
Seven Reasons for Believer's Baptism

BY
F. B. Meyer,
B.A., D.D.

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Seven Reasons for Believer's Baptism

THE longer I live the more impressed I am with the beauty and significance of Believer's Baptism, and I cannot but feel, that if it were really thoroughly understood by Christian people, they would not hesitate to obey the Lord's command. Indeed, they would be eager to pass through the simple outward rite, which would express their desire to be as like Him as they may.

But remember at the outset that you may be baptised, as a believer, without becoming a member of the Baptist denomination. You may be baptised, and still continue in communion with the Christian body with which you have been accustomed to worship. This rite is a personal matter between the Lord and the individual believer.

Now Believer's Baptism differs from the ceremony which is often called

Baptism, in two ways—First, in the person baptised; and Second, in the mode of Baptism.

First, as to the Person Baptised. It must be a *believer*, one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. We sometimes hear people speak of *Adult* Baptism, but the expression is very misleading. If a man be as old as Methuselah, yet if he do not believe, he has no right to be baptised; while if a little child truly trust to the Saviour, it has an undeniable right to baptism. Christ did not ask for intense feeling, or matured character, or years of consistency as the condition of baptism. He only asked *faith*, "He that *believeth* and is baptised . . ." (*Mark xvi.* 16.) The question in the baptism of the Eunuch (even though it be an interpolation) shows that it was the custom of the early Church to be sure of the *faith* of those who wished to be baptised (*Acts viii.* 37). And there is certain evidence that those baptised by the Apostles were true believers in the Lord. (*See references at the end.*) The only sort of baptism mentioned in the Bible is the Baptism of Believers; the sprinkling of babes, who cannot believe, may be a beautiful and interesting rite, but it does not fulfil the conditions of Believer's Baptism.

Second, as to the Mode of Baptism. It must be by immersion, *i.e.*, the dipping of the whole body beneath the water. If there were no other argument to prove that this was the ancient and scriptural mode, the question would be settled by an appeal to the *sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans*. The whole point of the argument there is this: the waters of baptism are a Grave; Baptism is a Burial; the Baptised one is buried into the likeness of Christ's death.

If a few drops of water are sprinkled on the face, it is impossible to trace any resemblance to that eventful moment when Joseph and Nicodemus bore the lifeless body of the Lord to burial in the garden tomb, amid the tears of the Maries, and the evening fragrance of the spring flowers, and hid it from the sight of man. And what likeness is there to the resurrection of Christ, unless the whole body can be lifted from the grave-like waters into the upper air and light?

It is for these reasons, no doubt, that the prayer book of the Church of England in its rubric prescribes *immersion* as its usual mode of Baptism. No wonder that John baptised in Ænon "because there was much water there" (*John iii. 23*). And it was well that there was so ample a supply of water in

Jerusalem, for the use of the priests and for temple purposes, otherwise the 3,000 new-made converts could not have been baptised in one day (*Acts ii. 41*). It was in keeping with all this, that so many of the ancient churches were furnished with Baptisteries. Of course, Baptism does not save. It has no sacramental efficacy. If a man is not saved before he is baptised, he certainly will not be saved by passing through that rite. In fact, the ordinance will do him more harm than good.

Yet Believer's Baptism is binding on Christians for the following reasons:—

1.—*Believers should be Baptised, because the Lord Jesus was Baptised.* When He was thirty. He mixed with the crowds that thronged the banks of the Jordon, and asked baptism at the hands of John the Baptist. He that baptises with fire was baptised with water (*Matt. iii. 13; John i. 33*). If there were no other reason for Believer's Baptism, would not this be enough? His footprints lead down into the deep, clear waters, and if we would follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth, we have no alternative but to follow Him there. It is enough for the servant to be as His Lord. He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps. Courtiers

will imitate the deformities of their King; let us imitate Christ in His fulfilment of all righteousness.

2.—*Believers should be Baptised, Christ commanded it.* "Go ye," said He, "and teach all nations, baptising them" (*Matt. xxviii. 19*). These, as the Iron Duke once said, are the marching orders of the Church. We are not at liberty to alter or discuss them, we must simply obey. When a Roman Centurion said to his servant, do *this*, it was done immediately; and surely the Captain of our salvation should not be worse served by His disciples and friends. His mother spoke a memorable word to the Church of all time when she said to the servants at Cana, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." If we could see no meaning in this ordinance, we should submit to it, because He commanded it; how much more should we do so when we can see its beauty and use. And all the time there rings in our hearing, like a peal of silver bells, these words, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments"; and may we not add, "His commandments are not grievous"? It is not enough to talk of love; let us show it.

3.—*Believers should be Baptised, the Apostles practised it.* Wherever they went they employed the rivers and

reservoirs for this holy rite. In Jerusalem (*Acts ii.* 41), in Samaria (*viii.* 12), in the Desert (*viii.* 36), amongst the Gentiles, in the house of the soldier Cornelius, and in the prison of the jailer at Philippi (*Acts x.* 48 and *xvi.* 33). Even if we had nothing else to go by, yet the practice of such men, who had so many opportunities of knowing the will of Christ, would be a conclusive guide of our duty. We refuse to stay with the corrupt Church of the IVth or Vth century; we will press back to the 1st, when she had come fresh from the hand of her Lord. Her earthly practice shall be our guide.

4.—*Believers should be Baptised, it is a beautiful symbol of the forgiveness of sin.* John the Baptist first used it for this object: "They were baptised of him in Jordan, *confessing their sins*" (*Matt. iii.* 6). Other meanings have gathered about the ordinance in addition to this, but this original one remains. Sin is constantly described as a moral *stain*; forgiveness is as constantly spoken of as *washing white*—whiter than the wreaths of driven snow. In Baptism, of course, all dust and impurity is removed from the body, and this outward cleansing is a sign and reminder of that which has already taken place in the Believer's

Inner Experience. He seems to say, "I have already plunged my sin-stained nature into the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; nay, to make assurance doubly sure, I do now by faith repeat it; as my body is plunged into this crystal bath, so do I now plunge my whole being into the precious blood of Christ; and as my flesh is made perfectly clean by the water, so also is my spirit made clean by the application of the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, which cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7).

5.—*Believers should be Baptised, it is a Badge of discipleship.* This is the meaning especially attached to it by Christ Himself. "Go ye, and *make disciples* of all nations, baptising them." The Lord looked round for some world-wide substance, some universal act, which should serve as a badge of His disciples, and there was nothing so suitable as this. Water is everywhere, and few acts are more simple or common than the immersion of the bath. Alas! that it has become too much the badge of a sect. But let us not let Christ's idea be obscured by man's mistake. Believer's Baptism does not necessarily mean that you belong to the Baptist denomination. It means only that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ. There is no necessity, if

you are baptised, that you should join the Baptists; you may be baptised as a disciple of the Saviour, and remain beneath any Church government you please. The Eunuch was baptised, but did not join a Church.

6.—*Believers should be Baptised, it marks a Break with the Old, and a start for a New and Better Life.* Christ's burial broke His earthly life into two parts. He was different on this side of the grave from what He was on the other. Physical weakness was replaced by Resurrection life; dishonour by glory; weakness by power; a natural body by a spiritual body (1 Cor. xv. 43).

Something like this happens when a man trusts Christ. He dies and is buried to his old sinful past. He arises in the strength of Christ, into a new and glorious life. Now it is well to have an outward sign to impress all this on the Believer and on the world. And the Holy Ghost led the Apostles to put this new meaning into Baptism. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised into His death? Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism unto 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" (Rom.

vi. 4). When the Lord Jesus died, and was buried, all those who in the thought of God are for ever one with Him died with Him and lay with Him in the grave, rising with Him in the light of the Resurrection morning. And we have to appropriate these facts, and make them real by a living faith. Nor are they to be merely matters of sacred inner experience. As we set forth His death in the Lord's Supper, so we should set forth our death, in and with Him, in the act of baptism; whereby we are visibly buried in the likeness of His death and raised in the likeness of His resurrection. It is a confession of our desire to be dead indeed to the world and to sin, and alive unto God, through Jesus Christ the Lord (*Col. ii. 12*, and *iii. 1*).

7.—*Believers should be Baptised, it is the Profession of a Creed.* When we are baptised, we profess to the world our belief of these distinct facts—That Christ lived once upon our world in human flesh, that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, that He is living still, and that His word is law. The ordinance of baptism is a standing witness to the reality of those facts with which it is associated, and we

should do all in our power to maintain and accentuate that evidence in the face of an unbelieving world.

For all these reasons, Believers should be Baptised. If you were baptised as a babe, you should be baptised again as a Believer (*Acts xix. 3 and 5*). Of course, as we cannot be saved by Baptism, so we may be saved without it. The dying thief was never baptised, yet we know that he is in Paradise (*Luke xxiii. 43*). Thousands stand before the throne, clad in white raiment, who never passed through the waters of Baptism. But at the same time, those who love are not always asking *What must I do?* but *What may I do?* We know that our salvation has been finished for us on the Cross, and it can make no difference to our final salvation, whether we have been dipped or sprinkled. But it will make all the difference to our enjoyment of the presence of our Master whether we have kept all His wishes or not. Even if there were only the faintest possibility of Believer's Baptism being His dear will, I would be baptised, in order to be on the safe side. He will never find fault with those who did all they thought to be His will, even though they had slighter grounds for thinking so than we have for Believer's Baptism. He

may find serious fault with those who did not investigate His commands for themselves, or postponed obedience, because the matter was non-essential. True love knows no distinction between the essential and the non-essential.

A FEW COMMON QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

Is Believer's Baptism essential to Salvation? No; when our Lord Jesus died, He said, "It is finished," and He meant that the salvation of all who should trust Him was complete; and so, the only thing now required of us is a simple heart-trust in Him. If you can look up into His face and say, "Lord Jesus, I trust Thee," you are saved, though you have never been christened or baptised.

Why, then, need we be Baptised? Because our Lord Jesus wishes it. If there were only a dim suspicion that He wished it, it surely would be enough. Shall we do less for Him than the three mighty men did for David, when they risked their lives to get him the water of childhood's well, for which he expressed a passing wish?

Supposing we were christened as

Babes, need we be Baptised as Believers? Certainly, because christening does not fulfil all the conditions of Baptism; christening was not your act at all, you did not do it, you cannot remember it, it was done for you; besides, in *Acts xix.* 1-6, there were some baptised a second time, when they learnt the truth about the Baptism of Christ.

Should we have our Children Christened? Why should you? Where is the scriptural warrant for it? The blood of Christ is quite efficacious enough to save them if they die in childhood, without your adding a few drops of water. Will He, who said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me," cast a babe out of His heavenly home because it had not been sprinkled? The second Adam undid the results of the sin of the first Adam, and He undid them thoroughly and completely for all who do not refuse the benefits of His work by their wilful sin and neglect.

How can we live up to this high profession of the buried and risen life? There is only one way. Live a moment at a time; and each moment look to Jesus to make real your death to the old and sinful life, and your resurrection to a life in which all things are become new.

Selected Texts on Baptism.

Baptism shows forth our Burial and Resurrection with Christ. Rom. vi. 3, 6. Col. ii. 12.

Baptism is a *command*, but *only* to *Believers*.

Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. Acts ii. 38.

Mark xvi. 15, 16.

Only Believers were baptised.

Acts ii. 41. Acts x. 47, 48.

„ viii. 12. „ xvi. 14, 15.

„ viii. 13. „ xvi. 31, 32, 33.

„ viii. 37, 38. „ xviii. 8.

„ ix. 17, 18. „ xix. 5.

The *profession* made in Baptism is that of Death to sin, and to the world, and of Resurrection to a new life of holiness unto God. Rom. vi. 3, 4.

There are *only three households* mentioned in Scripture as having been baptised.

(1). *That of the Jailor*. Acts xvi. 33.

But to his household the Word was first spoken, verse 32. And all of them, we are told, were “believing in God,” verse 34.

(2). *That of Stephanas*. 1 Cor. i. 16.

Of whose household it is said that they “addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.” 1 Cor. xvi. 15.

(3) *That of Lydia.* Acts xvi. 15.

Regarding whose household we are given no particulars, but in all probability she was neither a wife nor a mother. Her household consisted of her assistants in the dyeing trade.

Baptism was not instituted *in the place of Circumcision*. The literal circumcision of the flesh was replaced, in the teachings of the Apostles, by the spiritual circumcision "made without hands." Col. ii. 10. "Circumcision," says St. Paul, is "that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter." Rom. ii. 29. There is not a word as to Baptism taking its place.

Baptism is nowhere spoken of in Scripture as a "Covenant," or "Sign in the flesh."

The "*New*" and "*Better*" Covenant. Heb. viii. 6, 13, is "In Christ's *blood*." Luke xxii. 20, and *sealed* by His *death*—Heb. ix. 15, 16, 17.

The Baptism of the *Spirit* does not do away with the necessity for the Baptism of *water*, but is a reason for it.—Acts x. 44, 48.

"And now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptised."