

SHOULD YOU BE BAPTIZED?

Why be baptized? WHAT IS baptism? Is it a religious "rite" required by this or that church? Should it be done in infancy? Should you be sprinkled, poured upon, dabbed at with a damp cloth or immersed? What is a valid baptism in God's sight?

by Garner Ted Armstrong



"**R**EPENT!" screamed the panting, perspiring evangelist to a crowd of awed followers in Brooklyn, New York.

It was a hot, steamy, sweltering day, with the heat assailing the followers in waves from the blistering pavement under their feet. As the hoarse voice of the street-corner evangelist grew in fervor and intensity, the excitement of the crowd mounted.

Finally, an impassioned street-corner plea for repentance was given. Dozens rushed up — jeans coursing, dusty rivulets down flushed and perspiring faces as they were swept along on the crest of a tidal wave of human emotion.

They were baptized — right then and there.

The method?

The evangelist had secured permission from the city Fire Department to turn on a street-corner fireplug. He **SPRAYED THE WHOLE GROUND** free hose!

Was this baptism VALID?

The Scene Changes

At that same hour, on a Sunday morning, a cultured, well-dressed young couple stood solemnly, proudly holding their infant firstborn before the pastor in a fashionable church.

The pastor graciously sprinkled a few drops of water over the wee bit of humanity. The baby had been baptized.

Was this baptism valid?

The scene shifts again. A baptizing service is in progress in another church. In waterproof costumes and black robes both the pastor and candidates step down into the tank of water. The pastor bends, the candidates over

backward, completely immersing them under the water.

Is this the proper mode of baptizing?

Simultaneously, unknown to any of these participants, still another baptizing service is under way, far outside the city. In a swiftly running stream a minister is immersing a number of candidates, also burying them completely. But this minister shunned the water of the baptizing tank. He buried them in the running stream.

Was this baptism more valid than the others?

Here we have pouring, sprinkling, immersing — sometimes indoors, sometimes outdoors. Babies are being sprinkled. Some adults are required to repent. Others are baptized on profession of Christ without any repentance. In many churches there is no baptizing whatever.

But it seems that in all this there is **CONFUSION**.

Does anybody **KNOW** which is right? Does it make any difference which way — or whether one is baptized at all? **Why** such confusion?

A Confusing World of Religion

Jesus Christ said such things would happen!

He warned you would be living in a world literally filled with religious confusion. He said, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:4, 5). Notice Christ said **MANY** would be deceived, and that **MANY** would come "in my name," that is, using the **name** of Jesus Christ as if they had His authority.

He said, "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:11).

In the hodgepodge of conflicts, schisms, splits, divisions, arguments, personal interpretations, and private philosophies that make up our Western world of Christian religion — one starkly clear fact stands out: these plain-spoken prophecies of Jesus Christ have come to be true, **LITERALLY!**

Today, there are well over **TWO HUNDRE** different recognized "denominations" — each professing to be preaching and teaching exactly what is in the Bible — and enough other schisms and splits, or independent "organizations" to make up more than **400** differing bodies in the Western world of Christianity!

Can They All Be Right?

The average person is inclined to say, "But **SURELY** all these churches can't be wrong?"

But why can't they?

Jesus Christ of Nazareth said the great majority **WOULD BE!**

Most never think to put it this way: "**SURELY** all these churches **CAN'T BE RIGHT!**" All you need to do is simply add two and two together. The very fact there **ARE** so many different views proves, in itself, the latter statement! No, they **CAN'T** all be right!

The dilemma facing each layman, then, is to find out **WHO** is right, and how you can **PROVE** it.

Remember, the Apostle Paul said, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thes. 5:21). Isaiah said, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). The Apostle Paul taught a group of Jews in Berea who were, "more noble than those in Thessalonica,

in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Remember! All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16).

That is why we constantly say, "Don't believe us, unless or until you check up, and PROMISE everything in your own Bible!"

Be sure you DO carefully prove, to your own complete and total satisfaction, that you know the plain truth about baptism—by checking up on these scriptures in your own Bible!

Christ COMMANDS Baptism!

Jesus Christ of Nazareth was baptized! Later, you will see baptism is an outward symbol of the BURIAL of the old self, and of the resurrection to life—to live in a new and a different way! Baptism is commanded an outward sign of our REPENTANCE, and willingness to surrender our lives completely to God—being willing to bury the old self.

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Jesus gave this example to show what a RARE thing it is when one really repents. If you have never read our article on the Bible definition of REAL REPENTANCE—then write for it immediately.

One Baptism

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God commands, through Paul, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1, 2). If a person is experiencing TRUE repentance, he is literally GIVING his own self to God! He is reckoning himself DEAD, so far as sin is concerned, but ALIVE through God and His Son Jesus Christ! "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but ALIVE unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin [and sin is the transgression of the law (I John 3:4)] therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:11-12).

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"mode" devised of man is absolutely contrary to God's inspired Word, and is not VALID!

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up over your past way of life, the method you used in conducting your private affairs, your business, your home? Did you become so thoroughly DISGUSTED with yourself, your very nature and personality, your habits and methods of expression, that you simply couldn't stand to live with yourself any longer?

Did you not only feel this as a deep and very real emotion, but did you thoroughly UNDERSTAND that you must yield in complete OBEDIENCE to God and His Law? Had you really come to Jesus Christ in UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER of your rebellion against God's ways — had you thoroughly repented of going with the WORLD?

Did you understand, fully, that you were being BURIED, and that a "new you" was to emerge from the water? Did you really "count the cost" (read Luke 14:25-33) when you were baptized?

Perhaps you are like many who have written to us. They can "see" many new truths by reading *The PLAIN TRUTH* or *TOMORROW'S WORLD* magazine. They listen, and they "agree with" many things they hear on

The WORLD TOMORROW program. Perhaps, many, many years ago they were "baptized." This may have been during a revival, at a tent camp meeting, at the local church, or even when they were an infant. They realize there was no really DRAMATIC CHANGE that took place in their lives when they were "baptized," but feel "satisfied" since they are now learning some new "points of truth."

But THIS IS NOT ENOUGH! Remember — and never forget! — that BELIEF without OBEDIENCE is not enough to get you into God's Kingdom! Even the demons "believe and tremble"! (Jas. 2:19.)

Satan the Devil is the greatest "fundamentalist" of all time! He believes Jesus is the Christ. He BELIEVES in the virgin birth, the temptation and trial of Jesus, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, that Christ ascended to the right hand of God the Father, and that He is coming again! He BELIEVES in ALL the essentials of salvation! He KNOWS they are true — but he WON'T obey them!

Belief coupled with OBEDIENCE is necessary to gain the Kingdom of God!

What about it? Are you being truly honest with yourself?

Baptizing Counsel

As part of the ADULT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM we now have TRAINED MEN — graduates of AMBASSADOR COLLEGE — available in all parts of the world, ready to counsel with you PERSONALLY — to answer questions — to help you with any spiritual problems — and to baptize any who are ready for it.

We WON'T send anyone to see you, UNWANTED! Not unless you REQUEST it! BUT, PLEASE feel free to invite such a visit. That's what these trained and consecrated men are there for. Actually most of them are ordained ministers. They, and we here at Headquarters of this great Work, want only to HELP — to SERVE. We count it a PRIVILEGE to do so. □

If you are not yet a subscriber to *TOMORROW'S WORLD*, a magazine of biblical understanding published by the Ambassador College Graduate School of Theology, be sure to request a free subscription.

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