

# Pastor Russell's Sermon

## SANER VIEWS ABOUT BAPTISM

Theories of Our Fathers No Longer Accepted.

## SUPERSTITIONS OF THE PAST.

Pastor Russell Dissects Doctrines of Various Denominations and Shows Their Crudities and Falseness—Immersion in Water Does Not Open the Door to the Church of the Living God—Mistake of the Baptists.



PASTOR RUSSELL

London, Tabernacle, Nov. 5.—Pastor Russell spoke today to large audiences. We report one of his discourses, which treated on the subject of Baptism. Church History shows that the damnation theories grew gradually. First came the theory that every child of Adam was born damned to eternal torture at the hands of fire-proof devils, and that the only escape was through baptism. But it was claimed that baptism cancelled only previous sins and not subsequent ones; hence it was the custom in Constantine's time to put off baptism until as near the hour of death as possible. Tertullian is credited with supporting this view.

Later came St. Augustine, advancing the theory that only the Church would be saved and that baptism was for the purpose of induction into the Church. Naturally it followed that if infants died without being admitted into the Church they would go to eternal torture. As a result of this teaching infant baptism sprang into great popularity, which is still maintained. At first the infants were immersed in water, but later, under the belief that all bishops were successors of the Apostles and equal in authority, Church Councils took the place of the Word of God. They not only sanctioned infant baptism, which is not even mentioned in the Bible, but additionally claimed that immersion was unnecessary and that a few drops of water would induce the aged or the babe into the Church and constitute an insurance against a hell of eternal torture. This theory still persists to perhaps a greater degree than many would imagine. Luther and his coadjutors protested against some of the doctrines of the Church of Rome, but accepted without protest infant baptism, sprinkling, etc., as necessary to preservation from everlasting torment.

**Unbaptized Infants in Torture**  
Someone suggests, "Ah! we practice infant sprinkling, but it is merely a 'christening.' We have no thought whatever that the gracious Heavenly Father or His adorable Son, our Redeemer, would consign an infant to torture, even if it died without being christened." Do not be too sure, my brother. Superstitions die hard. I know of a white-haired bishop in the Episcopal Church who was appalled at the very suggestion that his infant grandchild might be safe in the arms of Jesus without having been "christened."

Not only so, but these superstitions of a darker day are forcefully impressed upon the "common people" by some of the clergy. Let me tell you of two cases:

(1) A Lutheran couple in Pennsylvania had some unpleasantness with their pastor respecting Church dues. This caused them to absent themselves from Church service for several months. Meantime their babe became sick. The father humbled himself to go to his pastor to tell him of his distress and his fear that the child might die and of his desire to have it baptized. Imagine the anguish of the deluded parent when the pastor refused and told him that the child would go to hell and that this was his desert as a parent because of failure to keep in touch with his Church.

(2) The other case was that of a Catholic couple in Wisconsin. Their two little girls died of diphtheria within a few hours of each other. When the parish priest was sent for he declined to come and refused permission to have the children buried in "holy ground." The explanation given to the astonished parents was that they had neglected their duty toward the children, that they had not been baptized into the Church and consequently they were lost.

To a friend the bereaved father declared that he wanted to have nothing whatever to do with so unjust a God who would consign his little, innocent children to eternal torture merely because of his sin, his neglect, in not having a few drops of water sprinkled in their faces by the priest! The friend had been reading my "Studies in the Scriptures" and explained to the bereaved father that Church creeds and theories are very different from the plain and simple teachings of the Bible. He showed him that his little ones were merely "asleep in Jesus" waiting for the glorious resurrection blessings of restitution, to be brought to mankind at the second coming of Jesus, after the completion of the elect Church and their change to heavenly glory. Could you wonder that that

Catholic, a saloon-keeper, received a new ray of hope and that it had a transforming influence upon his life?

**The Christian-Disciples' Error**  
Pastor Russell examined the doctrine of immersion as set forth by the Christian or Disciple denomination. He had not an unkind word to say respecting the people of this denomination, but he did dissect their doctrines, laying bare what he considered to be their inconsistencies, falsities.

Criticizing the immersion theory of the Christian-Disciples he declared that the texts used by this denomination as proofs that baptism is for the remission of sins were never applied to any except Jews. The Jews were in Covenant-relationship with God through the Mosaic Law. If they got into sin it was proper for them to repent, return to God and use water symbolically, indicating return from sin. All Jews in full harmony with the Law Covenant in Jesus' day were transferred from Moses to Christ. Only those who had committed special sins were called upon to wash away those sins symbolically in water.

Others living consistent lives as "Israelites indeed" were never instructed to be baptized or to wash away their sins. Amongst the Apostles, Pastor Russell said, there is no record of any of them having been immersed in water for the remission of sins, except St. Paul, and he only because he had persecuted the Church of Christ. The baptism into Christ announced for Gentile converts is wholly different, he declared, from the Jewish baptism for the remission of sins. An illustration of this, he said, is found in Acts xviii, 24, 25, where Apollos had baptized certain Gentiles of Ephesus with John's baptism for the remission of sins. St. Paul afterward declared this incorrect and directed them to be immersed again—not for the remission of sins, but for induction into the Body of Christ, which is the Church. (Acts xix, 1-6.)

But the chief point which Pastor Russell made against the Christian-Disciple theory, that baptism is for the remission of sins, was that it naturally dis-fellowships all Christians who have not been immersed. The logic of this theory, he declared, would find few supporters in the Christian-Disciple denomination. The logic of it is this: If immersion is necessary for an adult in order that his sins may be remitted or washed away, it would logically follow that all adults not immersed are yet in their sins—unforgiven. And this signifies, according to this theory, that, if they die thus they must suffer the penalty of their sins, which penalty, they say, is eternal torture.

**Baptist Theory in Error**  
Next the Baptist theory of baptism was dealt with. It was complimented as being more nearly in line with the Scriptures than any theory of baptism held in the world. And yet, said the speaker, remarkably few Baptists today could do so stand by their theory, if put to the test. Nevertheless, in theory and practice, the great mass of Baptists declare that immersion is a necessary incidental to admission to the "Church of the Living God, whose names are written in heaven!"

In full keeping with this, in nine out of every ten Baptist Churches the world over, only immersed Christians are ever invited to the communion table to participate in the Lord's Supper. Why? Because they claim that only immersed persons belong to the true Church and that the communion service is exclusively for the Church.

If we ask them what are the advantages claimed for membership in the Church, they reply—Salvation! What is the antithesis or opposite of salvation? We ask. They answer—Lost! What do you mean by lost? We inquire. The reply is, To be banished from God and suffer everlasting torture.

So then, theoretically, our Baptist friends deliver to the unimmersed the same blood-curdling theory handed out by Christian-Disciples—that Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, etc., are enroute for eternal torture. The difference between the two theories is that the Disciples say that this awful fate impends upon the masses of Christendom, as well as upon heathendom, because their sins have not been forgiven, while the Baptists say, No, not for that cause, for Jesus died for all, but because they have not taken the necessary steps to get into the Church.

**"Times of Such Ignorance"**  
St. Paul tells us of certain times of ignorance which "God winked at" or disregarded. We believe that the Almighty graciously overlooked such inconsistencies in the theories of some of His children and charged them not with the responsibility of so terribly maligning the Divine Character and misrepresenting the Divine Word. But now our God is opening the eyes of our understanding and there is no longer excuse for any to believe such monstrous theories, nor excuse to still profess to believe them after they have been repudiated by the heart.

The true view of baptism is one which cannot be controverted. It is consistent with itself and with every Bible statement. It recognizes every consecrated child of God of every denomination, or outside of all denominations. It inducts the saintly Baptist, saintly Disciple, saintly Catholic, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Congregationalist, Methodist, etc., into membership in the "one Church of the Living God, whose names are written in heaven."

What baptism can this be? We reply that it is the one mentioned by St. Paul, in a text which we have all read and quoted time and again: "So many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death." (Romans vi, 3.) The mistake we have all made in the past is in applying the

Apostle's words to water baptism. The Apostle said not a word about water baptism, but mentioned specifically the Baptism into Christ, into "the Body of Christ, which is the Church."

The thought is that God has ordained the gathering of the elect Church during the Gospel Age. The Head of this Church was received up into glory eighteen centuries ago, and since Pentecost one and another of the true footstep followers of Jesus have been accepted of God through His merit and counted as "members of the Body of Christ, which is the Church." First, Jewish believers were transferred from Moses into Christ.

Next the message was extended to the Gentiles. But these could not pass from Moses into Christ because they were not in Moses, never having come under the Law Covenant arrangement. Hence, these could come into Christ only by direct baptism. All baptized into Jesus Christ occupy a specially preferred relationship to God and, if faithful to the end, will be received to glory, honor and immortality on the spirit or heavenly plane. But there is not a word of Scripture to say that the world, which misses this glorious exaltation, will on this account suffer eternal torture. They will lose the great prize, however.

**Water Baptism Not the Door into the True Church**

Our Baptist friends will agree to the above statement. They will say, Yes, that is what we mean, only, in order to be in Christ, we Baptists claim, water immersion is necessary.

We are glad to have their plain, candid statement and to meet the issue squarely. That is the Baptist mistake—supposing that water baptism inducts anybody into membership in the true Church. They may indeed make water immersion the door into the Baptist Church, but this does not make it the door into "the Church of the Living God." St. Paul defines the Baptism by which any Gentile may come into membership in the Body of Christ. Note his words again: "So many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death." Our Baptist friends think of this as though it read "were baptized in water." This is their mistake as before stated.

But the question arises, Just what is meant by these words, "Baptized into His death?" Was His death in any way different from the death of others? Most decidedly it was! Our race die as sinners, children of wrath, under Divine sentence of death. But Jesus was not a sinner and hence was not under Divine sentence of death. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners" and free from Adamic death. His death was a sacrificial one—a surrender of an unimpaled life. Those, therefore, who would become His footstep followers and be baptized into His death, must participate with Him in a sacrificial death. The Scriptures explain that this would be impossible except as those footstep followers should be cleansed and made acceptable sacrifices through the merit of Jesus, because "by nature we were all children of wrath, even as others."

Death was the real meaning of our Lord's baptism. John the Immerser knew that Jesus was not a sinner, knew that He had no sins to wash away, and at first he declined to immerse Him. And he did so only after Jesus had assured him that it was right and that the matter had a deeper significance. "Suffer it to be so."

**Our Lord's Baptism Finished at Calvary**

Our Lord for three and a half years was carrying out the consecration vow which in Jordan He symbolized—baptism into death. Day by day He became more deeply immersed into death. That real immersion into death was finished on Calvary. In harmony with this the day before His death Jesus said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." The next day it was accomplished, when He cried, "It is finished!" His baptism into death was finished.

The same thought the Master gave to His followers, saying to two who desired places on His right and His left in the Kingdom: "Ye know not what ye ask!" You do not know what it requires to secure exaltation to the Kingdom. Are you able, are you willing to drink of my cup of sorrow, self-denial, etc.? Are you willing to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with"—the baptism into death? When the disciples replied that they were willing, the Master assured them that He would attend to the rest. The terms of discipleship have not changed.

Just a word further respecting water baptism. It has its place, not in keeping any out of eternal glory, nor in getting them into eternal glory; but it is a symbol, a beautiful picture in one act. It is a testimony to all believers that the consecrated one has vowed loyalty to the Redeemer—even unto death. As such a confession of such a consecration, we commend water baptism to you all as being the Lord's own provision of a pictorial confession for those who have accepted His terms, surrendered their all, and are seeking to walk in newness of life and to attain the eternal glory by and by.

As for the unconsecrated world, it is fitting that they should not be baptized. Baptism was never intended except for the fully consecrated, the sanctified in Christ Jesus. When God's due time shall come the world of mankind will receive the blessings provided for them through the Redeemer's merit, under the gracious arrangement of that Redeemer's heavenly Kingdom, which will be established under the whole heavens for the purpose of uplifting mankind from sin and death—whosoever wills.

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