

## CRUCIAL TRUTHS IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### BAPTISM

In the first sixteen topics, we saw the aspects of God's salvation. Now we will study matters that one must practice after being saved. The first of these concerns baptism.

God's interaction with man and the service He requires of man can be divided into the age of the Old Testament and the age of the New Testament. The former is a type of the latter. Thus, the former is a shadow and prefigure, and the latter is the reality, the body of the shadow. In the Old Testament age of shadows and prefigures, service was a matter of rituals and ordinances; in the New Testament age of truth and reality, service is a matter of spirit and life. Nevertheless, in the New Testament age there are at least four matters that God wants man to practice, which from their outward appearance seem to be rituals and ordinances. These four matters are baptism, the laying on of hands, head covering, and the breaking of bread. Although God abolished the rituals and ordinances of the Old Testament and requires man to serve Him in spirit and reality in the New Testament, He requires man to practice four matters that seem to be rituals and ordinances. This proves that these four matters are very important in God's eyes; therefore, we should pay attention to them and not despise them. Actually, they are not matters of ritual and ordinance; rather, they are practical steps and concrete processes through which we receive, obtain, enjoy, and utilize God's salvation and all of its blessings. All that God accomplished and prepared for us in Christ, all that He wants to give us in the new covenant, is dispensed into us through these practical steps and concrete processes. Therefore, if a believer wishes to completely and fully receive and enjoy God's salvation in His Son, he must properly appreciate and practice these steps and processes. The first of these is baptism.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM

##### 1. **"The baptism which John proclaimed"** (Acts 10:37; see also Luke 3:3).

At the beginning of the New Testament age, the first thing God did was to send John the Baptist to proclaim baptism. John was the first servant sent by God at the beginning of the New Testament, and the baptism preached by him was God's first message in the New Testament. This shows the importance of baptism in God's plan and arrangement. We can say that baptism began the New Testament. Just as the teaching of baptism was God's way of beginning the New Testament age, the practice of baptism is man's way to begin to enjoy the blessings of the New Testament.

##### 2. **"It is fitting for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness"** (Matt. 3:15).

We see the importance of baptism even more in the fact that the Lord Jesus also needed to be baptized. Although He was the Son of God who came to be our Savior, He still kept God's ordination for men because He was a man. According to His humanity, it was fitting for Him to do this. In doing this, He was a man according to God's procedure. Before God, He fulfilled all righteousness. Since even the Lord as a man needed to be baptized and since it was fitting for Him to fulfill righteousness before God in this way, how much more should we do the same! Since baptism was the fitting way for even the Lord as a man to fulfill all righteousness, we should realize that baptism is extremely important.

##### 3. **"The Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God for themselves since they had not been baptized by him"** (Luke 7:30).

This passage also speaks of the importance of baptism. Baptism is a matter in the counsel, or the plan, of God. If a person is not baptized, he rejects the counsel of God for himself. This is very serious. The Pharisees and lawyers who rejected and opposed the Lord Jesus did this; how can we, who receive the Lord today, be like them in this matter?

##### 4. **"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"** (John 3:5).

When we studied regeneration in chapter 11, we saw that *born of water* refers to baptism. Baptism is a necessary step a person must take to enter into the kingdom of God. It is important.

**5. “Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He spent some time with them and baptized”; “Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John” (John 3:22; 4:1).**

John the Baptist was not the only one who came out to preach and baptize people; the Lord Jesus also baptized people when He began to preach. Not only was He Himself baptized in order to fulfill righteousness before God, but He, through His disciples, baptized people in order to accomplish God’s will, to be according to God’s procedure, and to fulfill God’s righteousness. All these show the importance of baptism.

**6. “Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).**

When the Lord Jesus was on the earth, He baptized people through His disciples, and even after His resurrection, He commissioned His disciples to go out into all the inhabited earth to preach the gospel to people and to baptize them. His last command before His ascension shows that baptizing people is an important matter that we must carry out when we preach the gospel to people and when we disciple them. Just as preaching the gospel is important, baptizing is important. To merely preach the gospel to people without baptizing them is not sufficient and does not completely keep the Lord’s last command.

**7. “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16).**

Here the Lord says that baptism is a necessary step in a person’s full salvation, proving that baptism is important.

**8. “What should we do, brothers? And Peter said to them, Repent and each one of you be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:37-38, see also v. 41).**

On the day of Pentecost many heard Peter’s word and were pricked in their hearts, so they asked Peter what they should do. He told them to repent and be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. When they heard his word, they were immediately baptized. This also shows the importance of baptism. Peter’s directions emphasize baptism. Peter considered baptism as important as repentance and believing on the name of the Lord. He was not like today’s preachers who mostly emphasize repentance and believing on the name of the Lord but neglect baptism. Baptism is related to a person’s sins being forgiven and to receiving the Holy Spirit. The first group of people, who turned to the Lord and were added to the church after the Lord ascended into the heavens and poured out the Holy Spirit, were baptized. The first mention of any matter in the Bible is a pattern for that particular matter. According to this principle, the baptism of the first group of people who believed is a pattern for all subsequent believers.

**9. “The eunuch said, Look, water. What prevents me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:36).**

The Ethiopian eunuch spoke this word to Philip, who had preached the gospel to him. This proves that Philip not only preached the gospel but also baptism. If he had not preached baptism, how could a Gentile, who was from a faraway place and had never heard the gospel, know about baptism? How could he have known that he should be baptized and then request baptism? Philip preached the gospel and baptism simultaneously, proving that he saw the importance of baptism. Therefore, when we preach the gospel to people, we should also speak to them about baptism. Baptism should always follow the gospel. Our gospel preaching should not lead people merely to believe but also to be baptized. Believing is important, and baptism is also important. This is the reason that the Holy Spirit did not immediately carry Philip away, even though he clearly had preached the gospel and baptism to the eunuch. Philip was carried away by the Holy Spirit only after he had baptized the eunuch and the eunuch had come up out of the water. This is strong proof that the Lord considers baptism to be very important. In His view, if we preach the gospel to others and lead them to believe in Him without baptizing them, our work of turning others to Him is not finished. Thus, He waited until after Philip had baptized the eunuch before He acknowledged Philip’s work as complete by carrying him away. Since the Lord considers baptism to be so important, how can we ignore it? How can we only preach

the gospel without baptizing those who believe? How can we only lead people to the Lord but not baptize them?

**10. “And now, why do you delay? Rise up and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16).**

This was Ananias’s word to the newly saved Saul (who later became Paul). This word shows that the early disciples placed much emphasis on baptism. Ananias knew that Saul had met the Lord on the road to Damascus, that the scales had fallen off his eyes through the laying on of his hands, and that he had received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (9:17-18), yet Ananias still wanted Paul to be baptized and even hurried him to be baptized. If baptism is not important, and if the disciples did not emphasize baptism, why did Ananias hasten Paul to be baptized?

**11. “Can anyone forbid the water so that these would not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit even as we? And he charged them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:47-48).**

Although the household of Cornelius visibly received the Holy Spirit, Peter still wanted them to be baptized. Does this not prove that baptism is important? Does this not show how much Peter emphasized baptism? He did not do what many today advocate when they speak of only needing a spiritual baptism, not a water baptism. He said that those who had received the baptism of the Spirit still needed to be baptized in water. Moreover, he baptized them in water because they had received the baptism of the Spirit. In Peter’s eyes, being baptized in water and receiving the Spirit were equally important. His view is also the Spirit’s view and the Lord’s view.

**12. “He took them with him in that very hour of the night and washed their wounds. And he was baptized immediately, he and all his household” (Acts 16:33).**

When the Philippian jailer and his household received the Lord, Paul and Silas, still wounded from being beaten, immediately baptized them. This tells us that baptism is extremely important. If it were not, why would these two brothers, who had been beaten with rods and who were wounded and exhausted from being in jail, immediately baptize the whole household at that very hour of the night?

**13. “When they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5).**

The day Paul came to Ephesus, he asked the disciples what baptism they had received, because he was concerned about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When he discovered they had received only the baptism of John, he solemnly told them that the baptism of John was over and that people should be baptized into the name of the Lord. When they heard this, they were immediately baptized. Paul did not merely find out with what baptism they had been baptized, but he also told them with what baptism they should be baptized. Although they had received the baptism of John, they were immediately baptized again when they heard about baptism into the Lord’s name. This proves that they thought baptism is very important.

### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BAPTISM AND SALVATION**

Many today think and preach that baptism is not related to salvation. This thought is not according to the Bible. The Bible solemnly, definitely, and clearly says that baptism is related to salvation and that the relationship is a direct one.

**1. “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).**

Our Lord said that in order to be regenerated into the kingdom of God, one must be born not only of the Spirit but also of water. When the Lord spoke of being born of water, He was referring to baptism. Thus, baptism causes a person to enter into the kingdom of God; it is a requirement for one’s entrance

into the kingdom of God. This, of course, does not refer to the outward appearance of baptism but to the reality of baptism. However, we cannot spiritualize the reality and say that we do not need the practice. If a person wants to enter into the kingdom of God, he must repent and believe to receive the Lord's life through the Holy Spirit, and he must also be baptized to terminate everything of himself through the water of baptism.

**2. "Rise up and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name"; "Repent and each one of you be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 22:16; 2:38).**

The Lord's word in these verses clearly indicates that baptism washes away our sins, causes our sins to be forgiven, and enables us to receive the Holy Spirit. The term *wash away your sins* in the verses above refers to the washing away before others of our sins in our rebellion against God and opposition to the Lord (see the section "Cleansing at the Time of Salvation" in chapter 7). *Forgiveness of your sins* refers to more than the forgiveness of our sins in that aspect. This shows that baptism is related to the forgiveness of our sins; baptism along with repentance and believing on the name of the Lord are requirements for the forgiveness of sins. Furthermore, baptism, repentance, and believing on the Lord's name are also related to receiving the Holy Spirit and are requirements for receiving Him. Therefore, if, before others, we want to be washed of our sins of rebelling against God and opposing the Lord, and if we want our sins to be forgiven and to receive the Holy Spirit, we must not only repent and believe on the Lord's name, but we must also be baptized.

**3. "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"; "All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death"; "Buried together with Him in baptism, in which also you were raised together with Him" (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3; Col. 2:12).**

These verses in the Bible show how closely baptism is related to our salvation in Christ. Baptism is the process by which we are put into Christ. It is also the way we are put into His death, are buried together with Him, and are raised together with Him. Through baptism, we are put into Christ and into His death, and we are buried and raised together with Him. Thus, baptism does not *represent* our co-death, co-burial, and co-resurrection with Christ, as is taught by many in today's Christianity; rather, baptism is the *reality* of our entrance into Christ, His death, burial, and resurrection. This requires faith, but our inward heart of faith also requires the outward act of baptism to work together with it. If we want to enter into Christ and into His death and to be buried and raised together with Him, we must have the inward faith and the outward act of baptism.

**4. "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved"; "Which water, as the antitype, also now saves you, that is, baptism...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21).**

Many say that it is enough to only believe and that we do not need to be baptized. But the Lord said, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." According to the Lord's word, if a person wants to be saved, he needs to believe and he also needs to be baptized. Just as believing is a requirement for salvation, baptism is also a requirement for salvation. Therefore, Peter said that baptism saves us.

Many change the Lord's word, which says, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved," into "he who believes and is saved shall be baptized." They think that believing is a procedure prior to salvation and that baptism comes after being saved. Actually, the Lord means that both procedures, believing and baptism, come before salvation. Although salvation is just one step, it requires the movement of two feet. The first step is believing, and the second step is baptism; both feet together add up to one complete step, or procedure, through which we receive the Lord's complete salvation. There are different parts to the Lord's salvation; some parts are obtained by our faith and some are participated in through our baptism. Faith is the inward aspect by which we inwardly receive the Lord's salvation; baptism is the outward action by which we outwardly apply the Lord's salvation. If we have only faith without baptism, we can receive only one aspect of the Lord's salvation; that is, we will have only a partial salvation and will not utilize or apply all aspects of the Lord's full salvation. If we want to participate in all aspects of the Lord's salvation, if we want to be fully saved, we must believe and be baptized.

## **THE MEANING OF BAPTISM**

### **Into Christ**

#### **1. “Baptized into Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:3).**

In John 3:16 the word *into* follows the word *believes* in the original language. Thus, just as we believe into Christ, so also we are baptized into Christ; both cause us to enter into Christ and to be joined to Him. Just as we are joined to Christ through believing to partake of Him, so we are joined to Him through baptism to partake of Him. Believing and being baptized cause us to enter into Christ and become persons in Christ.

### **Into Christ’s Death to Be Buried and Raised Together with Him**

#### **1. “Baptized into His death...buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death”; “Buried together with Him in baptism, in which also you were raised together with Him” (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12).**

Since we are baptized into Christ, we are also baptized into His death. Baptism causes us to be joined to Christ and to participate in His death, burial, and resurrection. Since baptism puts us into Christ, it also puts us into His death to be buried and raised together with Him. Therefore, we, who are baptized into Christ, enter into His death, are buried with Him, and are raised with Him, being completely joined to Him. In His death the old life of the self dies completely, and we die forever to sin and the world; in His burial the self and all our past are completely terminated; in His resurrection we receive His life and have a new beginning of life. Therefore, when we go into the water to be baptized, by faith we enter into Christ’s death and allow the self, everything of the self, and everything related to the self to be buried in Christ’s burial, in the tomb of the baptismal waters. By faith we then come out of the water and allow Christ to live in us in His resurrection.

Therefore, baptism causes us to be joined to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. His death and burial terminate the self and everything related to the self, freeing us from sin and the world. Only death and burial can cause a person to be terminated. No matter how lively or active a person is, once he is dead and buried, everything is finished. Only death and burial can free a person from sin and release a person from the world. Only the dead can be freed from sin, totally cutting off their relationship with sin. Only the dead can be freed from the world and say “good-bye” to the world. Moreover, only a person who is buried can completely leave the world; the world leaves no shadow or trace on a buried one. The functions of death and burial are the negative aspects of the meaning of baptism. In its negative aspect, baptism puts us into Christ’s death and burial, freeing us from the self, sin, the world, the things of the old creation, the things of Satan, and everything apart from God. In its positive aspect, baptism joins us to Christ’s resurrection. This resurrection causes us to become a new creation, to participate in the divine life in Christ with all its riches, and to enter into the new realm of resurrection where old things have passed away and everything is made new. This is the reality of baptism and the positive aspect of baptism.

### **The Testimony of a Good Conscience**

#### **1. “Baptism, not a putting away of the filth of the flesh but the appeal of a good conscience unto God” (1 Pet. 3:21).**

Because baptism puts us into Christ, causing us to be joined to His death, burial, and resurrection, it gives us a good conscience, and from this good conscience, it produces a testimony of the Lord’s salvation. In the past we were in our corrupt and sinful selves; consequently, our conscience was not good. Since baptism put us into Christ through the redemption accomplished by His death and the justification caused by His resurrection, our conscience becomes good, and through baptism there is a testimony that we who died, were buried, and are resurrected together with Christ are partakers of Christ. Our sins are forgiven in Him because of His redemption, and we are justified in Him because of His resurrection. Thus, baptism gives us a good conscience through our entering into Christ and our entering into His death, burial, and resurrection. Our good conscience thus testifies before God, before worldly people, before angels, before Satan, and before all created things that we are joined to Christ,

that we have died and resurrected with Him, and that in Him we have received God's forgiveness of our sins, are justified by God, and have returned to God to eternally belong to Him.

Baptism is not a ceremony or ritual for becoming a church member; rather, it is a practical procedure, a definite step in faith. By such a step we enter into Christ and are joined to Him, obtain full salvation in Him, and have a silent testimony to His salvation from our good conscience.

### **THE MEANING OF THE WORD BAPTISM**

#### **1. "Baptized" (Mark 16:16).**

*Baptizo* is the Greek word used here and in other places in the New Testament; it means "to dip in or under, to immerse, or to sink." This meaning is found in all the well-known Greek lexicons and is agreed upon by all the famous Bible scholars throughout the ages. Martin Luther, the leader of the Reformation, said that he hoped everyone who is baptized would have his whole body put into the water because that is the meaning of the word *baptism*. John Calvin was a great Bible expositor of the Reformation; he said that the meaning of the word *baptism* is to immerse and that this was the practice of the primitive church. Dean Stanley said that the practice of the first thirteen centuries was according to the New Testament and that the people went into the water according to the original meaning of the word *baptizo*.

### **THE PATTERN OF BAPTISM**

#### **1. "Having been baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water" (Matt. 3:16).**

God used a clear word *baptism* to tell us that baptism is to be put into water; He also used a pattern or example to show that baptism means to be put into water. People can explain the clear meaning of the word differently, but the pattern of the example eliminates differing human views. There are two patterns of baptism according to God's record in the Bible. The first is the baptism of the Lord Jesus. After our Lord was baptized, He went up from the water. This means that He first had to go into water. Going into water and coming up from water is the clear pattern established by our Lord Jesus. Should not all those who wish to follow in the footsteps of the Lord follow His pattern? If we want to be like the Lord and "fulfill all righteousness" before God (v. 15), how could we not follow His pattern or example by being baptized in a different way?

#### **2. "They both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water" (Acts 8:38-39).**

God not only provided the example of the baptism of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels; He also showed that the apostles followed the footsteps of the Lord in the book of Acts. Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch by going down into water and coming up out of water. By this we know how the early disciples baptized people. The record that they both went down into water and came up out of water is clear and accurate; how could people in later centuries have so much dissension and so many questions concerning the way to baptize people? Should we not go back to the beginning and follow these examples?

### **THE TYPE OF BAPTISM**

#### **1. "Entering into which [the ark], a few, that is, eight souls, were brought safely through by water. Which water, as the antitype, also now saves you, that is, baptism...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:20-21).**

In the Bible we have not only the pattern of baptism but also the type of baptism. In the Old Testament God used two events to paint a clear picture of the baptism which was to come in the New Testament; these two events prefigure baptism. The first event involved Noah's household passing through the flood in the ark. Through Peter the Holy Spirit said that this typifies baptism. This type not only clearly explains baptism, but it also shows the effect of baptism. The eight people of Noah's household who were in the ark were covered with water, showing that we should be covered with water in our baptism in Christ. The flood caused the people in the ark to be separated from the old world in which they had

lived, freeing them from their corrupt generation. This shows that the water of baptism causes us, who are in Christ, to be separated from the world in which we live, freeing us from this crooked and perverted generation. Thus, just as they were saved by water and freed from their corrupted generation, we also are saved through the water of baptism and are freed from our crooked and perverted generation. On the one hand, they entered into the ark by faith and were saved by the ark from the flood waters of God's judgment; on the other hand, in the ark they passed through the flood and were saved by the flood waters from that old world and were given entrance into a new world. In the same way, we enter into Christ by faith and are saved in Christ from the judgment of God's wrath; we also pass through baptism in Christ and are saved through the water of baptism from the old world and are given entrance into the new realm of resurrection. They were saved through the ark from God's judgment, and they were saved in the ark by means of the flood waters from the old world; in the same way, we are saved through Christ from God's judgment, and we are saved in Christ by means of the water of baptism from the world to which we originally belonged. Just as the waters of the flood caused them to be separated from the world to which they originally belonged, the water baptism separates us from our old world. The waters of the flood through which they passed in the ark gave them entrance into a new world; in the same way, the water of baptism through Christ's death and resurrection gives us entrance into a new realm. Thus, the relationship of the floodwaters to the eight people of Noah's household typifies how baptism causes us to be saved by water from the world and into the realm of resurrection.

**2. "All our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. 10:1-2).**

The second event in the Old Testament that God used to typify baptism is the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea. The apostle Paul said that when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, they were baptized. They crossed the Red Sea in the cloud and in the sea, signifying that our baptism should be in the Holy Spirit and in water. In the negative aspect, the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea freed them from Pharaoh and Egypt, and in its positive aspect, it brought them to Moses. This signifies that our baptism frees us from Satan and the world under his hand and also brings us to Christ. Pharaoh and his army pursued the Israelites into the waters but could not cross the Red Sea to continue their pursuit; moreover, when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, they were freed from Egypt and could not return to it or its living. This signifies that Satan and his authority can pursue us into the water of baptism but cannot cross this water. When we are baptized, we are freed from the world and cannot return to the worldly living. The water of the Red Sea buried Pharaoh and his army for the children of Israel, and it also saved the Israelites from Egypt and caused them to follow Moses to serve God. In the same way, on our behalf baptism destroys Satan and his power, and baptism also saves us from the world and causes us to follow Christ to serve God. Although the Israelites were saved by faith when they put the blood of the lamb on their doorposts, causing God's wrath to pass over them, they still needed to cross the Red Sea so that the power of Pharaoh over them could be destroyed. Although they were spared from God's judgment by keeping the passover, they would not have been able to escape from their slavery to Pharaoh and Egypt if they had not crossed the Red Sea. This tells us that even after receiving by faith the redemption of the Lord's shed blood and even with the removal of God's wrath, we must still cross the water of baptism so that Satan's power over us can be destroyed. Although we have believed in the Lord and are no longer condemned by God, we must be baptized in order to escape our slavery to Satan and the world. Therefore, baptism frees us from Satan and the world just as crossing the Red Sea freed the Israelites from Pharaoh and Egypt. Just as Pharaoh and his army followed the Israelites into the waters of the Red Sea and were drowned, the power of Satan and the world follows us into the waters of baptism and are destroyed there. We should bring all the things of the world that control and bind us into the water of baptism, such as fame, entertainment, money, fashion, movies, tobacco, and alcohol, and bury them. After Pharaoh and his army were drowned in the Red Sea, the Israelites were able to follow Moses to serve God. Similarly, Satan and the things of the world are buried in the water of baptism, but we come up in resurrection together with Christ and follow Him to serve God. The Red Sea is a type of our being saved through water and escaping the world and its power to enter into a new realm.

**THE ONES BEING BAPTIZED**

**1. "He who believes and is baptized" (Mark 16:16).**

Who can be baptized? Who is qualified to be baptized? Only a person who believes is qualified. This is because the Lord said, “He who believes and is baptized.” This is a principle that does not and cannot change. Those who have not believed are absolutely not qualified to be baptized; only those who believe can be baptized. This believing must be a receiving of the Lord from the heart and must be a believing into the Lord—a receiving of the Lord into our being, allowing Him to enter into us and be mingled with us, and an entering into the Lord to be joined with Him, as we saw in chapter 5. This is not a mere mental belief in doctrines or an act of the will to enter a religion. A person who merely believes a doctrine or enters a religion does not believe in the Lord and does not contact the Lord, receive the Lord, enter into the Lord, or have a direct relationship with the Lord; therefore, he does not have the true and proper faith spoken of in the Bible. Faith in the Bible means to receive the Lord from one’s heart, to use one’s spirit to contact the Lord Himself, to enter into the Lord, to be joined to Him, and to enter into a life relationship with Him; it is not merely understanding some doctrines. Many understand gospel doctrines and many have received these doctrines, but they have not touched the Lord in their spirit to receive Him, so they cannot be considered as having believed in the Lord; thus, they are not qualified to be baptized. In contrast, some do not understand many doctrines, but they have prayed to the Lord from their heart and spirit and have received the Lord as their Savior. They have truly believed and can be baptized.

An infant, who does not even know the difference between his right and left hand, does not have the capacity to believe and is not qualified to be baptized. According to the principle of “believes and is baptized,” infant baptism is absolutely not allowed. It is very much against the Bible.

**2. “When they believed...the gospel...and of the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized” (Acts 8:12).**

In Samaria the ones who were baptized first believed the gospel and the name of the Lord Jesus. They did not only believe the gospel but also the name of the Lord. The gospel says that the Lord died for our sins, was buried, and rose on the third day (1 Cor. 15:1-4); that they believed the gospel means they believed that the Lord died for them and was buried and rose again. The name of the Lord speaks of His person and represents the Lord Himself. That they believed in the name of the Lord means they believed in the Lord Himself and received the Lord Himself (John 1:12). Since they believed in this way, they could be baptized, and they were.

**3. “What prevents me from being baptized? And Philip said, If you believe from all your heart, you will be saved. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:36-37).**

The conversation between the evangelist Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch shows that if a person believes from all his heart, nothing should prevent him from being baptized. However, we must note that it says, “Believe from all your heart.” It does not tell us to believe with the mind or with the brain but from all the heart. This means our entire heart must believe; we cannot believe half-heartedly or with doubts. We must believe from all our heart before being baptized.

This shows the object of our faith. What do we believe? We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. A person must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God in order to receive life in His name (John 20:31). Therefore, one must believe this from all his heart before he can be baptized. As soon as he believes in this way, he can be baptized; he does not need to wait until he understands many doctrines or wait for anything else.

**4. “They heard, believed and were baptized” (Acts 18:8).**

This word refers to the early Corinthians. They believed and were baptized. They had to believe before being baptized, but once they believed they could be baptized. We cannot be anything less than a believer, and we need not be anything more.

Note: First Corinthians 15:29 speaks of being “baptized for the dead.” This is not God’s ordination but a practice that some of the Corinthian believers made up. In this verse the apostle Paul based an

argument upon this practice with those among the Corinthians who did not believe in the resurrection but who were practicing being baptized for the dead. He pointed out that their beliefs and actions were contradictory since they did not believe in resurrection but were practicing being baptized for the dead. God calls for only believing, living people to be baptized; He never asks someone to be baptized for a believer who died without being baptized. The saved criminal on the cross is an example of a believer who died without being baptized; his case is an example and proof of this point.

## **THE ONE BAPTIZING**

### **1. “Jesus Himself did not baptize, but rather His disciples” (John 4:2).**

When the Lord was on earth gaining disciples, He did not baptize; rather, His disciples baptized. We must pay attention to the fact that it does not say that His apostles baptized. It says that His disciples baptized. Of course, among the disciples there were apostles, but they did not baptize in their office as apostles but in their position as disciples. This tells us that the Lord had disciples do the baptizing. The disciples, the believers, baptized others. Thus, any believer who is a disciple of the Lord can baptize. The teaching that only the clergy can baptize or that only those with an office in the church can baptize was started and ordained by the Roman Catholic Church. This poison of heresy was also brought into the Reformation from the Roman Catholic Church; this is against the teachings of the Bible and against the Lord’s will. According to the Lord’s will, a believer does not need to hold an office in the church in order to baptize. Baptism is not based on one’s office in the church; rather, any saved believer can baptize someone in his status as a believer. Of course, anyone baptizing another person should carefully consider all sides of the matter and seek the Lord’s leading.

### **2. “Go...baptizing them” (Matt. 28:19).**

The Lord’s command to preach the gospel to the nations and to baptize the nations was given to the disciples, not to the apostles. Although the eleven who received this command were apostles, they are not called “the eleven apostles”; instead, they are called “the eleven disciples” in verse 16. When the Lord gave this command, He did not consider them to be apostles but disciples. If the Lord had considered them to be apostles when He gave the command, only a small number of apostles would have gone out to preach the gospel to the nations, and not all the disciples would have participated in this matter. This is not the Lord’s intention. He wants all the disciples who believe in Him to preach the gospel to others and to baptize them. Anyone who is His disciple should preach the gospel and baptize people. Preaching the gospel is the heavenly occupation of His disciples, and baptizing people is their duty. Preaching the gospel and baptizing are two sides of the Lord’s commission to His disciples. Both aspects are the responsibility of His disciples, and both are their authorized right. Therefore, whoever preaches the gospel has the authority to baptize.

### **3. “A...disciple...named Ananias” (Acts 9:10, see also vv. 17-18).**

When the Lord chose Paul to be an apostle, He did not send an apostle to baptize him; He sent a disciple named Ananias. The Bible does not tell us that Ananias held any office in the church; it says only that he was a disciple. This also shows that as long as one is a disciple, he can baptize others; one who baptizes does not need to hold any office in the church. Furthermore, when Paul went to Damascus, the church there may not have been officially established, so the Lord sent a disciple named Ananias to baptize him. This tells us that in any place where there is a church, any of the saints can baptize people together with the whole church, but in a place without a church, any of the scattered disciples can baptize. Of course, this is speaking in principle; we must follow the Lord’s leading for the details, just as Ananias did.

### **4. “They both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him” (Acts 8:38).**

Philip was not an apostle but an evangelist (21:8), yet he not only preached the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch but also baptized him. This clearly tells us that whoever has the authority to preach the gospel can also baptize. Moreover, Philip was on a road in a place without a church, so he baptized the man by himself. This also proves that in places where there are no churches, the believers can baptize those to

whom they preach the gospel. Of course, this is in principle; we must also follow the leading of the Holy Spirit as Philip did.

**5. “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius”** (1 Cor. 1:14; see also Acts 18:8).

Although many believed and were baptized when Paul first preached the gospel in Corinth, Paul baptized only a few of them, such as Crispus and Gaius. The other disciples baptized the rest. Paul and the other disciples’ practice shows that baptism does not need to be carried out by an apostle sent by the Lord or by any other person with a spiritual office. The apostles sent by the Lord or those with spiritual offices can baptize people, but in places where there are brothers, it is best to be like Paul and not baptize so many; rather, we should allow the brothers to baptize lest there be an improper result.

Some who serve the Lord baptize many people, but this is not appropriate or according to the pattern left by the apostles. Some, however, based upon 1 Corinthians 1:17, only preach the gospel and never baptize others; this is not right either. This does not follow the footsteps left by the apostle. Although the apostle said that he was not sent out to baptize but to announce the gospel, he did baptize some. He clearly wrote of this in the preceding verses. What he meant was that the goal of his being sent out was not to baptize people but to announce the gospel; he was not saying that he never baptized anyone. When it was necessary, he baptized people; however, in places where there were brothers, he did not baptize many. It is best if there are brothers to participate in the baptizing to prevent anything inappropriate from occurring, but if there are no brothers, one must do it oneself.

## **THE TIME OF BAPTISM**

**1. “Those then who received his word were baptized”** (Acts 2:41).

When a person believes in the Lord, he should be baptized immediately without waiting. On the day of Pentecost three thousand people received Peter’s word, believed in the Lord, and were baptized. It was not like today when people believe in the Lord and wait many days before being baptized. Waiting is not according to the Bible, and it quenches the work of the Holy Spirit. There is no passage in the Bible which says that a person waited a long time between believing in the Lord and being baptized. The Bible indicates that when people believed in the Lord, they were immediately baptized. The acts of believing and being baptized should be close together; they should not be separated by a long period of time. When a person is moved by the Holy Spirit to believe, he should immediately be baptized; this will enable the Holy Spirit to work more strongly and more thoroughly in him. If he is not baptized immediately after believing and continues to wait, his heart will become heavy, and the Holy Spirit will be hindered from doing a strong, thorough work in him. Many believe, but they are not living or strong because they did not take advantage of the time immediately after believing, when their hearts were on fire, to be baptized. When a blacksmith pounds on metal to make scissors, he must heat the metal to the right temperature, beat it just the right way, and immediately plunge it into cold water to make the cutting edge sharp. If the metal cools after it is heated and is not pounded properly when it is hot, the cutting edge will be very dull when it is plunged into cold water. Many brothers and sisters do not have a strong salvation because they were not plunged into the cold water of baptism when their faith was burning hot. When someone believes in the Lord, he will suffer loss if he is not baptized immediately.

We have seen in the preceding sections that baptism is a procedural step for people to receive the Lord’s salvation, through which people are put into the Lord and His death, and through which they are buried and resurrected together with Him. In a normal situation, the beginning step in receiving the Lord’s salvation is to believe, and the completing step is to be baptized. Today, however, things are totally differently. Some wait for people to become completely clear about matters related to salvation before baptizing them. A wedding ceremony is the final step in a marriage procedure, but the experience of some related to baptism can be likened to people living as a married couple and then having a wedding ceremony much later to represent their act of being married. It is no wonder that among us some say that baptism is only a representation of our death, burial, and resurrection together with the Lord. To be baptized is to be put into the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection; it does not represent our death, burial, and resurrection with the Lord. When a person believes and is immediately baptized, his baptism puts him into the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection. If he waits a long time

after believing before being baptized, his baptism will become merely a representation of his death, burial, and resurrection together with the Lord.

**2. “When they believed...they were baptized” (Acts 8:12).**

The Samaritans who heard the gospel from Philip believed and were baptized immediately. This is always the pattern in the Bible.

**3. “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he ordered the chariot to stand still, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch” (Acts 8:37-38).**

The Ethiopian eunuch believed in the Lord as he was traveling on a road. Even though it was not convenient to be baptized, he was still baptized immediately after believing.

**4. “He took them with him in that very hour of the night and washed their wounds. And he was baptized immediately, he and all his household” (Acts 16:33).**

The Philippian jailer and his household believed in the Lord in the middle of the night and were immediately baptized in that very hour. If we were responsible for the arrangements, we would have many reasons for waiting to baptize them, including: (1) They were Gentiles who had never known God or heard His word. Since they had heard His word only once, how could they be baptized immediately? They should wait to be baptized until they understood more of the word. (2) When they heard the Lord’s word and believed, it was the middle of the night. To be baptized in the middle of the night is extremely inconvenient, so they should at least wait for daylight. (3) Paul and Silas had been beaten with rods and were covered with wounds. How could it be convenient for them to baptize anyone? They should wait at least for their wounds to heal before baptizing anyone. We would consider any of these reasons to be sufficient to make us wait. However, they did not consider even one of them, and they did not wait. Even though Paul and Silas were covered with wounds from being beaten and it was the middle of the night, they did not hesitate to baptize the jailer and his household once they had heard the gospel and believed. Paul and Silas did not hold back from baptizing the people at that very hour because they were covered with wounds or because it was too late at night, and they did not ask the people to wait for baptism because they did not understand more doctrines. They knew that understanding more of the Lord’s Word comes after baptism, not before. Their practice was according to the Lord’s command to preach the gospel and to baptize the ones who believed, and then to teach them the Lord’s Word (Matt. 28:19-20). The gospel causes people to receive spiritual life, baptism brings people into the reality of their spiritual birth, and Bible teaching enables people who have received a spiritual birth to obtain spiritual nourishment and education. Nourishment and education come after our spiritual birth, so it is something that we receive after baptism. Some, however, require people to understand many doctrines before they can be baptized. This is like trying to educate a person before he is born. It is no wonder that the practice of baptism does not bring people into the reality of their spiritual birth but is only a representation of spiritual birth after it has occurred. Instead of entering into the reality of our spiritual birth through baptism, many are born spiritually and then only later represent this reality through baptism. The way that baptism often is practiced today does not benefit a person’s spiritual life in the way that an immediate baptism would. This causes many to suffer loss; it is improper and unnecessary.

We think that people must hear and understand much of God’s Word in order to be saved; actually, people are saved when they have spiritual contact with the Lord in their spirit. The gospel that we preach should open the way for people to have a living touch with the Lord. As long as a person has a living contact with the Lord through our gospel preaching, he can be baptized immediately without the need to understand many doctrines.

**5. “Why do you delay? Rise up and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16).**

Ananias spoke these words to Saul, who had been enlightened by the Lord and had believed in Him on the road to Damascus. Saul had only believed in the Lord for three days without being baptized (9:9),

but the Holy Spirit rebuked him for delaying. Today, if a person is baptized only three days after believing, we might rebuke him for being too quick. But should we follow the will of the Holy Spirit or follow our own opinion? The Holy Spirit considers it a delay for someone to wait for three days in order to be baptized. Since the Lord wants people to be baptized immediately after believing, there should not be even one moment's delay. Thus, we should recover the matter of baptism so that the water of baptism always comes after the gospel message. As soon as people receive the gospel, they should immediately go into the water to be baptized. This is according to the Lord's will and the pattern of the Bible, and it results in great spiritual benefit. However, it requires faith and the power of the Holy Spirit. It requires us to preach the gospel in power, and it requires us to baptize people in faith. If we lack these two things, we are only imitating the black and white letters of the Bible and do not have the spiritual reality.

### **THE PLACE OF BAPTISM**

**1. "As they were going along the road, they came upon some water, and the eunuch said, Look, water. What prevents me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36).**

The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized as soon as he and Philip came upon some water beside the road. This shows that baptism is not tied to any place; the only thing necessary is water. When I first believed in the Lord, a pastor told me that if we had to imitate the Lord Jesus by going down into the water to be baptized, then we should imitate Him by being baptized in the Jordan River. But this is not the only pattern in the Bible; any place with water is good for baptism.

**2. "John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people came and were baptized" (John 3:23).**

John was baptizing in Aenon near Salim because there was much water there. This indicates several things, including: (1) There should be much water in a place for baptism. Any place that has enough water to submerge people is good for baptism. (2) When John baptized people, he must have put them into the water, so there was a need for a place with much water. If baptism is only a ritual sprinkling or a ritual dripping, he would have needed only a little water. It would not have mattered how much water was in a particular place. Any place would have been fine. In order to submerge people in water, however, he needed a place with much water.

### **THE CORRECTION OF BAPTISM**

**1. "He said, Into what then were you baptized? And they said, Into John's baptism. And Paul said, John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people that they should believe into the One coming after him, that is, into Jesus. And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:3-5).**

This passage speaks of the disciples in Ephesus, who were baptized with John's baptism of repentance and did not know that John led people to believe in the Lord Jesus. They also did not know that once the Lord Jesus came to minister, John's baptism of repentance had ceased and that people should be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When they learned this, they immediately corrected the problem and were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Thus, according to the pattern recorded in the Bible, if a person is not baptized properly, his baptism can be corrected. In those days the baptism of repentance had ceased and was inadequate, so anyone baptized in that way needed a correction. Today there are rituals of sprinkling, dripping, infant baptism, baptism before one properly believes, and baptism before one has contacted the Lord in spirit. All of these are improper, and anyone baptized in such a way should correct it. When it is corrected, it should be carried out by faith in order to receive all the spiritual realities of baptism.