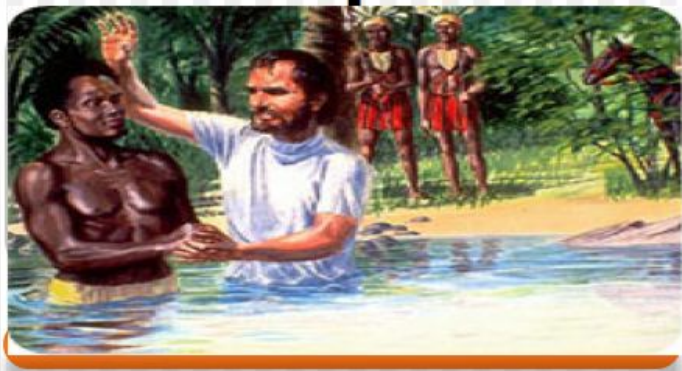


Repent and be Baptized



Jonathan Mukwiri

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Repent and be Baptized

By Jonathan Mukwiri

The apostle Peter had spoken boldly to a multinational gathering in Jerusalem, preaching about Jesus Christ, pointing out the sins committed against Christ, when his hearers were pricked in their heart, and they asked him, what shall we do? Peter answered them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). What did Peter mean be baptized?

The word “baptize” means “to immerse or dip under,” from the Greek *baptizein*. John the Baptist was baptizing in the river Jordan. “Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him” (Matthew 3:13). If John the Baptist had only sprinkled water on the foreheads of those who listened to his preaching, he would not have gone to the River Jordan. Any place would have done. It requires much water to baptize. That is why “John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized” (John 3:23). The

Bible indicates no method of baptism except by immersion.

When Philip baptized the Ethiopian treasurer, it was by immersion. “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:36-39).

Note that they both went “down into the water,” and they both came “up out of the water.” The Ethiopian official went away rejoicing in the newness of life, having been immersed in water – baptized.

There is only one true baptism, which is by immersion. “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5). Jesus expressed the importance of baptism in these terms: “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the

kingdom of God” (John 3:5). This baptism is a symbol of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:3-6).

Baptism symbolizes the death of the old man and a rebirth to a new life in Christ. The old man is buried beneath the water. This is why in baptism the person goes completely under the water and then rises again. In baptism you confess Christ publicly and symbolically “wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16).

Through baptism we confess our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and testify of our death to sin and of our purpose to walk in newness of life – a life of obedience. Thus we acknowledge Christ as Lord and Saviour, become His people, and are received as members by His church – into the body of Christ. Baptism is a

symbol of our union with Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and our reception of the Holy Spirit. It is by immersion in water and is contingent on an affirmation of faith in Jesus and evidence of repentance of sin – forsaking the life of disobedience. Baptism follows instruction in the Holy Scriptures and acceptance of their teachings.

Qualifiers for baptism

There are four main qualifiers necessary before an individual is ready for baptism. First, he must be carefully taught the truths of God's word. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19, 20).

It must be mentioned here that Matthew 28:19 is not teaching a trinity (three in one or one in three god), for the Holy Spirit is not a separate individual but the Spirit of God. One may ask: "if Jesus did not want us to think that the Holy Spirit is a separate individual, why did He mention the Holy Spirit in this commission?" On the day of Pentecost Peter

proclaimed, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Peter mentions (1) repentance towards God, (2) baptism in the name of Jesus, and (3) the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus mentioned all three; if He had left out the Holy Spirit in His commission, people would likely have been left without the knowledge that Christ lives in us through His Spirit. When Paul was in Ephesus he met some brethren and asked them, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost” (Acts 19:2). Paul taught them about the Holy Spirit, and “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5). It is interesting that even though Paul taught these brethren specifically about the Holy Spirit as the element they were missing, he still baptized them in the name of Jesus Christ rather than in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus wants His church to benefit from the entire gospel, including the rich gift of His Spirit (not a third god). It would be dangerous to leave people without the knowledge of the wonderful gift of God’s Spirit, for no one can repent and be baptized without the work of the Spirit.

Second, he must accept and believe these truths. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

Third, he must feel sorry for and repent of his sins. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

Fourth, he must be willing to die to sin and live fully for Christ. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3, 4).

Baptism of infants is not biblical, as they cannot take any of the above steps. However, it is Biblical to dedicate our children to the Lord. “Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence” (Matthew 19:13-15).

Baptism is the doorway to God's church. "For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:13). Christ is the head of this body, His church. "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:15, 16).

When a baptized person enters the body of Christ (the church), he, together with the church, must submit to Christ, as do faithful wives submit to their husbands. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (Ephesians 5:23).

It is important that the foundational truths are taught to the new believer before baptism. Normally baptism is performed only once in a person's life, but there are occasions when it is proper to be rebaptized. For example, in Acts 19:1-5 there were

people who had been baptized yet they had never heard of the Holy Ghost. Paul led them into repentance, and when they understood the truth, they were rebaptized in the name of the Lord.

Jesus is our example in baptism

Jesus did not receive baptism as a confession of guilt on His own account. He identified Himself with sinners, taking the steps that we are to take, and doing the work that we must do. His life of suffering and patient endurance after His baptism was also an example to us.

Christ as the head of humanity was to take the same steps that we are required to take. Although sinless, He was our example in fulfilling all the requirements for the redemption of the sinful race. He bore the sins of the whole world. His baptism was to embrace the whole sinful world who by repentance and faith would be pardoned.

“After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our

Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men” (Titus 3:4-8).

Man was brought again into favour with God by the washing of regeneration. The washing was the burial with Christ in the water in the likeness of His death, representing that all who repent of the transgression of the law of God receive purification, cleansing, through the work of the Holy Spirit. Baptism represents true conversion by the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Those who have been buried with Christ in baptism, and been raised in the likeness of His resurrection, have pledged themselves to live in newness of life. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3: 1, 2).

This is my beloved son

“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:16, 17).

As Jesus asked for baptism, John drew back, exclaiming, “I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” With firm yet gentle authority, Jesus answered, “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” (Matthew 3:14, 15). And John, yielding, led the Saviour down into the Jordan, and buried Him beneath the water.

“And straightway coming up out of the water,” Jesus “saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him” (Mark 1:10). The solemnity of the divine Presence rested upon the assembly. The people stood silently gazing upon Christ. His form was bathed in the light that ever surrounds the throne of God. His upturned face was glorified as they had never before seen the face of man. From the open heavens a voice was heard saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

The word that was spoken to Jesus at the Jordan baptism embraces humanity. God spoke to Jesus as our representative. With all our sins and weaknesses, we are not cast aside as worthless. "He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

The glory that rested upon Christ is a pledge of the love of God for us. His love has encircled man, and reached the highest heaven. The light which fell from the open portals upon the head of our Saviour will fall upon us as we pray for help to resist temptation. The voice which spoke to Jesus says to every believing soul, This is My beloved child, in whom I am well pleased.

Our Redeemer has opened the way so that the most sinful, the most needy, the most oppressed and despised, may find access to the Father. All may have a home in the mansions which Jesus has gone to prepare.

Born of Water and Spirit

Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again to enter the kingdom of God. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"

(John 3:5). Christ here referred to water baptism and the renewing of the heart by the Spirit of God.

Repentance, faith, and baptism are the requisite steps in conversion. As Christians submit to the solemn rite of baptism, He registers the vow that they make to be true to Him. This vow is their oath of allegiance.

Those who are baptized, having been convicted of sin by the Spirit of God, have obeyed the command: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, ... and touch not the unclean thing." And to them is fulfilled the promise: "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters" (2 Corinthians 6:17, 18).

The obligations in the spiritual agreement entered into at baptism are mutual. As human beings act their part with whole-hearted obedience, they have a right to pray, "Let it be known, Lord, that Thou art God in Israel" (1 Kings 18:36). As we act our part, through His Holy Spirit who worked before baptism God continues to work in the new life of the believer.

We need the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Now is the time to ask Christ to breath upon us. We need the Holy Ghost to work His gifts in us. Christ breathed on His disciples (John 20:22), and then He said to them, "Behold, I send the promise of My

Father upon you” (Luke 24:49). All believers now need to prayer for a greater measure of the Holy Spirit. As believers in Christ, we now need a great outpouring of the Spirit of God if we should complete the gospel ministry in these perilous times.

Symbol of death and resurrection

The apostle Paul explains this with a question: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6:3).

Those who have taken part in the solemn rite of baptism have pledged themselves to seek for those things which are above, “where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1); pledged themselves to labour earnestly for the salvation of sinners. God asks those who take His name, How are you using the powers that have been redeemed by the death of My Son? Are you doing all in your power to rise to a greater height in spiritual understanding? Are you adjusting your interest and actions in harmony with the momentous claims of eternity?

Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. We have died to the world. We have been

buried in the likeness of Christ's death and raised in the likeness of His resurrection, and we are to live a new life. Our life is to be bound up with the life of Christ.

In the first chapter of Second Peter is presented the progressive work in the Christian life. The whole chapter is a lesson of deep importance. If man, in acquiring the Christian graces, works on the plan of addition, God has pledged Himself to work in his behalf upon the plan of multiplication. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord" (2 Peter 1:2).

The work is laid out before every soul that has acknowledged his faith in Jesus Christ by baptism. If we are true to our vow, there is opened to us a door of communication with heaven – a door that no human hand or satanic agency can close.

Once we have been raised from the water of baptism, we rise to walk in the steps of Christ. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1).

All who enter upon the new life should understand, prior to their baptism, that the Lord requires the undivided affections. The practicing of the truth is essential. The bearing of fruit testifies to

the character of the tree. There is need of a thorough conversion to the truth.

All who study the life of Christ and practice His teachings will become like Christ. Their influence will be like His. They will reveal soundness of character. As they walk in the humble path of obedience, doing the will of God, they exert an influence that tells for the advancement of the cause of God and the healthful purity of His work.

Baptism and Church Membership

One way of becoming a member in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is through baptism. But over the years this sacred process has been compromised. Copying performance models from the world, souls have been hurriedly baptised to count numbers with little regard to their understanding of what it really means to be a Seventh-day Adventist. This is a betrayal of sacred ordinance for both the baptised and for the church as a body of Christ. Yet, in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the counsel from inspired writings of the Church is clear.

“The test of discipleship is not brought to bear as closely as it should be upon those who present

themselves for baptism. It should be understood whether they are simply taking the name of Seventh-day Adventists, or whether they are taking their stand on the Lord's side, to come out from the world and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. Before baptism, there should be a thorough inquiry as to the experience of the candidates. Let this inquiry be made, not in a cold and distant way, but kindly, tenderly, pointing the new converts to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Bring the requirements of the gospel to bear upon the candidates for baptism" (*Evangelism*, p. 311; *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 95).

"One of the points upon which those newly come to the faith will need instruction is the subject of dress. Let the new converts be faithfully dealt with. Are they vain in dress? Do they cherish pride of heart? The idolatry of dress is a moral disease. It must not be taken over into the new life. In most cases, submission to the gospel requirements will demand a decided change in the dress" (*Evangelism*, p. 312; *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 96).

It is very unfortunate that new converts are often not taught principles of dress. The first principle is to bear good fruit, for it is by our fruits shown through

our dress that we are to be known (Matthew 7:16-20). To bear good fruit, we are required to come out of world fashions and be “separate” then we can be “sons and daughters” of our God (2 Corinthians 6: 17, 18). How these principles of “fruit” and being “separate” apply to dress must be taught to new converts.

Being separate from the world in dress fashions must be taught to new converts before they are baptised, otherwise they are betrayed into misrepresenting Christ. Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Those who are baptized, having been converted by the working of the Holy Spirit, declare publicly that they have forsaken the service of Satan and have become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. They have obeyed the command: “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, . . . and touch not the unclean thing.” And to them is fulfilled the promise: “I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6: 17, 18).

Those baptised and hence accepted as members of the church, no longer are they to follow the traditions of men. No longer are they to follow dishonest methods. They are to obey the statutes of

the kingdom of heaven. They are to seek God's honour. If they will be true to their vow, they will be furnished with grace and power that will enable them to fulfil all righteousness. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12).

After the taught and baptised member continues to follow the fashions of the world, the church needs to act in a manner that is loving, and yet not compromising with sin. The principles are laid out in the Bible. In 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, Paul is uncompromising on how we should deal with open sins, which here dress fits. We must "purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump", and "put away from among yourselves that wicked person." This includes censure and disfellowship actions of the church. This is tough but inspired language.

But we often play with sin in the church. In 2 Corinthians 2:1-11 Paul labours to explain that it was out of love that he first wrote to the church with "heaviness" for he had written "out of much affliction and anguish of heart" and "with much tears" due to the sin in church; but even this time, the tried apostle did not forget to require them to "be obedient in all things." In 1 Timothy 5:20 Paul is again

uncompromising, this time he instructed young Timothy that: "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." Certain sin needs open rebuke. Partly because the issue of dress is not dealt with at baptism, many in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are unaware of the perversion of fashion to their Christian character.

"Obedience to fashion is pervading our Seventh-day Adventist churches and is doing more than any other power to separate our people from God. I have been shown that our church rules are very deficient. All exhibitions of pride in dress, which is forbidden in the word of God, should be sufficient reason for church discipline. If there is a continuance, in face of warnings and appeals and entreaties, to still follow the perverse will, it may be regarded as proof that the heart is in no way assimilated to Christ. Self, and only self, is the object of adoration, and one such professed Christian will lead many away from God. There is a terrible sin upon us as a people, that we have permitted our church members to dress in a manner inconsistent with their faith. We must arise at once and close the door against the allurements of fashion. Unless we do this, our churches will

become demoralized” (*Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 4, pp. 647-648).

Failure to effectively teach before baptism the dress and health reform principles in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, perhaps explain why when Sunday Law, the great final test, will be brought upon us, many will backslide. We are told, “As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel’s message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side” (*Great Controversy*, p. 608). This is why new converts ought to be grounded in the truth, not deceived to take lightly their sacred vows of coming out of the world, otherwise they are betrayed and set up for a bitter exit at the great final test.

As you read this, whether you are baptised or not, seek to be faithful and obedient to Christ, for there is no other way. Christ will soon return to take only the faithful. Satan will do all he can to deceive you into thinking that church discipline is an enemy to spirituality. Do not be deceived. God in His mercy

has instructed us how to avoid getting lost. There is no real happiness in following the ways of the world. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). Do not choose your own way and be found wanting when Christ returns.

When you seek baptism, do not take it without Christ, as a mere formality. It is the grace of Christ that gives life to the soul. Apart from Christ, baptism, like any other service, is a worthless form. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life" (John 3:36).

Full surrender to Christ is required. Salvation is not to be baptized, not to have our names upon the church books, not to preach the truth. You can do all that but still get lost. Salvation is a living union with Jesus Christ to be renewed in heart, doing the works of Christ in faith and labour of love, in patience, meekness, and hope. Every soul united to Christ will be a living missionary to all around him.

Christ took upon Himself the infirmities of humanity so that we may have no fear that because of the weakness of human nature we could not overcome sin. Because of what Christ did for us, it is "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the

divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4).

Christ overcame sin. “The prince of this world cometh,” said Jesus, “and hath nothing in me” (John 14:30). Christ did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us. So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. In Christ, we overcome and need not retain one sinful propensity.

Christ bids you: “abide in me, and I in you” (John 15:4). For “whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not” (1 John 3:6). When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the Word of God. All its strength is yours. Grasp His promises as leaves from the tree of life: “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). As you come to Him, believe that He accepts you, because He has promised. No one can ever perish while he abides in Christ by faith.

When Rebaptism Is Appropriate

There are many at the present day who have unwittingly violated one of the precepts of God’s law. When the understanding is enlightened, and the claims of the Sabbath commandment are urged

upon the conscience, they see themselves sinners in the sight of God. "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4) and he that shall "offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

The honest seeker after truth will not plead ignorance of the law as an excuse for transgression. Light was within his reach. God's Word is plain, and Christ has bidden him search the Scriptures. He reveres God's law as holy, just, and good, and he repents of his transgression. By faith he pleads the atoning blood of Christ, and grasps the promise of pardon.

To such, his former baptism does not satisfy him now. He has seen himself a sinner, condemned by the law of God. He has experienced anew a death to sin, and he desires again to be buried with Christ by baptism, that he may rise to walk in newness of life.

To him, the word of God says plainly, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Rebaptism is a subject that each individual must conscientiously take his position upon in the fear of God. The duty of urging belongs to no one but God; give God a chance to work with His Holy Spirit upon

the minds, so that the individual will be perfectly convinced and satisfied in regard to this advanced step.

Rebaptism is a matter to be treated as a great privilege and blessing, and all who are rebaptized, if they have the right ideas upon this subject, will thus consider it.

It is the privilege and the duty of every Christian to have a rich and abundant experience in the things of God. "I am the light of the world," said Jesus; "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). Every step of faith and obedience brings the soul into closer connection with the Light of the world, in whom there "is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

Both ministers and laymen may baptise

The Saviour's commission to teach and baptise included all the believers in Christ to the end of time – ministers and laymen. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. "Everyone, to the extent of his talent and opportunity, is to fulfill the Saviour's commission" {SC 81.1}. "All who receive

the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men” {CT 466.2}. “When men go out with the burden of the work and to bring souls into the truth, those men are ordained of God, [even] if [they] never have a touch of ceremony of ordination. To say [they] shall not baptize when there is nobody else, [is wrong]. If there is a minister in reach, all right, then they should seek for the ordained minister to do the baptizing, but when the Lord works with a man to bring out a soul here and there, and they know not when the opportunity will come that these precious souls can be baptized, why he should not question about the matter, he should baptize these souls” {Ms75-1896 par. 4}.

In many places, an ordained minister may not be in reach because the Seventh-day Adventist Church ministers may refuse to baptise the souls who do not subscribe to the trinity doctrine. Non-trinitarian Seventh-day Adventist laymen should not question about the matter, they should baptise the souls in the single name of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 10:48; 19:5)!

Ellen White went on to say, “This is the very work [described in the Scriptures], as I have been writing on the life of Christ in regard to these [believers] being scattered, how because of the persecution they went everywhere preaching the Word of God;

they were preaching the gospel everywhere, and as souls were raised up they were baptized. Philip was not an ordained minister, but when the eunuch began to inquire about this matter, Philip opened to him the Word, and then what? He says, 'What doth hinder my being baptized?' Sure enough, what did hinder? It was not considered that anything hindered, and Philip went down and baptized him" {Ms75-1896 (November 12, 1896) par. 5}.

Conclusion

Baptism brings us into twofold association. The first fold is Christ. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). The second fold is Christ's body, the church. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Baptism is the divinely ordained means of signifying conversion to Christ and adoption into the family of God. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be

damned” (Mark 16:16). “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

This does not detract from the personal aspects of our communion with God. “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:6). “Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (Psalms 73:23-26).

Such communion strengthens us for fellowship and corporate worship. When we are baptized, we confess Christ before the world, and He confesses us before the Father and His angels. “Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God” (Luke 12:8).

We are baptized because we have been “crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20). Baptism

symbolizes the crucifixion of the old life. It is not only a death but also a burial. We are “buried with him in baptism” (Colossians 2:12). As a burial follows a person’s death, so when the believer goes down into the watery grave the old life that passed away when he accepted Jesus Christ is buried.

But after His death and burial, Christ arose from the grave. And in baptism we arise from our watery grave to a new life in Him. Then the power that enabled Christ to arise enables us to live that life. “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

After baptism, the newness of life lifts us to a higher plateau of human experience, giving us new values, aspirations, and desires that focus on a commitment to loving Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself prescribes what it means to love Him: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Baptism brings us to discover the purpose of our being created by Christ.

Finally, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

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