. We are called to obey, to step out in faith. Then as we "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," we will discover that every act of obedience brings its added enrichment, and that this act will increase in splendour with the passing of the days.



We follow our Lord through the waters of baptism, not because we feel good enough, but because He loves us, and we love Him, and because He has left us an example to follow in His steps. And if we love Him, we will delight to keep His commandments.

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“AND NOW WHY DO YOU WAIT? — ARISE AND  
BE BAPTISED!”





