



My Bible School Lessons

Exploring the Word of God

Lesson #27: "Following Jesus in Baptism"

SCRIPTURE READING: MATTHEW 3:1-17; JOHN 13:1-17; 1 CORINTHIANS 11 :23-29

Memory Verse: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him." Matthew 3:13

In this lesson, we will study the example of Jesus, to determine what He would have His followers do today in matters of religious ceremony. When the Saviour called the disciples to His service His invitation was, "Follow me." To Peter, Andrew, James, and John on the shores of the Sea of Galilee; to Matthew at the receipt of customs; to the rich young ruler who sought the way to life eternal; to Peter after the resurrection—to all who came to Him in sincerity He gave the same invitation, "Follow me." And to all who turn to Jesus for light and comfort and salvation in every age He has the same call. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me" (*John 12:26*). Christ's example is for the Christian a sufficient reason for every rule of life, for every ordinance of the church.

1: WHAT EXAMPLE DID JESUS SET FOR HIS CHURCH AT THE RIVER JORDAN?

He was baptized by John in the Jordan River.

Matthew 3:13: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him."

He was baptized by John the Baptist (or Baptizer), not because He had sinned, but as an example to us, and "to fulfil all righteousness" (*Matthew 3:15*). Heaven was pleased, for we read, "Lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (*Matthew 3:17*). He commanded His disciples to baptize converts among "all nations."

Matthew 28:19: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"

Baptisms are to be conducted in "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The true Christian will obey the command of Christ that brings him into such a close relationship with God. The baptized believer is actually adopted into the royal family of God and takes the royal name of Christian.

2: SPRINKLING OR IMMERSION, WHICH?

Baptism by water is God's plan. This is made clear by Jesus' words to Nicodemus:

John 3:5: "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 baptized at Aenon, "because there was much water there" (*John 3:23*).

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Jesus is our example; He walked into the old Jordan River, and John baptized Him. Jesus then "went up straightway out of the water" (*Matthew 3: 16*). To the candid mind there surely can be no doubt about the method used by John. Had he used "sprinkling," one pail of water would have sufficed for a great host of people. But Jesus was immersed in the Jordan.

Philip and the eunuch went into the water, and came out (*Acts 8:36-39*). Philip baptized in the same manner as John the Baptist. He and his candidate "went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him." They then came "up out of the water."

Here we have but one candidate. He could have been sprinkled with a few drops of water or a cup of water might have been poured over his head, but this would not have been baptism according to Jesus' example and commandment; hence Philip immersed the eunuch in a pool of water by the side of the road.

The word "baptize," in the Greek, means "to immerse," "to dip under." The word "baptize" is from the Greek word, baptize, which comes from the root bapto, signifying "to immerse," "to dip," "to cover with fluid," "to plunge," etc., as material is dipped into a vat of dye, as the blacksmith plunges hot metal into a tank of water. The meaning is definitely not "sprinkle" or "pour."

3: IS THE METHOD OF BAPTISM IMPORTANT?

Yes, because the method is designed to illustrate the meaning and purpose of baptism. Said Paul:

Romans 6:3-6: "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."

Notice these four points:

1. Baptism commemorates Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.
2. It symbolizes the death and burial of the "old man" of sin.
3. It represents resurrection to "newness of life" in Christ Jesus.
4. It indicates the washing away of sin (*Acts 22: 16*).

Since baptism commemorates the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and Jesus died and rose but once, those who immerse the individual three times instead of once miss the important point of Jesus' sacrifice "once" for all (1 *Peter 3: 18*). Those who baptize the candidate face down, depart from the regular mode of burial. The "old man" of sin must die and be buried, and the "new man" (*Ephesians 4:22, 24*) be brought forth to "walk in newness of life" (*Romans 6:4*). This is symbolized by the candidate's closing his eyes, holding his breath, being buried under the water, being raised up, opening his eyes and breathing again, then walking out of the watery grave. Sprinkling or pouring simply cannot symbolize this spiritual work of grace in the Christian. Baptism is first and foremost an outward symbol of the change made by God's grace in the sinner's heart.

4: WHAT STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN BEFORE BAPTISM?

1. The candidate should be carefully taught.

Matthew 28:19-20: "Teach all nations, baptizing them. . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

The candidate should be taught "all things" that Jesus commanded. This is really much more necessary today than in the apostles' time, for the following reasons:

There was a definite risk and sacrifice even in professing Christianity in the days of the apostles. Baptism tended to eliminate a mere nominal profession of His name. People do not relish scorn, reproach, division in the family, or martyrdom, just to take up a new religion. But, today, it is a matter of honor to be counted a church member. So every candidate for baptism should understand fully what it means to become a follower of Christ.

In those days, Jesus Christ Himself was the issue. No one thought of any Sabbath but the Bible Sabbath. So that was not an issue. But today it is. Today, *the teachings of Christ, as well as Christ Himself, is the issue*. What will the candidate do? Accept Christ and reject His teachings? This is impossible. To receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour means to accept "all things whatsoever" He commanded.

One may join a church that preaches Christ and yet deny almost every fundamental doctrine of Bible religion. We have, in the churches today, everything from fanaticism and playing with rattlesnakes, on the one hand, to ethereal ideas that there is no sin or death, but only God and life and good. Millions seek some mystic "higher plane" while evading the eternal teaching of the Word of God and avoiding the everlasting truths that "sin is the transgression of the law" of God. that "the wages of sin is death," and that Jesus is the only Saviour from the transgression of the law. It is therefore clearly essential that candidates for baptism be thoroughly taught "all things" that Jesus commanded. else the profession of Christ may mean fatal delusion and dangerous heresy.

2. He must believe.

Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

After being taught, the candidate should, in his heart, believe in Christ as Lord, as a personal Saviour, and in His teaching. It is not enough to say, "I believe in Christ." Today that may mean almost anything. He should believe His Word and teachings as recorded in the Bible; and, by faith, follow his Saviour.

3. He must repent of his sins.

Acts 2:38: "Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

To repent means to turn away from sin. It means to turn to God and righteousness. Man, of his own free will and choice, must make the decision to turn to God and away from sin and error.

A vital element of true repentance is "godly sorrow," which "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 *Corinthians* 7:9-10). This repentance God will give us if we are willing to turn away from every sin (*Acts* 5:31; *Romans* 2:4). God's love melts the heart, and the Holy Spirit makes us truly sorry for sin when we behold the precious Saviour dying for the sins we have committed.

4. He must be willing to die to sin (Romans 6:3, 11-13).

As Jesus died for sin, man must die to sin. He will choose to lose a hand, a foot, an eye, before he wills to use them to do evil (*Mark* 9:43-47). His hands will not hold ill-gotten gain or lift to his lips the red and

stirring wine that bringeth forth "babbling" and "woe." Nor will he stain his fingers or foul his breath with the poisons of tobacco. His feet will not cross the forbidden places of the world's alluring and sinful pleasures. He will not yield his members as instruments of unrighteousness.

5. He must be ready to live for God (Romans 6:11,13).

And Christ will dwell in him by His Holy Spirit. When Satan knocks at his heart door, he will find the "old man" gone-dead. A little girl put it this way: "When Satan comes to my door and calls for me, I tell him that Jesus lives here, and then Satan goes away." When God calls, we yield our members as "instruments of righteousness unto God." With Isaiah we say. "Here am I; send me" (*Isaiah 6:8*). Such are "born again" men and women. Candidates for baptism should learn, believe, repent, die to sin, and surrender to God; therefore, infant baptism is not Biblical. We may dedicate our children to God, but infant baptism is without meaning in the light of these facts. There is no example for it in the New Testament!

5: WHAT IS THE DOOR TO CHRIST'S CHURCH?

We are "baptized into Jesus Christ" (*Romans 6:3*). The church members are called the members of Christ's body, and we are baptized into this body of Christ on earth. Christ calls Himself "the door," but we are baptized into Him. Thus baptism is an entrance. Notice three points:

1. Christ is the head of the Christian body (*Ephesians 4:15-16*).
2. We become members of Christ's body, the church, at baptism (*1 Corinthians 12:20, 27*).
3. We are baptized "into one body" (*1 Corinthians 12:13*).

Some ask about being baptized more than once. In Acts 19:1-5 is the record of believers who were baptized twice. Important new truth had come to them, and they acted upon it and were rebaptized.

Some ask whether baptism of the Spirit is not sufficient (*Acts 10:44, 47-48*). Here Peter commanded these sincere believers to be baptized "in the name of the Lord." They had already been baptized with the Holy Ghost.

6: WAS THE LORD'S SUPPER ESTABLISHED AS A CHRISTIAN ORDINANCE?

Yes, the Lord's Supper is an ordinance established by Christ. Said Paul:

1 Corinthians 11:23-26: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come,"

Keep in mind five lessons about the Lord's Supper:

1. It is to be celebrated in remembrance of Him.
2. It commemorates "the Lord's death till He come."
3. The bread represents His body, "which is broken for you."
4. The wine symbolizes His blood shed for man.

Matthew 26:28: "This is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

5. It foreshadows Christ's return. Baptism commemorates the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The Lord's Supper is held in remembrance of His death, "till He come." It thus anticipates the second coming of Christ. It links together the cross and the second coming. This ordinance should be regularly observed by Christians.

7: WHAT WORK OF PREPARATION SHOULD PRECEDE THE COMMUNION SERVICE?

1. Each member should examine himself.

1 Corinthians 11:28: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

Many are so occupied pulling the mote out of the eye of another that they neglect the beam in their own eye. They miss the whole spirit of Calvary.

2. A man may eat unworthily if he comes unprepared.

1 Corinthians 11:29: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

We are guilty if we partake of communion in the spirit of a feast or if we do not examine ourselves, sense our own unworthiness, and then rejoice in the Saviour's forgiving love and mercy. After sin is put away, this service should not be a season of sorrowing. We stand, not in the shadow, but in the saving light of His cross.

3. Jesus rebuked pride by washing the disciples' feet.

John 13:4-5: "He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded."

The washing of the disciples' feet was in itself a ceremonial and meaningful washing. Jesus said to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me" (*John 13:8*). He also added that washing the feet would clean them "every whit." Then He added that one of them, though washed, was not clean. None of this would make sense, unless the washing has a symbolic meaning (*John 13: 1-17*); so ponder it in your own heart.

4. He instructed us to follow His example in feet washing.

John 13:13-15: "Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you,"

You can see from Christ's words that this service is as much a gospel ordinance as the Lord's Supper, which was ordained by Christ at the same time.

8: WHAT IS THE SPIRIT OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN?

Jesus did not wash the disciples' feet merely to stage a show. He wanted them to learn the spirit of heaven and to know that no service that needs to be done is beneath the dignity of His followers. He humbled Himself to do this task as He lifted every needful and lowly service to the plane of Godlike ministry.

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"The way to heaven is consecrated by His footprints." And when we reach heaven, we shall find the Saviour still manifesting this same spirit of service that characterized His life on earth. In heaven He will "gird Himself, and . . . come forth and serve them" (*Luke 12:37*). This will take place after His second coming (*Luke 12:37, 40*).

9: HOW LONG WILL JESUS' SACRIFICE BE REMEMBERED?

And Jesus promised, "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (*Matthew 26:29*). That means that, throughout eternity, we will be reminded of the price paid for our redemption by our wonderful Lord. The last vestige of sin itself will be removed—only the tokens of love, divine, incomprehensible love, will remain. May you, dear student, be there to enjoy the endless pleasures of eternity with your Saviour.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

"At the words, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me,' Peter surrendered his pride and self-will. He could not endure the thought of separation from Christ; that would have been death to him. 'Not my feet only,' he said, 'but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit:

"These words mean more than bodily cleanliness. Christ is still speaking of the higher cleansing as illustrated by the lower. He who came from the bath was clean, but the sandaled feet soon became dusty, and again needed to be washed. So Peter and his brethren had been washed in the great fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Christ acknowledged them as His. But temptation had led them into evil, and they still needed His cleansing grace. When Jesus girded Himself with a towel to wash the dust from their feet, He desired by that very act to wash the alienation, jealousy, and pride from their hearts. This was of far more consequence than the washing of their dusty feet." -*Desire of Ages*. 646

" 'Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life: It is by receiving the life for us poured out on Calvary's cross, that we can live the life of holiness. And this life we receive by receiving His Word, by doing those things which He has commanded. Thus we become one with Him. 'He that eateth My flesh,' He says, 'and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me' (John 6:54, 56, 57). To the holy Communion this Scripture in a special sense applies. As faith contemplates our Lord's great sacrifice, the soul assimilates the spiritual life of Christ. That soul will receive spiritual strength from every Communion. The service forms a living connection by which the believer is bound up with Christ, and thus bound up with the Father. In a special sense it forms a connection between dependent human beings and God.

"As we receive the bread and wine symbolizing Christ's broken body and spilled blood, we in imagination join in the scene of Communion in the upper chamber. We seem to be passing through the garden consecrated by the agony of Him who bore the sins of the world. We witness the struggle by which our reconciliation with God was obtained. Christ is set forth crucified among us.

"Looking upon the crucified Redeemer, we more fully comprehend the magnitude and meaning of the sacrifice made by the Majesty of heaven. The plan of salvation is glorified before us, and the thought of Calvary awakens living and sacred emotions in our hearts. Praise to God and the Lamb will be in our hearts and on our lips; for pride and self-worship cannot flourish in the soul that keeps fresh in memory the scenes of Calvary." *Desire of Ages*. 660-661