

# **ON BAPTISM**

**or**  
***From Infancy to Maturity in Christ***

A. E. Knoch



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## ITS ELEMENTARY NATURE

“WHEREFORE, leaving the word dealing with the rudiments of Christ, we should be brought on to maturity, (not again disrupting the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith on God, of the teaching of baptizings, besides the imposition of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and of judgment eonian). And this will we be doing, that is, if God may be permitting” (Heb.6:1-3).

These six lessons comprised the elementary course God gave his earthly people. In the preceding chapter (Heb. 5:12) they are called the “first principles;” more literally the “*rudimentary* elements.” It is customary in our schools today to offer the pupil an elementary course. The same subject may be taken up again in a complete course.

Even so it has pleased God, in His wisdom, to arrange His course of instruction. In the primary grades He taught by means of object-lessons. He addressed Himself to their senses by outward ordinances of material forms. He instituted a parallel between the material and the spiritual spheres. The removal of bodily defilement by water served to illustrate the cleansing from spiritual uncleanness by means of His Word. A tabernacle made of gold and silver and brass, of linen, of wood, and various other materials, typified His glorious dwelling place and the way of approach (Exodus, chapters 25,26,27).

God dealt with His earthly people as with a child. He gave them the law for a “schoolmaster,” or rather a pedagogue to lead up to the true Teacher. Until Christ came there could be no complete course of instruction. All from Moses to Christ were in the primary grade, so to speak. The text book, composed of types and shadows, was elementary, and consisted of “*rudimentary elements*”.

Christ came (Gal.4:7). He was the great Antitype. He

revealed the heart of God fully and perfectly at the cross. Since then God has filled up His Word, and a complete course is offered. Christ Himself is our text book. In Him there is maturity.

What gentle graciousness we see in the patient Instructor of His people! To have blazed upon them in the effulgence of His glory would have blinded them. So He led them by gentle steps up the high ascent to the knowledge of Himself. But it is not His purpose that they should always remain on the way and never reach the goal (Heb.5:11-14).

#### THE MEANING OF THE WORD BAPTISM

Among the elementary ordinances is the "teaching of baptisms" (Heb.6:2), or, if we translate the word baptisms as in Hebrews 9:10 (AV), "the teaching of washings."

But is there any ground for speaking of baptism as "washing?" We have been taught that it is quite separate and distinct from the washings under the law.

First of all what is the real meaning of the word? It is not an English word at all, but a Greek word with English letters. Its meaning, therefore, must be gathered from its *usage* by the spirit of God.

It occurs in various forms, but all come from one root, *baptō*, which primarily means *to dip* (John 13:26; Lev. 16:24 [LXX]; Rev.19:13). It also occurs as part of the word *dippeth* (Matt.26:23; Mark 14:20).

From this root arise four words:

*Baptizō*—to make things "*baptō*."

*Baptismos*—the act of dipping or washing.

*Baptisma*—the result of "*baptismos*."

*Baptistēs*—the one who does it.

These words are seldom translated. The few cases in the AV where they are rendered otherwise than some form of "baptize" therefore claim special attention.



*Baptismos*, the act of baptizing, occurs only in Mark and Hebrews. The four occurrences are as follows: Mark 7:4; Mark 7:8; Hebrews 6:2; Hebrews 9:10.

*Baptisma*, the result of baptizing, is used twenty-two times, thirteen of which refer to John’s baptism, five to the Lord’s, three occur in Paul’s letters, and the last one in Peter. This shows clearly that it is not a special term used to distinguish so-called “Christian baptism” from “Jewish washings.” The occurrences are Matthew 3:7; 20:22,23; 21:25; Mark 1:4; 10:38,39; 11:30; Luke 3:3; 7:29; 12:50; 20:4; Acts 1:22; 10:37; 13:24; 18:25; 19:3,4; Romans 6:4; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21.

*Baptizō* is consistently transliterated “baptize,” except in the following cases:

Mark 6:14, “Baptist.”

Mark 7:4, “wash.”

Luke 11:38, “washed.”

The first is simply an incident of translation.

In the other two cases the action is clear. When a Pharisee came home from the market he washed himself before eating.

*Baptismos*, the act of dipping or washing, is only once transliterated “baptism.” This is in Hebrews 6:2. The other occurrences are:

Mark 7:4, “washing.”

Mark 7:8, “washing.”

Heb.9:10, “washings.”

“The baptism of cups and pots and brazen vessels, and of couches” (Mark 7:4), is not in harmony with the theological import of the word. Another discord is produced if we render Hebrews 9:10 as we consistently should: “with foods and drinks and distinguishing baptisms, carnal statutes laid on them until the era of rectification.”

We are constrained to acknowledge that both the Authorized and Revised are correct here in rendering the word "washings." The reference is clear and unmistakable. It is to the ordinances of divine service carried on in connection with the tabernacle.

So that the washings at the laver for the priests, and the various washings for the defiled of the people, were "baptisms" (Ex.29:4; 30:18,19,20,21; Lev.8:6; 11:40; 17:15,16; 14:8; 11:25; 15:8,13,16,17,21,31). Indeed the Septuagint renders Leviticus 11:25: "And whosoever beareth ought of the carcass of them shall *baptize* his clothes, and lie unclean until the even."

The root thought, then, of baptism, is washing.

It is evident however that this needs modification: for there are three other words in the Greek which also mean "wash." One of them, *niptō*, means *to wash* a portion of *the body* (Matt.15:2). Another one, *louō*, from which we have *ab-lu-tion*, refers *to bathing* the entire body (Heb.10:22). Still another one, *plunō*, means *to wash* or *rinse* inanimate things (Rev.7:14). Ordinarily this would be used in speaking of the washing of clothes.

These three words fully cover the field. The verb *baptizō*, is used in place of each of them. It must therefore have a meaning in common with all, yet distinct from each.

A study of each separate case will reveal the fact that *baptizō* was not used for the removal of bodily filth, but rather for the removal of *ceremonial* uncleanness. It is, in fact, *ceremonial washing*.

In the ordinary course of life contact with a carcass would not necessitate washing one's clothes. Marketing is hardly so defiling to the flesh as to require a bath. How could the Pharisee (Luke 11:38) have expected the Lord to do more than go through the formal act to which they were accustomed (Lev.11:24)? To this day such baptisms

obtain among the Jews. The merest dipping of the hands in water is deemed sufficient.

Thus we see the real application of the original root *baptō*, to dip. When cups were to be baptized they were not thoroughly washed, but (Matt.23:25) simply dipped in the water. Neither were pots scoured nor couches subjected to a continual and unnecessary scrubbing, but only formally or *ceremonially* washed (Mark 7:4).

In Numbers 19:18 the hyssop was baptized, or, as we know, *dipped* in water. Indeed in the first recorded baptism, that of the sons of Israel in the Red Sea, there was *no contact with water whatever*<sup>1</sup> (1 Cor.10:2). They went over dry-shod. *The Egyptians it was who were immersed.*

Washing *may* carry spiritual significance: “baptism” *always* does.

The cleansing, though outward and upon the flesh, is not intended to remove the defilement. But the ideas associated with the cleansing of the flesh are transported into the realm of spirit. Access into the tabernacle was conditional upon the ceremonial baptism or cleansing of the flesh at the laver (Lev.8:6; Ex.29:4; 30:20). Ananias charged Saul, “Rise, be baptized, and bathe off your sins, invoking His name” (Acts 22:16).

Therefore, as baptism is ceremonial washing and is applied to the formal cleansing under the law, and especially in connection with the tabernacle, it behooves us to examine the lessons there taught.

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1. As a matter of *fact* the sons of Israel at the Red Sea were not baptized at all in the ordinary sense of the term. By the figure of Metonymy (of the cause) the term “baptism” is used of the *effect* which it produced. Baptism separated between its subjects and a doomed world in the days of the Acts just as the cloud and the sea lay between Israel and the Egyptians in Moses’ day. Now since the *effect* of baptism was the same as the *effect* of the cloud and the sea, it is clear that the term “baptism” most appropriately and strikingly describes it.

## THE TEACHING OF THE TYPES

BEGINNING with the laver of the tabernacle (Ex.30:17-21), let us compare it with the sea and the ten lavers of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 1:23-39); and also with the river of Ezekiel (Ezek.47:1-12). The progress of its typical teaching during the ages will then be discovered to our view. If we then connect each type with its proper antitype, the dispensational setting of each will be clear; and we shall be in a position to apprehend the truth which is present with us now.

### THE TABERNACLE OF MOSES

When Yahweh tabernacled among His people He made provision for their approach; for though He did indeed dwell in their midst, it was behind thick curtains and a veil (Ex.25:27). In the court of the tabernacle, right in the way between the gate and the door, stood two vessels: the brazen altar and the brazen laver (Ex.40:29-34).

The laver is not included in the description of the tabernacle and its vessels (Ex.25:28). After all has been described in minutest detail, after the atonement money has been provided for (Ex.30:11-16), then the laver is added and set in its prominent place, intercepting every priest who would draw nigh to Yahweh (Ex.30:17-21).

And even then, its description is most meager: no dimensions, no shape, nothing to define its proportions. This is notable indeed where all else, with painful exactitude, followed the pattern shown to Moses on the mount.

What was it for? "To wash withal" (Ex.40:30). How simple and beautiful a picture of the cleansing necessary for communion with God!

Moses bathed Aaron and his sons, thus fitting them for the presence of a holy God (Ex.29:4). Such a cleansed condition speaks of nearness and communion, which is life.

So we see that the laver was a "bath of renascence" (Titus 3:5). The initiatory washing of the priest led to a new life of nearness to Yahweh.

But why was the laver left out of the description of the vessels of the tabernacle? Why such seeming indifference as to its shape? Does not this proclaim, with no uncertain sound, that it forms no integral part of the completed structure, but was added for the time being because of the tabernacle's own imperfection?

If it was laid on them only "unto the period of reformation" (Heb.9:10), we can see why no importance attaches to its form or dimensions.

But is there any other evidence as to its transitory nature?

#### THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON

The temple of Solomon, which replaced the tabernacle, had no laver between the altar and the house. In its stead we see the brazen sea at one side of the court and the ten lavers, five on each side of the house (1 Kings 7:23-39; 2 Chron.4:2-6).

The brazen sea is never called a laver. It stood upon twelve oxen (1 Kings 7:25; 2 Chron.4:2-4), speaking of service. The altar before the house has grown to such proportions that it alone fills the court in front of the house, the sea being placed to the left of the porch. The significance of these radical changes will come before us again.

The ten lavers were used to wash the offerings. Though permanently stationed on each side of the house, they were set on bases, each having four brazen wheels (1 Kings 7:30). As the wheels have no other use we may call them footings.

#### THE TEMPLE OF EZEKIEL

But again, let us make sure of our conclusions, and look at Ezekiel's temple. What place has the truth of the laver there?

We can hardly expect to find the single laver of the *tabernacle*, for that has already been taken out of the midst.

If we look on each side of the house for the ten lavers of the temple, surely enough, they are gone: they have been wheeled away!

If we look on the right shoulder of the house eastward over against the south (Ezek.47:1), where the brazen sea stood, that too is gone. But in its place, issuing from under the threshold of the house, flows the river of living water, which removes the curse and brings abundant life and fruitfulness (Ezek.47:8,9).

Here is water indeed! Not a small laver full; not two thousand baths, the limit of the brazen sea; but a flowing, living river, deepening as it flows (Ezek.47:3-5).

Thus we have pictured for us in the courts of God the metamorphosis of the laver, or rather of the truth which it inaugurates, for the laver itself and the ten lavers disappear, and are all alike finally lost in the river of living water.

## THE ANTITYPES

The tabernacle with its various ordinances was a type of that which was to come. The temple of Solomon likewise spoke of a future glory to be realized, when He, who is greater than Solomon, shall inaugurate His reign of peace. Ezekiel's temple—still future—will be standing in that millennial day. It, too, will be a type, not indeed of the day of Yahweh in which it stands, but of the succeeding one, the day of God (2 Peter 3:12) in which the curse will be no more, and a new creation will proclaim that the era of rectification has come.

Types which bring before us such widely different thoughts must picture to us widely different antitypes. It is exceedingly important that we obtain God's mind as to the teaching of the type; and it is no less imperative that we connect each type with the antitype which is proper to it.

## THE TABERNACLE PERIOD

The tabernacle stood from Sinai to Solomon. The epistle to the Hebrews deals with the realities which the tabernacle and its ritual prefigured. In it God's Son is set forth as the Antitype of Moses (Heb.3:2-6) and of Aaron (Heb.5:4), and of Joshua (Heb.4:8). The Hebrews are in the wilderness. One worthy of more glory than Moses is their Leader. He is about to bring them into God's rest, which Joshua failed to do. His priesthood far transcends Aaron's, for it is founded upon better promises and is untransferable. The first covenant given at Sinai fades before the second (Heb.8:7-13).

The tabernacle itself is briefly summarized in the ninth chapter, followed by this significant statement (Heb.9:9): "Which is a parable for the *present period*" (instead of "the time *then* present," as in the Authorized Version. See the Revised rendering). In the eleventh chapter the cloud of witnesses mentioned by name goes no further than the tabernacle days. Mount Sinai of the twelfth chapter, and the "camp" of chapter thirteen, all bring before us truths connected with the tabernacle.

*The days of the temple are not in view in this epistle.*

Now the epistle to the Hebrews was manifestly written to those who are the subjects of divine blessing (Heb. 2:3,4; 6:5) as recorded in the book of Acts. We therefore read of the ruins of the tabernacle of David as a present reality among them (Acts 15:16).

Christ is the true Antitype of the tabernacle. Until His glorious appearing, access into Yahweh's presence must be by means of the antitype of the tabernacle ritual, so far as that nation is concerned. (For the moment it will greatly aid us in understanding these types to dismiss from our minds the ministry of the apostle Paul to the nations in which we are given the truth for the present economy).

## JOHN'S BAPTISM

But before the true Tabernacle was manifested came John, baptizing in Jordan. What, in the type, is a picture of this?

Christ was that Prophet like unto Moses (Deut.18:15-19), who came to deliver His people from bondage (Acts 7:20-39). Israel in Egypt corresponds to Israel under law, and the Lord came to lead them out into that good land He had prepared for them. But, like Israel of old, they tarried in the wilderness. How sadly true is the type in every way! Tens of thousands of them "believed," but they were "all zealous of the law" (Acts 21:20). They were not well pleasing to God, and were strewn along the wilderness (1 Cor.10:5).

The introduction to the wilderness was by baptism. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. This severed them from Egypt and united them to Moses. And so, when John began to preach the kingdom of the heavens, he too baptized them into the true Moses, the Lord Jesus (Matt.3:6).

If a mother were to take her seven boys, who had been playing in the dirt all day, and wash the faces and hands of three of them, she would thus divide them into two companies. The clean ones would be "sanctified." She would be apt to call them "my" boys, in contrast to those who were not clean. And, besides this, the clean boys would have a common bond, which would distinguish them from the unwashed ones, making them a unit. So it was both in Egypt and in the ministry of John the Baptist and our Lord. When the people were "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea," they not only were separated from the Egyptians, but were identified with Moses.

All the prophets and the law prophesied until John: then the kingdom of the heavens began to be preached. But John did not baptize in his own name. He was not the



Prophet who was to come. "John baptizes with the baptism of repentance, telling the people that in the One coming after him, they should be believing, that is, in Jesus. Now, hearing this, they [i.e., the people] are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:4,5).

What then did John's baptism signify?

First, it was a confession: they needed to be washed, or ceremonially cleansed. They confessed their sins (Matt.3:6).

It was unto repentance, the prime requisite for Israel's blessing. The nation had become a byword and a hissing; they were scattered over all the earth; the nations ruled over them (Deut.28:37,43,48; 1 Kings 8:46,49).

The curses which were written in the law of Moses visited them in their disobedience. So then, in Deuteronomy 30:1-5, we read: "And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey His voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy sons, with all thine heart and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the peoples whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee: and the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and He will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers."

Since the days when Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons (Ex.29:4; Lev.8:6), *all baptism was performed by the person baptized*. The priest washed himself at the laver (Ex.40:31). The defiled clothes were to be washed by the man himself (Lev.11:40). Naaman dipped or baptized himself in Jordan (2 Kings 5:14).

But, when John came, he did the baptizing (Matt.3:6). So they called him "the Baptist." By his baptism, those who received it not only became a separate company, but were identified with the Coming One, and thus became a unit.

John came in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord (Matt.11:14; Luke 1:17). And this is why the Lord underwent John's baptism (Matt.3:13). He needed no cleansing. No defilement was there to be removed. But as Moses was with the sons of Israel in the cloud and in the sea, so He also identified Himself with those who had been baptized unto His name. And here, too, is emphasized the two grand methods of baptism which the cloud and the sea set forth. Here, too, there is a cloud, and its significance is clearly seen; for, through it comes the dove, that divine spirit which is the true cleanser, sanctifier, and giver of abundant life (Matt.3:16).

We pause to grieve over the fearful hypocrisy which reigned in the nation in those times. John himself saw how superficial many of those were who came to his baptism. In his bold and fearless way he denounces them, saying, "O progeny of vipers, who intimates to you to flee from the impending indignation?" (Matt.3:7). Repentance and baptism in name and form were not enough. Suitable fruit must be produced to prove its reality (Matt.3:8). The One to Whom they had been baptized could not be deceived. He would not baptize with water, but by His baptism there would be a severing of the real and the unreal. Those would receive the baptism of holy spirit, but such as these the baptism of fire (Matt.3:11).

#### BAPTISM AND THE KINGDOM

Repentance is always connected with baptism when administered to the sons of Israel (Acts 2:38). The words of Moses, in Deuteronomy, are the long lost key to the right understanding of this much-abused word. Before Yahweh

can bless His people Israel in the land they must turn to Him. And, to prove the sincerity of their repentance, they must also bring forth its proper fruits. None of them will ever enjoy that earthly kingdom except they enter through this door. But, for the other nations, God opened another door—the door of faith (Acts 14:27; 15:9).

Baptism was the outward seal of repentance during John's ministry, and that of the Lord Himself while on earth. The Lord Himself never baptized with or in water, but left that to His disciples (John 4:2).

The oneness of those thus baptized, and their separation from the rest, is seen when there arose a question between John's disciples and the Jews about *purification* (John 3:25). They go to John, and tell him of the Lord, how He (or His disciples) *baptize*, and all come to Him. John's disciples were Jews; but now they are distinguished from other Jews. This incident shows, too, how the ministry of John merged into the Lord's, and how John's disciples formed the nucleus of the Lord's followers. These, while one with the Jews by the fleshly rite of circumcision, were separated from them by the fleshly rite of baptism.

The same ministry is continued by Peter on the day of Pentecost. The kingdom had been proclaimed by John and the Lord. Israel refused it, and murdered the Lord's Anointed. But now, in resurrection, He is proclaimed to them again as David's Son, whom God had raised up to sit on David's throne (Acts 2:23,29,31). But, before the day of the Lord could come manifestly, God's hand must be displayed in judgment. Prophet after prophet had spoken of the opening of that terrible day. More awful than the judgments that delivered them from Egypt was to be the portion of His enemies (Acts 2:20; Joel 2:1-11; Amos 5:18-20; Zephaniah; Dan.12:1; Isa.66:15; 2:11,12).

How then were they, who were guilty of that sin of sins, the murder of God's Anointed—how could they escape

them? "Repent, and be baptized each of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the pardon of your sins, and you shall be obtaining the gratuity of the holy spirit. For to you is the promise and to your children, and to all those afar, whosoever the Lord our God should be calling to Him. Besides, with more and different words, he conjures, and entreated them, saying, 'Be saved from this crooked generation!'" (Acts 2:38-40).

He had shown how that generation was going on to the terrible judgments which would usher in the day of the Lord. To be saved from these judgments was the end he desired for them. In order to be saved it was necessary for them to repent. Nor this alone; but they must also be baptized. A priest (in the type of this period, the tabernacle) might have said: "The waters of the laver have no intrinsic value, I will not wash in it." But he would have been reminded of Yahweh's word "that [he] die not" (Ex.30:20). So also none of His people Israel will enter into that kingdom except by the way of repentance and baptism. This is the key to that strange word in Peter's epistle (who writes to the *diaspora*, or dispersion, who are in the wilderness and are about to enter the kingdom, and who are surrounded by the fiery trial he spoke of in his Pentecostal sermon): "The representation of which, baptism is now saving you also (not the putting off of the filth of the flesh, but the inquiry of a good conscience to God) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism will be the entrance into the "ark of safety" in that day, whose tempestuous judgments will so much resemble the waters of Noah (Isa.54:9; Matt.24:37-39).

Two notable results of John's baptism have been noticed.

(1) It separated its subjects from the nation as a whole and, in addition to this,

(2) it formed them into a separate company.

These two thoughts continue to be seen both in our

Lord's ministry and that of the twelve, as recorded in the book of Acts. When the proselyte Cornelius had received the gift of holy spirit, and thus given evidence that God had acknowledged him, Peter could say, "Who should forbid water, that these should not be baptized" (Acts 10:44-48)?

Why should not these men of the nations become one with the baptized company at Jerusalem, since God had sealed them? Not even all of those who had been baptized in water had received the gift of holy spirit. In Samaria they were baptized, but holy spirit had fallen upon none of them (Acts 8:15-17). Simon Magus would have bought the right to impart this spirit with money. If, then, those who had not even received these gifts should be identified with the saints at Jerusalem, and be delivered from the indignation about to be poured upon that nation and the whole earth, why should not these men of the nations be baptized who had received the gift, even as the apostles themselves at the first (Acts 11:15,17)?

So God comes in and forms a new ground of unity which supersedes (and rules in a sense) that of baptism in water, though both continued together for a time.

Now we know that the temple and its service speaks of the time when our Lord, like Solomon, will sit upon His glorious throne and rule in peace (2 Sam.7:12-16). It is a type of the millennial age. But the tabernacle preceded the temple. It stood during David's reign. The Lord would not suffer David to build Him a house (2 Sam.7:5-13; 1 Chron.17:4). But now the tabernacle of David is fallen, as the prophet Amos foretold.

But after Israel has been sifted among the nations, and the sinners have died by the sword (Amos 9:9), then will the tabernacle of David be built again (Acts 15:16). From this we gather, not that the tabernacle itself (as an earthly material structure), but the truth which it represents, the economy which it typifies, will continue until Israel comes

into that good land promised to their fathers, and even after this, so long as the Lord, like David, deals in judgment. This is the latter boundary of the antitype. Until then the laver holds its place midway between the altar and the throne. So long will the word go forth: "Repent and be baptized . . . for the pardon of your sins" (Acts 2:38).

While the tabernacle stood no one dared approach Him unless first he be cleansed at the laver. So, in Israel, when the kingdom of God began to be preached by John, and was continued by the Lord and by Peter, and by the twelve at Pentecost, and as it will again be preached at the time of the end, all the way, until the Greater than Solomon is peacefully reigning on His throne, baptism in water will stand right in the midst of the way of approach.

All this is clear; but why a change?

The absolute need of cleansing denotes a state of distance from God. But a cleansed condition speaks of nearness and fellowship. So it was that the laver was "a laver of regeneration" (*cp* Titus 3:5; Ex.29:4). The initiatory washing of the priest was the new birth that introduced him to a life of nearness to Yahweh.

As the sacrifices were continually repeated because of their imperfection (Heb.10:2), so also the washing was continually repeated, adding nothing to the meaning of the type.

In that glorious day when all Israel shall be saved, then all will have been born from above; all will have been cleansed at the "laver of regeneration." The whole nation will have been initiated into the priesthood. Hence there is no longer any need for the laver in this aspect. They all will be near (Rom.11:26; John 3:3; Ex.19:6; 1 Peter 2:9; Rev.1:6).

#### SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

Thus, in the temple of Solomon, the laver is taken out of the midst of the way of approach (1 Kings 7:23-39).

In its stead is "the great sea" mounted upon oxen, and the ten lavers on either side of the house.

The great sea speaks of the abundant blessing and consequent holiness which will be the portion of Israel in that day. They will no longer be exhorted to "repent and be baptized," for all will be regenerate. All that is needed is to maintain them in holiness in their priestly service for the nations.

The nations will approach through them. Solomon's temple was "a house of prayer for all nations." It was but a feeble type of that grand time when all the nations will approach through Israel (Isa.66:23). These sustain no such relation to Yahweh as Israel: hence for them there are lavers. In that glorious kingdom will be brought to pass the command of the King: "Given to Me was all authority in heaven and on earth. Going, then, disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit, teaching them to keep all, whatever I direct you. And lo! I am with you all the days, till the conclusion of the eon!" (Matt.28:18,20).

#### EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE

During the day of Yahweh, the temple described by the prophet Ezekiel will be built in the holy oblation (Ezek. 40-42; 45:1,7). In many respects it is a counterpart of Solomon's temple. It speaks of a day beyond even the day in which it stands. The day of Yahweh is characterized by the number seven. In Ezekiel's temple the unit of measure is one-seventh longer than in Solomon's, speaking of the eighth day, or day of God. Seven speaks of completion. Eight speaks of a new beginning. In the day of God all things will be new. There will be a new creation. Among the notable changes in Ezekiel's temple as compared with Solomon's we are most interested in the fate of the ten lavers and the brazen sea. The lavers were on

wheels, and, as we have already seen, they are gone; they have been wheeled away. And why? In Revelation 21:3 we read, "And I hear a loud voice out of the throne saying: 'Lo! the tabernacle of God is with mankind, and He will be tabernacling with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them. And He will be brushing away every tear from their eyes. And death will be no more, nor mourning, nor clamor, nor misery; they will be no more, for the former things passed away.'"

"And He Who is sitting on the throne said: 'Lo! New am I making all!' And He is saying, 'Write, for these sayings are faithful and true.' And He said to me: 'I have become the Alpha and the Omega, the Origin and the Consummation. To him who is thirsting I shall be giving of the spring of the water of life gratuitously.'"

The lavers entirely disappear, for there will be no sin to cleanse (Ezek.47:1). The priestly ministry of Israel for the nations is no longer needed. Israel no longer needs to cleanse the sacrifices of the nations, for two reasons: the sacrifices no longer need cleansing, and the nations no longer need the intervention of priests. They, themselves, are clean, and can draw nigh to offer for themselves. What need then for the ten lavers?

The brazen sea has its blessed counterpart. In its place, on the right shoulder of the house, is the river of life, which flows forth and destroys the curse. It proceeds out of the throne of God, an ever deepening stream, bringing life and fruitfulness wherever it goes (Rev.22:1-3). Where there is abundant life there is no need for regeneration. Where there is holiness no cleansing is needed. No, not even a sea; for His servants shall serve Him. There will be no more doom. God Himself shall dwell with men. He will impose no carnal ordinances between Himself and mankind. *The era of rectification has come* (Rev.21:3).

Thus have we traced, in the courts of God, the way of



approach to Him. For His own great name's sake He put barriers between Himself and mankind. But by Christ He will yet break all the barriers down; and, by Him, bring man back to Himself.

The very existence of a tabernacle or a temple, or even Ezekiel's glorious house, is proof positive of a distant God. So in the new earth there is no temple, but God Himself comes out into the open (Rev.21:22). Means of approach *seem* to speak of nearness: but they really proclaim estrangement. As we approach perfection they are all done away.

## THE TRANSITION

FOR clearness sake we have entirely omitted the consideration of our subject as set forth in connection with the ministry of the apostle Paul. Still, it is important to distinguish the apostle Paul from the twelve. They had been with the Lord on earth. When one was to be chosen to supply Judas' empty place, the qualification was one who had companied with Him from John's baptism onward (Acts 1:21,22). Paul had seen the Lord from heaven after His ascension, but was not qualified to have a part in the ministry of the twelve. They preached repentance and baptism; he preached faith.

The Book of Acts is divided into two parts by these two ministries. The incidents of the first half seem to be repeated in the second. Whatever miracle Peter wrought, Paul did the same. Compare:

Acts 3:1 with 14:8.

Acts 9:34 with 28:8.

Acts 9:36 with 20:9.

Acts 5:15 with 19:11,12.

Acts 10 with 9:3-12; 16:9; 18:9; 22:18; 23:11; 27:23.

Acts 12:7 with 16:26, etc.

"For he who operates in Peter for the apostleship of the Circumcision, operates in me also for the nations," said the apostle to the Galatians (Gal.2:8).

This distinction is clearly marked in Acts 13:2: "Sever by all means to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Hitherto the gospel had come through the twelve apostles. But Paul (as his name now becomes) did not receive his gospel from them, nor from any man, but by revelation from Christ Himself (Gal.1:11,12).

And not only so, but the time also was revealed to him when he should make it known to the twelve. And this he did separately, first of all to those of reputation, lest a con-

ference should be fatal to his cause. And those who seemed to be of note did not add anything to him, but rather, when they saw that the gospel of the Uncircumcision had been committed unto Paul as the gospel of the Circumcision had been to Peter, they gave to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. They would confine themselves to the Circumcision, while Paul and Barnabas went to the nations (Gal.2:2-9).

Paul's account of this ministry is found set forth in Romans 15:8-21. The doctrine which characterizes it is justification by faith apart from works of any kind. This teaching is fully opened up in the first four chapters of his letter to the Romans, that to the Galatians, and his first letter to Timothy.

Paul calls it (in contrast to the other apostles) "my" gospel (Rom.2:16; 16:25; 1 Cor.4:15; 15:1; 2 Cor.11:4; 1 Thess.1:5; 2 Tim.2:8).

While it is not the *fulfillment* of the promises God had made, it is in perfect *accordance* with the prophetic utterances concerning blessing to the nations with His people Israel (Rom.15:9-12, *according as*). In it the Jew is first, and the nations get a secondary place. This accounts for the statements found in Romans 1:16; 2:9; 2:10; 3:29,30. Mercy to the nations was to accompany the blessing of Israel: "Rejoice ye nations with His people." There is no hint that this ministry and grace *exhausts* such Scriptures. Indeed they await their *fulfillment* in Yahweh's day. But the grace dispensed is in perfect *harmony* with the revealed counsels of God (Rom.15:9).

When Israel failed, and it seemed that the counsels of mercy for the nations would also fail, then God sends His Son in glory to turn Saul of Tarsus, His bitterest enemy, to work His purposes of grace (Gal.1:15,16; Acts 9:1-18). This was at once the pledge and type of Israel's future conversion.

Peter had said that the heavens must receive the Messiah

until the times of the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21). While this remains true of the things spoken by the prophets, still, in a very real sense, He came forth from heaven and arrested Saul. When He comes to Israel He will come in glory (Titus 2:13; 1 Peter 1:7; Matt.25:31). So He came to Saul. The nation will get a sight of Him (Zech.12:10; Rev.1:7). So did Saul. They will be born at once (Isa.66:8). So was Saul (1 Cor.15:8). They will become a priest-nation. Saul offers up the Gentiles to God (Rom.15).

But Saul's birth and the glorious manifestation were all, from one point of view, premature. Hence, he says he was "as if a premature birth" (1 Cor.15:8). Its full maturity and future fulfillment awaits the day of Yahweh, of which the prophets have written.

What is manifest is this: God has not been balked by the failure of Israel. Had they been obedient (as human calculations go), then they would have been the channel of blessing to the nations (Acts 3:19-21).

But since they will not even have His blessing for themselves, God takes one man, His most malignant enemy, and uses him to do the work which Israel should have done. Paul takes their place. All that will fit them for it has been true of him *in spirit* (1 Tim.1:11). For him the Lord has already come in glory, and His priestly ministry among the nations is after the style of that ministry which will be fulfilled by Israel in the day of Yahweh (Rom.15:16; Rev.1:6; 1 Peter 2:9; Rev.20:6). It was for the nations, in spirit, as though they were already blessed with faithful Israel.

In connection with this ministry, baptism in water still obtained (1 Cor.1:14-16). But, like the case of Cornelius, the spirit baptism preceded and ruled the fleshly rite.

All were baptized in spirit. Only such as had undergone spirit baptism were eligible to water baptism (Acts 15:8; Rom.5:5).

In connection with the ministry of the twelve, all were

baptized in water; but not all in spirit. Now this was reversed. *All were baptized in spirit, but not all in water.*

#### THE TITLES OF CHRIST IN CONNECTION WITH BAPTISM

Volumes of precious truth cluster around the names and titles of our Lord, or Master, Jesus Christ. To understand baptism in its various administrations we will need to notice how His titles are used in connection with it.

*Kurios* is translated "Lord" as a rule. Ephesians 6:5 shows that the title means master. We have used the latter as a synonym for "Lord." Likewise *Christos* is generally transliterated "Christ." It means *Anointed*. "*Messiah*" is its Hebrew equivalent.

#### JOHN'S AND PETER'S BAPTISMS

John baptized into the name of "the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5). It was in view of the personal presence of the Master on earth, to prepare a people for Him. Those who owned the Man "Jesus" as their Master were his disciples.

Peter and the twelve baptized Israelites unto the name of "Jesus" (Acts 2:38), the name associated with His humiliation and shame. The emphasis here is that the man "Jesus"—Whom they had crucified and rejected—He was the Messiah. To be identified with Him was the object of that baptism.

But the Samaritans had no part in the Messiah; that was reserved for the priest nation alone. Jews alone were to be associated with Him in His anointing. To the Samaritans the Messiah sustained the relation of Master. But when on earth the Master had been among them as a man known as "Jesus," and so they were fittingly baptized unto the name and title "the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16).

The proselytes of the nations, as shown in the representative case of Cornelius, were admitted into full fellow-

ship with Israel by virtue of their reception of the spirit before baptism. Our Lord Himself, speaking of the proselyte centurion of Capernaum (Luke 7:2-10) said of him, "Not even in Israel found I so much faith!" So they were baptized in the name of "Jesus Christ."

Thus, while baptism united these three classes in one, it was a compound unity. Just as the space surrounding the temple was one, yet divided into various courts, so the Jews, the Samaritans, and the nations were united and yet preserved their distinctness.

#### PAUL'S BAPTISM

But when we come to the baptism under Paul's ministry there is a change. The same name and title is used which Peter employs for Israelites (Paul's and Peter's "acts" always seem to have some point of correspondence) but the order is inverse. Peter used Jesus Christ. Paul used Christ (Gal.3:27), or Christ Jesus (Rom.6:3, according to the Received Text, and RV).

The same as to words, yet widely different as to emphasis. To the Jews, the great question which their baptism answered was that "Jesus"—the lowly, despised crucified One—was the Messiah. Their baptism was a confession of this.

But with the nations the circumstances were entirely different. Even as their apostle had known Him only after He was glorified, so they acknowledged Him by the title of His glory, "Christ," or "the Anointed." And to identify this glorious One with the lowly Man of Calvary, they added His name, "Jesus."

As their baptism identified them with Him in this new and glorious resurrection sphere it attained a vastly greater force and significance than it previously held. It spoke to them of His baptism on the cross for their sins, and made them one with Him in His death. But it could not stop

there, for He was risen. They, too, were raised in Him. He lived a new, a resurrection life. And so they, too, in Christ Jesus, the Glorious One, had a life beyond the grave, beyond the reach of death. This life is eonian, and has its counterpart in the millennial age, when the nations that believe on Him will be blessed with life (John 11:26).

Thus we see that the apostles did not vary the formula used in baptism because of ignorance or carelessness, but always chose that which was appropriate to the circumstances. They showed the most acute discrimination. It is evident from this that their non-use of the formula at the end of Matthew's account was dictated by an intelligent grasp of the fact that it was not intended to be used until the kingdom had been inaugurated, as is assumed by the Lord when He gave it to them.

And here we near the summit of the "teaching of baptisms." God marvelously develops the simple cleansing of the flesh into a rich and fruitful rite. It speaks of purification indeed but not of the flesh. By His baptism on the cross there is cleansing from every defilement. This is the cleansing that sanctifies and makes meet; that fits for the fellowship of a thrice holy God.

As we have seen, then, Israel's failure does not hinder the blessing of the nations. They are not fulfilled, it is true, as they will yet be in due time; but they are transferred in part to a different moral sphere, and thus receive enrichment. Eonian life they have, but not on earth. They can draw nigh to God, but not, at Jerusalem, through Israel. The Apostle Paul takes Israel's priestly place and offers for the nations (Rom. 15:16: *leitourgos, acting as a priest*).

Baptism in water still obtains, no longer after the tabernacle type, but after the temple system. But it is ruled by the baptism of spirit.

But the time came when the apostle had completed the evangel of Christ (Rom. 15:19-23). And so, in Acts 19:21 we

read, "*Now as these things were fulfilled*, Paul purposed in spirit, passing through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem saying that, 'After my coming to be there I must see Rome, also.'"

This is a crisis of extreme interest to the saints of God of the present economy. At this juncture the apostle wrote the epistles to the Romans and Corinthians. In these epistles this transitionary period is clearly marked (Rom.15; 1 Cor.13:10-13; 2 Cor.5:16). We are permitted to see him look back on the ministry which was "ended," and to look forward to perfection. Hitherto he had known Christ according to the flesh; henceforth he would know Him so no longer. He speaks of observing by means of a mirror, but of future vision face to face. He speaks of knowing "out of an installment," but of a perfection which would do away with any further revelation.

In another passage he speaks of being caught away to the third heaven, and having heard words which it is not expedient to utter. John, in his Patmos vision, speaks indeed of a new heaven as well as a new earth (Rev.21), but, while he details the blessings of this nether sphere, he merely records the fact of the new heaven, and does not enter there as Paul did.

From 2 Peter 3:6,7 we learn that the heavens which are now are the second. Hence, the one seen by John is the third. This third heaven, then, was the subject of Paul's visions (2 Cor.12:2). It is at this juncture, too, that he shows that "if any one is in Christ, there is a new creation; the primitive passed by. Lo! there has come new! Yet all is of God" (2 Cor.5:17).

#### THE PRESENT ECONOMY

Does not all this lead us on in the parallel we have already discovered? If the blessing under Paul's ministry among the nations was on the style of the day of Yahweh, and this min-



istry came to an end, what shall we look for next? Shall it not be followed by the day of God, the perfect state which follows Yahweh's day? Introduction to the day of the Lord was by regeneration: but *a new creation* ushers in the day of God. Old things will have passed away. All things will have become new. And all things will be of God.

Such is the new ministry upon which the Apostle now enters—the ministry of the Conciliation (2 Cor.5:18).

That will be the crowning day of God, when He will be the God of all the nations. He will no longer be confined to Israel. So, also, the gospel of the mystery is by the decree of the eonian God, and is made known, not to one nation only, but to all nations (Rom.16:26).

In that day there will be no laver, no sea, no ceremonies of any kind on the way to God. Life and nearness will be within each heart. It will be as a flowing river, for thirst as well as for cleansing (Rev.21:3; 22:1-5).

And so it is now.

The forms and ceremonies will have no place there, because the substance will have come which they but weakly shadowed forth.

So now, *in spirit*, maturity, perfection, completeness, fullness, entirety, satisfaction—call it what you will—*has come* (Col.2:9,10). Not the material, on the earth but the spiritual, in the heavenly regions.

How restful it is to look upon a task all finished! And such a task! And so well done! How we should charge our hearts to enter and enjoy this solid satisfying portion. Whatever joys and glories the future may have in store, even though our bodies be changed at His coming, *nothing can add to our completeness in the Anointed*. No ordinances upon the flesh, no prayer, no worship, no service, nothing can make us more acceptable; nothing can remove defilement or any other barrier to approach, for now we are perfectly equipped for His presence. The spirit of our

God has cleansed us to His perfect satisfaction. Nothing can bring us nearer, nothing can make us dearer.

## THE SPIRIT SUPREME

But is there any hint as to the divergent quality of the blessings of this age as compared with that of the future perfect earth? What right have we to transfer all to spirit? The various baptisms illustrate this most clearly. As we have seen in our Lord's days upon earth, there was but one baptism—in water.

In the Pentecostal economy the baptism of spirit was *added* in some cases.

In Paul's first ministry to the nations *both* baptisms continued. But just the reverse of the days of Pentecost; *all* had the spirit's baptism, and only some that in water.

But now, in this new economy, there is again but “ONE baptism” (Eph.4:5), as in our Lord’s time; only it is not in water, but in spirit.

So we see that gradually, a step at a time, the tendency has been away from the outward expression by means of water, towards the end—the inward reality, by means of spirit.

This may be shown graphically thus:

| ONE BAPTISM                                               | TWO BAPTISMS                              | ONE BAPTISM                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ~~~~~<br>~~~~~<br>~~~~~<br><b>WATER</b><br>~~~~~<br>~~~~~ | ~~~~~<br>~~~~~<br>~~~~~<br>~~~~~<br>~~~~~ | <b>SPIRIT</b>               |
| <i>John and the Lord</i>                                  | <i>The Pentecostal Era</i>                |                             |
|                                                           |                                           | <i>Paul's Last Ministry</i> |

All the cleansing and sanctification (which the water only indicated) was really done by spirit. Water came first to instruct the lower classes in God's school. But now that spirit has replaced water, why should we cling to the outward semblance?

There are thus four distinct periods marked out in the Word. These differ from each other, not alone as to baptism, but along other lines as well. By rightly dividing off and partitioning to each the truth which God associates with it, we may hope for God's approval of our workmanship (2 Tim.2:15).

But the most important and weighty truth for us to apprehend is this: that, *in spirit*, the later ministry of the apostle Paul (subsequent to Acts 28:25-28), as recorded in the later epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians), brings the saints to a stage corresponding to the new earth of the end of the Apocalypse. *In spirit*, I say, not as it will be in that day of physical marvels. Now, as it will be then, nothing remains to be done (Eph.2:10,18; Eph.4:12,13). Nothing can be added. Nothing can be improved. All is perfect, complete, satisfactory (Phil.3:15; Col.1:20,25; 2:9,10).

By thus comparing the physical and spiritual, we are helped much in understanding many seeming difficulties.

Take, for instance, the manifestation of the spirit in sign gifts (1 Cor.12). In the millennial age these will be present to restore and bind up. But in the perfect state how can there be gifts of healing when there will be no sickness? No lame man will be there to heal, no dead to raise to life again. The very glory and perfection of that age will make such gifts void.

These gifts abounded in Paul's ministry at the first, and in his earlier epistles. They were common in the Corinthian assembly. But the apostle, at the crisis already noted, tells them that "they shall cease" (1 Cor.13:8-10). How? *By the incoming of maturity, or perfection*, just as will be the case in the day of God. The perfection of that age will make void many a millennial blessing.

If Paul's earlier ministry corresponds with Israel's millennial ministry (only with a spiritual tendency and lacking the measure of material blessing that will obtain then),

it is easy to see why they were done away in this succeeding ministry, which includes the present grace; and why they are not mentioned in his later epistles.

In the apostle's own experience a great change is strikingly manifest. At one time the earth shook open the prison doors and set him free (Acts 16:26). But his last years were spent a prisoner of the Lord in Rome. This fact, and contrast, is specially emphasized in each of the later epistles written by him who was now the "prisoner of Christ Jesus."

At one time kerchiefs taken from His body availed to heal the sick (Acts 19:12). Later he endures the thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7-9). Timothy suffers "often infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23), and Trophimus is left at Miletum sick (2 Tim. 4:20).

It is manifest that, if perfection has indeed come, it is not in the physical sphere; in fact, the flesh does not receive the comfort that it once obtained. The only medicine for Paul's thorn was sufficient grace.

From all this it is clear that the tendency towards spirit which we have observed in the various baptisms is continued to perfection. *From the former extreme, where spirit seemed to have no place, we have arrived at the latter where flesh has none.*

All is spirit. The greatest glory of this spiritual completeness is its manifestation in the midst of the utter weakness of the flesh. Let us then not look at our flesh to gauge God's thoughts towards us. Some day the spirit, of which we have but an earnest, will energize our bodies, too, and *they will become spiritual bodies*—perfect and complete as the bodies of those who will people the new earth, and with powers which will far transcend what even they will enjoy. Till then let us enjoy to the full the exceeding riches of God's grace as shown in the high and overwhelming and superabundant spiritual blessings He has bestowed upon us in the heavenly spheres. Our home, our hope, our des-

tiny is there. Let us drop those earthly concerns which are fitted for a people whose hope is earthly, and set our hearts and minds on things above. We cannot be there in flesh, but we can in spirit. Just as in that future day His presence will be our Paradise, so now let us go in spirit to where He is, at God's right hand, and find our *all in Him*.

## BAPTISM *IN* AND *INTO*

A most instructive and helpful distinction exists in the original text between baptism *in* a place or element, and *into* a condition or result. This is clearly seen in the declaration that, *in* one spirit, we all were baptized *into* one body (1 Cor.12:13). The spirit is the element *in* which we were baptized: the body in the resultant condition. We have thus become identified with the body of Christ. It is a pity that this distinction cannot be consistently carried out in an English version without offending the fastidious ear of the modern reader. However, in the interest of faithfulness to the Original, we have rendered it "*into* the name of Paul" (1 Cor.1:13,15), and are sure that many readers will appreciate our not hiding the truth under a veneer of elegant English. Indeed, we are more and more inclined to associate attempts to make musical English with the warning of the apostle concerning itching ears. Let us have the truth!

In some texts the force of *into* is easily seen. John the baptist and Peter both baptized *into* the pardon of sins (Mark 1:4; Acts 1:38). *In* could not be used here, for the pardon was not the place or element, but the effect which the rite produced. The same is true of our baptism into the death of Christ (Rom.6:3), the baptism of the sons of Israel *into* Moses (1 Cor.10:2), but best of all, our baptism *into* Christ (Gal.3:27) or Christ Jesus (Rom.6:3). In all these cases there is identification with the thing or person indicated by *into*. This is the point in Paul's appeal to the Corinthians. If he had baptized *into* his own name it would have created a party in Corinth. It would have identified those thus baptized with Paul, just as it did identify those who were baptized with Christ Jesus.

It is a notable fact that baptism into Christ—whether in Jesus Christ, as proclaimed by Peter, or Christ Jesus,

as proclaimed by Paul—baptism into the Anointed was always followed by manifestations of holy spirit. The reason is found in the title itself, for His anointing was by holy spirit. If we should expand the expression, we would say “baptism into the One anointed by holy spirit.” It follows as a matter of course that those baptized *into* Him must partake of the spirit which is His essential characteristic. This is emphasized by the fact that, when this title is not used the spirit is not given. Baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:16; 19:5) is expressly denied this virtue.

With these distinctions firmly established in our minds we are in a position to explore two much misunderstood passages, to which they are the key. One is the so-called “great commission” in the twenty-eighth of Matthew. The other is the double baptism of the disciples whom Paul met at Ephesus, as recorded in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts.

To do anything *in the name* of another signifies that the power and authority behind the act is supplied by the one whose name is mentioned. Some cast out demons in His name (Mark 9:38, see 16:17). Pardon was proclaimed in His name (Acts 2:38). The apostles had authority to baptize in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:38; 10:48). And this is the usual, and, in fact, the only possible sense in which the formula in Matt.28:19 can be understood if we follow the common version. The Revisers have happily changed it to *into*. The verse should read: “baptizing them *into* the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit.” Just as Paul baptized a few into Christ Jesus and thus they were introduced into a sphere of blessing in accord with the title, so, in the day of the Lord, when this commission will be carried out, the nations will be blessed in accord with the formula He gave them.

The name of the Father indicates that, in millennial days, the nations who becomes disciples will find entrance into

the family of God. They will become His children. And this relationship will be based on the propitiation provided by the Son. The apostle John, in his gospel and epistles, which have a special application to that day, treats of the truth which baptism into the Father and the Son indicates. In contrast to the present grace, it is not based on Israel's dejection, but on their redemption. "He is the propitiation concerning our sins, yet not concerning *ours* only, but concerning the whole world also" (1 John 2:2). This is the reason the millennial nations will be baptized into the name of the Son.

It is notable that the title Christ is not used in this formula. It would imply that the nations had a portion in Messiah, which is exclusively Israel's. They could not be baptized *into* the name of Christ without sharing in the administration of the kingdom. Because we, by faith, have been identified with Christ Jesus in baptism, we are associated with Him in His celestial rule. But the nations will have no share in Messiah's reign during the thousand years. It will be the kingdom of the heavens, when Israel alone is the ruling nation.

Why will they be baptized *into* the name of the holy spirit? Is it not clear that this indicates that they will receive the spirit and its manifestations? At that time God will pour out of His spirit on *all flesh* (Acts 2:17). No doubt this will be most evident in Israel, but it will extend to all the other nations also. Seeing that they will enjoy the manifestation of the spirit, this is incorporated into the baptismal formula. They are baptized into the holy spirit.

The baptismal formula used in the end of Matthew indicates the sphere of blessing into which the nations will be ushered when all earthly authority is vested in the hands of Messiah.

When Paul came to Ephesus he found some of John the baptist's disciples who had not received holy spirit.



Indeed, they had not heard whether holy spirit "is." They must have heard from John that holy spirit was to come, for his constant theme concerning baptism was to the effect that he baptized in water, but He who was to come after him would baptize in holy spirit (Luke 3:16).

Paul immediately questions them "*Into* what, then, were you baptized?" As it was into John's baptism, Paul explains that that baptism was in anticipation of the Lord Himself, and was into the name of the Lord Jesus. Now baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus does not confer the spirit. Even after the Lord had come and had died and had risen again, this formula failed to communicate spiritual endowments. Philip used it in Samaria and, in explanation of the fact that they did not get the holy spirit, we are told that they had only been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:16).

In view of this fact it is not likely that Paul would use this formula and re-baptize the men. Yet such is the usual interpretation, fostered by a faulty punctuation. Paul, rather, is rehearsing what John the baptist did, and telling us that the formula used by him was the same as that used by Philip in Samaria.

What possible use could there be to re-baptize them, choosing for a formula the very one which was *not* calculated to accomplish the effect he had in view? Instead, as in the case of the Samaritans, where the apostles communicated the spirit by the laying on of hands, Paul imposes his hands on them, and the holy spirit came on them, and they talked languages and prophesied.

The conclusion that Paul did not re-baptize in Ephesus is confirmed by several other considerations. It was at this time that he wrote to the Corinthians that Christ had *not* sent him to baptize, but to preach the evangel. The form of the verbs in the original are conclusive proof as to where we should divide what he said from what he did.

His rehearsal of the Baptist's ministry is in the indefinite tense as far as possible for he refers, not to any specific act, but to the whole tenor of his course. This is difficult to carry over into English.

But when he speaks of the imposition of his own hands the tense is changed to present active, indicating an action in progress at the time. That this is the point at which his speaking ends and his acting commences is finally settled by the fact that, after saying that they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, the narrative proceeds, "At the placing of *Paul's* hands on them . . ." If Paul had just been before us as their baptizer, his name should have been mentioned in that connection, and we should read "at the placing of *his* hands on them . . ." It is evident that his name must be mentioned as soon as he begins to act.

## BAPTISM IN PAUL'S EPISTLES

THE distinctive truth for the present time is given us through the apostle Paul (Eph.3:8,9) in the epistles written after Israel is set aside, or in view of that fact. In perfect accord with the grace revealed, the least of all saints is chosen to enlighten all as to the secret economy hitherto concealed by God.

If we seek to "reconcile" the various dispensations in which baptism obtains and fuse them all into one general and indistinct whole, we only obscure the truth. Truth must be rightly apportioned, or it is no longer truth.

Even in Paul's letters there are various presentations of this subject which *seem* contradictory. If, however, we remember the economy in which each truth finds its place, all is clear. What seemed contradictory falls into perfect order. Thus we are enabled to give each Scripture its full weight. We are not forced to tone down or clip His word to make it fit some other passage.

Paul wrote nine epistles to seven ecclesias. Seven speaks of the perfection and completeness of the revelation God gave through him. Every subject in which we require instruction is dealt with. True, Peter and John deal with the same subjects, but their view-point is radically different and not at all in keeping with the present fullness of grace. Nine speaks of the intense divinity pervading all. It is three (the number of God in revelation) squared. These numbers teach us that through Paul's letters we have the height and perfection of divine revelation.

They fall into three groups, according to the measure of the manifestation of God at the time when they were written.

Two were written before the truths most characteristic of the present dispensation had been made known. These are 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

Four were written on the verge of the present period, and were sent to the Romans, the Corinthians and the Galatians.

Three were given after the public repudiation of Israel (Acts 28:25-28), in the full blaze of the glorious grace which is now dispensed. These were written to the Ephesians, the Philippians, and the Colossians.

The remaining four are personal epistles.

This is the key to the various ways in which the truth of baptism is presented in each. Perfect harmony prevails when we apprehend the progress of revelation.

#### THE EARLY LETTERS

The subject is entirely foreign to Thessalonian truth. Its scenes are laid in that future glory where baptism has no place.

In Galatians it is mentioned once. "Now on the coming of faith we are no longer under an escort. For ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There cannot be Jew and Greek, there cannot be bond and free, there cannot be male and female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal.3:25-28).

Those under the law were children, kept in ward by its wall of ordinances and commandments. But when faith had come, the saints were given the place of a grown son.

This was not a matter of attainment for some. It was the portion of *all*. It is not a question of individual experience. It is not, as in nature, that saints become sons through infancy and youth. It is a question of dispensation.

All under law, however godly or experienced, were children. All who are of faith are sons. To illustrate this the apostle points to those among them who had been baptized into Christ. They had been clothed with Christ. And so, being clothed with Him, they themselves were not seen,

but Christ. All fleshly distinctions are obliterated. The differences between the Greek and the Jew, the slave and the freeman—even the sexes—all are gone in Him. But this was true, not alone of those who had been baptized, but of all. They were “all one in Christ Jesus.”

Let us for a moment allow that baptism in water made them one, as it did those in Jerusalem and Samaria. Then only those baptized were clothed with Christ. There would then be a fleshly distinction—a conclusion diametrically opposite to the apostle's words.

No ordinance could make them one in sonship. That was by faith alone. Having begun by spirit, it was impossible for them to be perfected by flesh.

#### THE TRANSITIONAL LETTERS

The epistle to the Romans contains a retrospective glance at the ordinance of baptism as administered under the “gospel of God,” or what Paul terms “*my* gospel.”

It follows from that most astounding revelation of God's favor found in the fifth chapter. The sovereignty of sin, from Adam till Moses, was absolute. No less so is the present reign of grace. Much as sin may abound, grace always superabounds.

“A most dangerous doctrine,” some would say. “Then a man may do just as he pleases! He may revel in sin and still be saved. Why his very sin will call forth still greater grants of grace!”

Just so.

“What, then, shall we declare? That we may be persisting in sin that grace should be increasing? May it not be coming to that! We, who died to sin, how shall we still be living in it? Or are you ignorant that whoever are baptized into Christ Jesus, are baptized into His death? We, then were entombed together with Him through baptism into His death, that, even as Christ was roused from among the

dead through the glory of the Father, thus we also should be walking in newness of life" (Rom.6:1,2).

The Received Text reads "Jesus Christ," which is unfortunate indeed. His personal name Jesus, followed by His title, Messiah, or Christ, refers us to the days of His humiliation. It was unto Christ as having been baptized at the cross, as having died and been buried, and as having been raised again; it was unto Christ Jesus that they were baptized. And this united them to Him. They too had been put to death, had been buried, and had been raised again. And this put them beyond the boundaries of sin's realm. Indeed, "We, who died to sin, how shall we still be living in it?"

The fact of having undergone the washing of water was no guarantee of a sinless life. It was only as they apprehended its spiritual meaning that its power was seen.

But some had not been baptized. Were they excluded from this unity with Christ? Were they forbidden to identify themselves with Him in His baptism? Or were they charged to undergo the ordinance in order to obtain these privileges?

None are told to be baptized. The apostle carefully distinguished between "*us*," those with him, and "*ye*" (emphatic or contrastive in the Greek), the Roman saints. Not even all of those with him had been baptized. He could only say "*as many* of us," not "*all*." Nor does he drop any hint which would lead us to infer that those with him had any intentions in that direction.

But still more strongly are we led to believe that it was not his object to teach the Romans to observe the rite, for a more fitting juncture could not be found in which he might have charged them to fulfil it. But he does not do so. And more than this, he does charge them to "reckon" it so. All the precious truth which the observance conveyed to its subjects was to be *reckoned* theirs, just the same as though they had gone through it. The fact that God does

not charge them to be baptized is a clear indication that it was not according to His will.

The uncertain footing upon which baptism in water rested during Paul's ministry among the nations, previous to the present economy, is in sharp contrast to its firm hold in early Pentecostal times. This becomes very apparent by Paul's course at Corinth, and his subsequent thankfulness that he had not baptized more freely (1 Cor. 1:14-16).

He regarded baptism as a unifier, or rather, in their case, a possible cause of division, by uniting them to another center than Christ. If he had baptized more of them he might be called upon to answer the charge of baptizing into his own name; thus creating a unity apart from the unity God had made by spirit-baptism. He goes on to say: "For Christ did not commission me to be baptizing, but to be preaching the evangel, not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void."

The cross put an end to man as to flesh. Oceans of water applied to his body could not cleanse; neither could it sanctify for God's presence, nor produce a spiritual unity. The power of that cross, once known, put an end to all that concerns the flesh. Flesh avails nothing. If it be reckoned, if I be baptized in water, then I deny the cross and its condemnation of the flesh.

And here we arrive at the very pith and marrow of our subject. Though our Lord had been baptized by John, still He speaks of another baptism, yet future, which would give relief from the hindrances in which He exercised His earthly ministry (Luke 12:50).

All baptism hitherto had been but shadows. But there can be no shadow without the substance. The washings of the law and the waters of Jordan did not even remove the filth of the flesh, much less did they touch the moral defilement which separates between the creature and the Creator. What can wash away such defilement?

Nothing but the death of Christ.

That was the baptism He spoke of. Not His death at Pilate's hands, but His death in that deeper spiritual sense of which the physical is but a parable. Just as all fellowship and recognition ceases between a dead man and his friend, so He was severed from the smile and fellowship of God. And more than this, when He was made the sin offering, as in days of old, God sent fire from above into His bones, and it prevailed against Him.

How great a marvel that He became a real Man, at times hungry and weary and worn! But how much greater is the marvel as we see Him, till then untainted, undefiled, holy, having no need of any cleansing, any baptism, become sin for us!

For Himself He could acknowledge no sin; for us He took all sin.

Then was cleansing needed; then was baptism needed. Water would not do; no, nor literal fire. Nothing less than the fierce fury of God's wrath could consume the sin: His hot displeasure alone could cleanse.

What all this involved we may never know. He alone could bear it. But we know that it laid Him in the grave, and that He rose triumphant, and has ascended to God's right hand.

And as we see Him in that holy place we know that all the sins that He bore are gone. They never could find entrance there. And we whisper to our hearts: "His is the baptism that cleanses and purifies and satisfies. And since it was not for Himself He bore it (for He had no need), then it was for me. Whatever means God has provided, that will I use to obtain the benefits of this baptism of baptisms, the cross of the Christ of God."

As we have seen, baptism into "Christ Jesus" meant more than into the "Lord Jesus" (for Samaritans), or "Jesus Christ" (for Israel's sons in their national standing and for



proselytes of the nations). It was unto Him as having died and being risen and glorified. Not death alone, but resurrection also.

In his great argument on resurrection the apostle makes a point of this: "Now if Christ is being heralded that He has been roused from among the dead, how are some among you saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? Now if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been roused. Now if Christ has not been roused, for naught, consequently, is our heralding, and for naught is your faith . . . . Consequently those also, who are put to repose in Christ, perished. If we are having an expectation in Christ in this life only, more forlorn than all men are we . . . . Else what shall those be doing who are baptizing? It is for the sake of the dead absolutely if the dead are not being roused. Why are they baptizing also for their sake? Why are we also in danger every hour?" (1 Cor.15:12-29).

Paul died daily. The death here spoken of is that which baptism sets forth—death with Christ. What shall we do for those who have died with Christ if there is no resurrection (Rom.6:3)?

If death is the end of all, if there is no resurrection, then those baptized into "Christ Jesus," acknowledging their death with Him, are, simply sealing their own doom and destruction. It is the hope of resurrection alone that puts meaning and joy into the rite for them. But they *did* rejoice in "Christ Jesus" (1 Cor.15:31). The apostle bases his protest upon this.

How inconsistent to rejoice in Christ Jesus (the title of His glory) when they had destroyed the only real cause of rejoicing—the resurrection! How inconsistent to identify themselves with Him in death and then deny His glorious resurrection and their part in it! Such teaching, instead of leading to a resurrection experience in this life, leads to looseness and carelessness and indifference.

In 1 Corinthians 10 (one of the earlier transitional epistles) the baptism of the fathers into Moses is made the point of a solemn warning.

Many of their descendants were sheltering themselves under the fact that they had been baptized. But, like Simon of Samaria, their hearts were not right in the sight of God. Every one of the fathers had been baptized into Moses, and enjoyed the same spiritual gifts, but this did not shield them from God's displeasure. The great bulk of them were strewn along the wilderness. "So that, let him who is supposing he stands beware that he should not be falling."

This passage has often been used by the enemy to destroy confidence in Christ. But the very opposite is its intention. Those who base their assurance on baptism or spiritual gifts, let *these* take heed! They may *think* they stand, but they are certain to have a fall. The *baptism of Christ* with holy spirit is the only one that can establish our hearts forever in God's sight.

The warning follows the fact that the consummation of the eons had been attained. The drama of earth's history had reached its crisis by the apostasy of Israel. This apostasy was burdened with baptism and religious ceremonies. Hence the warning.

The last Scripture in the transitional epistles remains to be noticed. "For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the one body, being many, are one body, thus also is the Christ. For in one spirit also we all are baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and all are made to imbibe one spirit" (1 Cor.12:12,13).

The Corinthians had been the subjects of the washing of baptism. Not, indeed, necessarily in its outward ceremonial form, in water, but in the substantial spiritual cleansing of which water was but the shadow. After mentioning various classes of the wicked, the apostle says: "And some

of you were these, but you are bathed off, but you are hallowed, but you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God" (1 Cor.6:11). The bathing which resulted in their sanctification was by the spirit of God. "Bathing" really cleanses the flesh; "baptism" does not. So the thorough spiritual cleansing is here spoken of as "bathing," rather than "baptism."

Unity had hitherto been by water. Now for the first time we read of a unity by spirit-baptism. We have seen how the laver gives place to the sea, which in its turn is transformed into a life-giving river, the source of life and fruitfulness wherever it flows. The spirit which baptizes us into one body is a river of life. Neither laver nor sea furnished a draught for the thirsty soul. Cleansing exhausted their mission. They were not "living" or running water, like the river. But the spirit He bestows not only binds us one to another, but it is a draught of delight and life. We have all been caused to imbibe the same spirit. We all have the same life. We all are one. This is the "unity of the spirit," which cannot be broken, which He charges us to keep with diligence (Eph.4:1).

Thus is baptism set forth in the transitional epistles. We are pointed back to what has been, and are led on to look forward to still clearer light. "Out of an instalment are we knowing," says the apostle, "now whenever maturity may be coming, that which is out of an installment shall be discarded" (1 Cor.13:9,10). Childhood is past. Manhood is future. Upon its threshold he says: "When I was a minor, I spoke as a minor, I was disposed as a minor, I took account of things as a minor. Yet when I have become a man, I have discarded that which is a minor's" (1 Cor.13:11).

The apostle had the unique experience of emerging from one economy, of passing through a second, and was about to enter the third. The first was characterized by the concrete forms of childhood; the next, the dignity of sonship; the last is to be the maturity of the full grown man.

Thus we can easily see the ground for "putting away" things he once held dear. It is the contempt of the matured man for the infantile playthings which had fully served their purpose.

The present secret economy was gradually approached in the Acts, and those epistles written before its close. The mystery or secret of the present economy was not made known until Ephesians was written. Still there is symptom after symptom pointing forward to it. The manner of Paul's conversion was itself a very remarkable indication, even though he was brought into the (then) existing order of things. He was called *as an enemy, outside the land*. His preaching Messiah as the Son of God is another very prominent point of divergence from the rest. His separation along with Barnabas and his sermon at Pisidian Antioch drove the wedge in still further.

There was a great difference, too, in the effect of his ministry on those who heard him. All received the spirit. When the mystery was finally revealed, it was not given to those alone who should thenceforward be saved, but to those who had previously received the gift of the spirit in connection with his ministry (Eph. 1:13).

At that time they had no hope of their own, but the hope of Israel. But they were to be saved from the wrath about to visit this earth by being caught up into the air. They and those who had fallen asleep would be changed in the resurrection. They were to bear a heavenly stamp.

The secret (or mystery) of Israel's blindness had been revealed to the initiated as well as the mystery of the gospel, or secret good news—the conciliation.

After all this Israel is publicly and finally repudiated, and the way is thus cleared for the acknowledgment of the nations (Acts 28:25-28).

So we see that, before the present secret economy was revealed, things were in a ripe state to receive its wondrous message.

All the while the evangel of God was being proclaimed among the nations, God was still holding out the offer of the kingdom to His disobedient people.

Before this, while our Master was still on earth, He had proclaimed the kingdom as Yahweh's prophet. When they reject the offer, He quotes the words Yahweh spoke to Isaiah, blinding their eyes and stopping their ears. He no longer proclaims the kingdom openly, but veils His teaching in parables concerning the interval of its rejection (Matt.13).

When, later on, they rejected the King Himself, He hid himself from them, and the word through Isaiah (which he heard when he saw His glory) was again announced (John 12:37-41).

All manner of sin and blasphemy was forgiven them, even though they rejected Yahweh and His Messiah. Only one more way was open. After He ascended, the promised holy spirit was given, renewing the offer of the kingdom, and promising to send back their Messiah if they would repent (Acts 3:20). It is the last call. If the spirit is rejected there is no other resource. Sin against the holy spirit can not be pardoned in this eon or that which is impending.

The book of Acts is the record of this final ministry. It begins with the coming of the spirit: it chronicles the rejection of the spirit: it ends with the spirit's repudiation of Israel. Its subject is the kingdom of God—the same kingdom which they had twice rejected in Messiah's preaching and His person. Isaiah's thrice quoted testimony against them (this time referred to as the holy spirit's specially solemn words) concludes the history. Their dreadful wars and the sickening horrors of the destruction of Jerusalem pass unnoticed by their God. Thenceforward they are out of His reckoning.

They have rejected Yahweh.

They have rejected Messiah.

Now they have rejected the holy spirit.  
This is final.

How solemn and far-reaching, then, must be the proclamation from Rome, the seat of earthly sovereignty, of the spirit's withdrawal of the offer of the kingdom to Israel.

In the first proclamation of the kingdom, by the Master Himself, the nations had no place. The Son of David was not sent but to the house of Israel.

Neither had they any part in the King. The Greeks who desire to see Him are not accommodated.

And when the kingdom first began to be proclaimed by the spirit's power, no one dreamed of such a thing, even though Israel, by the murder of Messiah, had forfeited every claim to the kingdom. After this dreadful deed they really had no more right to God's blessing than the other nations.

The spirit must needs act upon the principle of *grace*, even with the people of the covenant. But this principle takes in the other nations, too!

The first hint we get of this is in Cornelius' case. The spirit's gifts are freely bestowed on aliens. Fleshly distinctions are ignored. Through Paul's ministry among the nations the spirit gets a larger and still larger place. The nations receive the spirit. Israel rejects the spirit.

Israel is not cast aside for failure to carry out the ordinances. Far from it. They were fiercely zealous for the ritual, and even tried to force the other nations under its yoke. This is why Isaiah's words at the close of Acts are quoted as the words of the *holy spirit*, and not, as previously, as Yahweh's words or the Master's.

The first rejection of the kingdom drew from Him the mysteries of the kingdom, which the disciples alone could understand.

The rejection of Himself led Him to further unbosom Himself to His own, though He hid Himself from the multitude.

What, then, shall we expect from the rejection of the spirit?

Publicly and outwardly the spirit seems to withdraw. No mighty works henceforth display its presence. But to His own He reveals the greatest secrets that God's purpose has ever revealed—the full Mystery of Messiah, and the present secret economy which God had concealed from all previous ages.

The public proclamation of the spirit's rejection of Israel is the monument God has erected to guard the boundary-line between the previous and the present dispensation. On one side is inscribed Isaiah's solemn repudiation. On the other, "*to the nations was dispatched this salvation of God.*"

While we have observed with profit the *tendency* of the truth before this time, we must not stop here. We must look to Paul's letters, written after this great and distinct dispensation-marking event, to get clear, conclusive, and final teaching on our subject.

## PERFECTION

WHO shall describe the glories of the Ephesian letter? We are taken back before the entrance of evil and behold ourselves in His purposes in Christ. We are taken and seated in the very heavens in Christ. But, though the earth is taken from beneath our feet in this twofold sense, yet in Him we find a firmer footing than ever this earth can give.

But such abundant grace cannot be contained in Israel's narrow pale. They were nigh by virtue of the covenant blood. Such nearness was but distance compared with the nearness now secured by the blood of Christ. The means by which they drew near—the court, the altar, the laver, the holy place, the vail—all these are now seen to be but barriers to their free approach.

Now these are all removed. The defilement of the flesh might keep even an Israelite outside the camp in the days of old; but now the blood of Christ yields to no fleshly disability, and avails for all—for those afar off as well as those that were nigh. The nations have an equal share with Israel in this stupendous blessing.

The blood of Christ alone, unaided, without escort or association, without accessory or adjunct of any kind, brushing aside the embarrassment and blockade of fleshly rites, in the fresh and unsupported vigor and power of its solitary majesty—the blood of Christ alone is the champion of the sinner; that, single-handed, clears a passage to the very throne of God.

But is baptism brushed aside? Is it included in the abolished rites?

Among the unities of the fourth chapter are: "*One* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism" (Eph.4:5).

Though there be lords many, for us there is but one Lord.

In previous dispensations, as well as in a future day,



varieties of faith obtain. Favor is shown to various classes according to their relationship to Israel. In the Pentecostal era the faith for Israel was far more glorious than that for the Samaritans, while the nations were but guests at Israel's board. Now they are no longer guests and sojourners, but fellow citizens of the saints, and members of God's family. Now there is one faith for all; not Israel first, not the nations first; but all are received on equal gracious terms.

As there is but one faith now, so also there is but one baptism.

We have seen how the ministry of our Lord, and, that of John were characterized by one baptism—that in water. John had borne record concerning the Master: "For I, indeed, am baptizing you in water for repentance, yet He who is coming after me is stronger than I, Whose sandals I am not competent to bear. He will be baptizing you in holy spirit and fire" (Matt.3:11). So the Master, upon His ascension, bears witness to John: "John indeed baptizes in water, yet you shall be baptized in holy spirit after not many of these days" (Acts 1:5).

So that from Pentecost onward two baptisms obtained. Water baptism was accompanied by spirit baptism.

In the administration of the evangel of God among the nations by Paul these two continued, but water baptism takes a secondary place, while the baptism of the spirit is the portion of all.

Now that there is a return to *one* baptism the question remains: "Is it water, or, Is it spirit?"

The epistle itself gives answer: "on believing, also, you are sealed with the holy spirit of promise" (Eph.1:13). This alone entitled them to the spiritual blessings which they had in the heavenly regions.

By one spirit they were all baptized into one body. Without that baptism there could never be the one body. If the one body does not exist, there is no body of Christ, no ecclesia, and our highest blessings as His members are annulled.

It is by this spirit that we all have access into God's presence, and are united one to another. This unity of the spirit is one of the characteristic truths of this secret economy. It is vital.

So then, the baptism of spirit remains.

As there is but one baptism, that in water disappears. If we take Ephesians as the text book, then Philippians furnishes us with examples, and Colossians with review.

In Philippians, we see the apostle's own course in the things of flesh. Precious as they once appeared, he now counts them but fit for curs. As he sees those who call themselves the "Circumcision," staking all upon a mere mutilation of their flesh, he sounds the alarm: "Beware of the maimcision, for *we* are the circumcision who are offering divine service *in the spirit* of God, and are glorying in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in flesh" (Phil.3:2,3). He weeps as he warns them once more of the enemies of the cross of Christ "who to the terrestrial are disposed" (Phil.3:18,19). It is hard to exclude baptism in water from these "terrestrial things." Once, like circumcision, it was necessary for Divine blessing, but now both have been fulfilled in His cross.

In Colossians, baptism itself is taken up in conjunction with circumcision.

In the days when Yahweh taught His people how to draw nigh to Him, what was the requisite for approach? The uncircumcised could not draw nigh at all. Circumcision was the prime factor in seeking His presence and blessing.

But a nearer approach required still more. The circumcised Israelite could not even reach the laver. A circumcised priest could not go beyond the laver without being first baptized in its water.

Circumcision and baptism, then, constituted the Israelite's fitness to approach a veiled God.

*And they are still necessary. They are essential.* No one

is properly furnished for His presence and blessing unless first he is circumcised and baptized.

In this light we read that we "are complete in Him . . . in Whom you were circumcised also with a circumcision not made by hands, in the *stripping off the body of flesh* in the circumcision of Christ" (Col.2:10).

Here is circumcision indeed; though "not made by hands" though accomplished on the cross apart from us altogether, it is *the only real, the only true circumcision*. The sons of Jacob were *not* circumcised. *We are*. They only shadowed it. We have the substance.

Let no one say that circumcision is obsolete. It is a present, practical, powerful truth. It is, however, but part of the truth. It leaves Christ on the cross, lifeless.

So the apostle goes on to say: "Being entombed together with Him in baptism, in Whom you were roused together also through faith in the operation of God, Who rouses Him from among the dead" (Col.2:12).

Christ is risen! And we are risen in Him! Here is cleansing! Here is baptism!

By the power of His spirit we enter into the blessed potent truth that we have already been baptized. And such a baptism as the sons of Israel never knew. By Him we have not only died, but have also been buried and raised from the grave—in *Him*. Not from "a watery grave by the strong arm of the baptizer" but by an Almighty arm, "through faith in the operation of God, Who rouses Him from among the dead."

Just as we are not circumcised in flesh, but in spirit, so also with baptism. *His* baptism, just as His circumcision, we reckon as our own. He was buried; so were we. He arose; we too are risen.

As we think of this solemn glorious truth the warning still rings in our ears: "*Beware!* that no one shall be despoiling you . . . in accord with the elements of the world

[the elementary religious observances] and not in accord with *Christ!*"

O, beloved, has our God set this danger signal here for naught? How many, many, of His precious ones have passed it by unheeded! How sad to be in the toils of men when God has made us free and complete in Him!

There is danger! God has not warned us against that which has no existence, for multitudes of God's saints have gone blindly into this snare in spite of God's warning. He has delivered the writer of these pages: He alone can deliver those who bear His divine and solemn appeal.

The exquisite joy and delicious satisfaction which is found by those who know themselves complete in Christ can only be found by heeding this divine "*Beware!*"

By the very nature of things, circumcision, while speaking of the stripping off of flesh, gave the flesh a standing it was never entitled to. Spiritual circumcision alone really fulfills its import.

Baptism was likewise embarrassed. While it spoke of spirit and gave the flesh no place, yet, being an ordinance on the flesh, it *seemed* to give the flesh acceptance in His sight.

But *our* baptism gives flesh no place. Our cleansing is by spirit and finds a real and genuine acceptance by our God.

If I am complete in Him no fleshly rite can add to my completeness. If I do add it, then I deny that His work has fully met God's claims. I dishonor that work by subtracting from its potency; and spoil it by adding something of my own dead, putrefying flesh.

If I receive the wondrous truth then I am constrained to refuse these ordinances upon the flesh, both circumcision and baptism. I rest alone in Him in Whom I have no lack.

Complete in Christ my Saviour,  
My heart is satisfied;  
For He is all-sufficient,  
What need for aught beside?

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