

THE NARROW WAY.

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THE idea is prevalent among people who profess to be Christians, that baptism is not essential to salvation, and that a person can obey the gospel without being baptized. This doctrine is often taught by men who are erroneously called ministers of the gospel, and it is one of the doctrines of many of the churches of the present day, but it is an unscriptural and anti-christian doctrine. If baptism by water could be non-essential in any case, why was it essential that even Jesus, the immaculate Son of God, should be baptized? If any person could "fulfill all righteousness" without being baptized, he could. Although he was without sin, "neither was guile found in his mouth," yet he did not, like self-righteous and sinful people in our day say that he could be sufficiently righteous without baptism. He came

"From Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him."—Matt. iii. 13-15.

John would have made an exception *only* in this case, but even Jesus could not fulfill all righteousness without baptism. Jesus taught that this ordinance was essential unto him, and unto all, when he said, "thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." It is

charging him with falsehood to say that we can fulfill all righteousness without baptism. If baptism is not essential, it was an act of folly for Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, to be baptized by John the Baptist.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, the indispensable necessity of baptism was the first subject which Jesus expounded. The doctrines which he taught is shamefully misrepresented by many interpolators on the doctrine of Christ. Jesus said unto Nicodemus,

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—John iii. 3.

These interpolators will zealously and elaborately contend that a man must be born again, but if Nicodemus had enquired of them how a man can be born again, he would have remained in ignorance of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. They have sought out plans of their own to answer this all-important question. Their plans are diversified, but they agree on one point, viz.: to set aside the answer which Jesus gave, and to answer the question in their own way. We prefer the answer of Jesus, to the wisdom of men. We have sufficient faith in him to make us believe that he would not teach a superfluous, or unimportant, or non-essential doctrine. His paramount love for the children of men would not suffer him to give an unimportant answer to a ruler of the Jews who came to him to enquire what he should do to be saved. His answer must be the most pertinent that Infinite Wisdom could present.

It must be easy to understand, for it is an explanation of his declaration that "except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." The emphatic explanation is,

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God."
—John iii. 5.

That Jesus intended to impress upon these words the utmost importance is further evident from the fact that he introduces this, and also the preceding answer by saying, "verily, verily."

He thereby invites particular attention to his answer. Notwithstanding all these impressive facts, the answer of Jesus is treated with contempt by many who say that they are his disciples and his ministers. If a person enquires of them what they shall do to be saved they will never quote these words of Jesus. They will not say, "verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit he can not enter into the kingdom of God," but they may tell him to come to the anxious seat, or the mourners' bench and get religion, or to come and be prayed for. They may tell him that he must be born again, or he can not see the kingdom, or he can not enter the kingdom of God—that he must be born of the Spirit. They skip around the first act which Jesus declared with an emphatic style—with a "verily, verily," that it must be done. Instead of telling a man that he must be born of water, they will most likely tell him that he can be baptized or not. It makes no difference. It is all the same. It is not essential. If Jesus did not mean water when he spoke of water, he did not mean Spirit when he spoke of the Spirit. We can not make one part of the sentence figurative and not the other part. Water, can not mean Spirit. Such an interpretation would make the sentence ridiculous. We would then have to read it thus: except a man be born

of Spirit, and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. There is no possibility, with the least degree of propriety, of making water, mean anything but water in this sentence. When Jesus spoke figuratively he presented as much evidence of the fact as we do in the use of such language. When he conversed with the woman of Samaria, at Jacob's well, he said,

"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."
—John iv. 13, 14.

Although the woman did not immediately understand him; yet, by his instructions on that occasion, which to those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness," would be like cold water to a thirsty soul, he made manifest what he meant.

Annexed to the instructions of Jesus unto Nicodemus, it is written that

"After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them and baptized. And John was also baptizing in Ænon, near to Salim, because there was much water there."
—John iii. 22-23.

From these statements we learn Jesus and his disciples baptized while John also continued to baptize. Baptism by water was therefore one of the doctrines of Christ, from the commencement of his ministrations. It was also a prominent part of the last commission which he gave unto his apostles after his resurrection.

"He said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned."
—Mark xvi. 15, 16.

If we can be saved without baptism, uninspired teachers know more about the gospel of Christ than Christ did. If salvation can be obtained without it, would he not have said so.

on that important occasion. He was then communicating unto them the laws of adoption into the kingdom of God, and the plan of salvation. It was the great proclamation—the gospel of the kingdom of God which was to be preached in all the world and to every creature. The eternal destiny of all mankind was to be dependent on their obedience or rejection of this gospel. Can it be possible that there can be any defect or misrepresentation or falsehood in this great commission? Did Jesus say that “he that believeth and is *not* baptized *shall be saved*?” Who is he that dares to add to, or take from the Gospel of Christ? He that doeth any of these things is not a believer in Christ. If he that believeth and is not baptized can be saved, why may not he that believeth not be saved?

The apostles did not fulfill their mission in this way. On the day of Pentecost they commenced their work as Jesus had commanded them. On that day, Peter preached to the multitude who had collected together from various nations, concerning Jesus and his resurrection.

“When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren what shall we do?”—Acts ii. 37.

A question of greater importance could not have been asked. The answer must have been the most appropriate imaginable. Because the apostles were qualified in the highest degree to give the most appropriate answer. Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, he commanded his apostles

“That they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”—Acts i. 4, 5.

This commandment they had obeyed and they had been baptized with the Holy Ghost as Jesus promised. At

the same time, Jesus also said, unto them,

“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”—Acts i. 8.

We are also informed that on the day of Pentecost, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. They were therefore fully qualified and authorized by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost to teach mankind what they must do to be saved. Whosoever preacheth contrary to what they preached on this subject is guilty of that sin which Paul delineated when he said,

“Though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”—Gal. i. 8, 9.

If the gospel should at any time be preached in plainness and simplicity it was when the earnest enquiry was made of the apostles—when thousands of enquirers were anxious to know what they should do to be saved. The reply of Peter was,

“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 ii. 38.

The gospel is very different from the doctrine which is called the gospel and which is preached in our day. Peter did not set aside baptism. He did not tell them that baptism was not essential. His strict command that every one of them should repent and be baptized, presented the subject of baptism before them as an indispensable duty. It was the duty of every one, first to repent and then to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. There was no anxious seat, nor mourners' bench, nor six months' probation for these 3,000 converts. These are inventions of men who “pervert the gospel of Christ,” and lead enquiring souls away from it, disregarding the inspira-

tion of the apostle Peter and the Divine Illumination which was manifested on that occasion.

"They that gladly received his word, were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about 3,000 souls."—Acts ii. 41.

The law of adoption into the Church of Jesus Christ is unchangeable.

Whosoever obeys the gospel of Jesus Christ must first believe in him. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," saith the Savior. Faith in God is the first principle in the gospel. Paul said,

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."—Heb. xi. 6.

He must believe these things before he comes to God. He can not repent of his sins unless he first believes that he has sinned. He can not believe that he has sinned unless he believes that there is a God who has given a law to man. Faith in God and in his Son Jesus Christ must precede repentance. When Peter commanded his audience to repent and be baptized, they had already believed. He had preached Christ unto them as a crucified Redeemer and risen Savior, and they believed what he had preached and under the impulse of that belief they said, "men and brethren, what shall we do?" Repentance was therefore the next thing required of them. Repentance is required before baptism. When John the Baptist

"Saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits meet for repentance."—Mat. iii. 7, 8.

Baptism is for the remission of sins. Many suppose that it is an ordinance which may be attended to after our sins are remitted. Peter did not say so. He said, "repent, and be baptized

every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

If a remission of sins can be obtained without baptism, or before being baptized, with what propriety did Peter command them to be baptized for that purpose? If the doctrine of the Baptists be correct, he would have told them to obtain a remission of their sins by faith in the atonement of Christ, and afterward to be baptized. If a remission of sins can be obtained by unbaptized persons praying for it or being prayed for by others, the commandment through Peter was a perversion of the gospel. When Ananias was sent by a divine command unto Saul, to tell him what he should do to be saved, he said,

"Now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."—Acts xxii. 16.

This is not the doctrine which is commonly preached in our day. The washing away of sins by baptism is a doctrine which is ridiculed and misrepresented by many so-called Christians. What virtue, say they, can there be in water to wash away sins? The virtue is in obeying the commandment of God. It is an ordinance of divine appointment. To God belongs the right to make known unto us how his blessings shall be bestowed upon us. Those who contend against this divine ordinance manifest their folly much more than Naaman the Syrian, when Elisha directed him to go and wash in Jordan seven times, that he might be healed of his leprosy. Naaman said,

"Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?"—2 Kings v. 12.

It was the leprosy of the body which Naaman the Syrian desired to be divested of, but he refused to submit to the simple remedy which was provided for him, until his servant came to him and said,

"My father, if the prophet had bid thee

do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, wash and be clean. Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God, and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."—2 Kings v. 13, 14.

It is the leprosy of the soul, and the remedy which God hath ordained for it, that we desire to call attention to. By this narrative concerning Naaman we may learn this important fact, that God bestows his blessings on his own terms, and will not be dictated to by short-sighted mortals. If we comply with the conditions on which his blessings are offered unto us, he will fulfill his promises, but we can not change his inevitable decrees by our obstinacy. When Jesus commanded the man who had a withered hand, spoken of in Mat. xii., to stretch forth his hand, if he had not obeyed the command, would he have been healed? When Jesus anointed the eyes of a blind man and said unto him, "Go and wash in the pool of Siloam," if the blind man had disobeyed the Savior, would he have received his sight? When Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that they might look upon it who had been bitten with the fiery serpents, would they have been healed if they had not looked upon it? These were special commandments for special purposes, and if the people to whom they were given had been disobedient, they would have forfeited the blessings which were promised only on those conditions. Baptism is spoken of by Isaiah, (iv. 3, 4,) where he says,

"He that remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion."

The time which is here spoken of is yet in the future, for holiness has never characterized every one in Jerusalem at any time since that day. An objection

is sometimes raised against this doctrine by quoting Rev. i. 5, where John, speaking of Jesus, says,

"Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us in His blood."

The objector says, "If we are washed from our sins by the blood of Christ, it is not by baptism that they are washed away." We reply that Christ's atoning blood is the foundation of the whole subject, but his atonement does not wash away the sins of those who do not keep His commandments and who reject the testimony of His apostles. Peter said,

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, and we are his witnesses of these things."—Acts v. 31, 32.

To reject what Christ's witnesses taught, is to reject him. Jesus said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." The blood of Christ hath not washed them from their sins who refuse to be baptized for the remission of sins, and baptism for the remission of sins would be of no avail, if Jesus had not made atonement for sin. Another objection is, that Jesus forgave the sins of some who were not baptized. He said unto a man who was sick of the palsy, "Thy sins be forgiven thee" In reply, we say that it is not shown whether the man had or had not been baptized. He might have been baptized by John. If he had not, his case was only an exception to an established law, which was made so by the authority of Jesus Christ, who is the lawgiver. This case furnishes no excuse for any to reject baptism for the remission of sins. Such excuses are not sanctioned in the Bible. The Pharisees and lawyers were not justified in excusing themselves from being baptized of John; but they

"Rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized of him."—Luke vii. 30.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost fol-

lows baptism for the remission of sins: John the Baptist said,

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."—John iii. 11.

John understood that baptism by water preceded the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and that he was only authorized to baptize with water. Jesus held the authority to baptize with the Holy Ghost, and to ordain others to that authority. It was after Jesus was baptized that the Holy Ghost descended and remained on him. As Jesus had said that the apostles should be witnesses unto him, first in Jerusalem, it is necessary that we should understand what the testimony of Peter was on that occasion. When the multitude came together who were Jews out of every nation, they were confounded because that every man heard the apostles speak in his own language.

"Others mocking, said, these men are full of new wine. But Peter, said, ye men of Judea and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which is spoken by the prophet Joel, and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."—Acts ii. 13-17.

There are some people who say that Peter intended that it should be understood that this prophecy was entirely fulfilled in that day, but this could not be, for the Spirit was not poured out upon all flesh in that day. The 3,000 who were added to the church on that day, could not be called "all flesh." Peter said, "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." He evidently meant that the work of the Spirit which was then manifested was that which was spoken of by Joel.

The Spirit produced the same effect on those who received it at that time, as it will in that day when it will be poured out upon all flesh. Peter intended to show, that the work of the Spirit was the same in those who received it in that day, as it will be upon all flesh in the last days. This is further shown by the fact that he spoke of signs which are to be seen in that day, which were not seen in his day. In his quotation from Joel, he further said,

"And on my servants and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come."—Acts ii. 18-20.

These events are therefore to be coterminous with the pouring out of the Spirit of God, upon all flesh, and were to precede the great and notable day of the Lord. The baptism of the Holy Ghost which the apostles, and all the saints received in their day, "is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," concerning all flesh, in the last days. It was the same baptism wherewith all flesh will be baptized. It was not confined to the apostles. It was for all to enjoy who would obey the gospel. It is a prominent part of the gospel, and is inseparable from it. On the day of Pentecost, Peter did not merely command the people to repent and be baptized, every one of them in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, but in connection therewith he said,

"And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."—Acts ii. 38, 39.

We discover that this promise was very comprehensive. It was a promise unto the people who were then assembled together, that if they would repent

and be baptized for the remission of sins, they might receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, even as the apostles had received it. This is not all. If Peter had merely said, "the promise is unto you," we might have supposed that the rest of mankind could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, but he said, "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." It was not confined to them and their children. Therefore, if our readers are not their children, they are not excluded from receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. The promise is, "to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This includes every person in this age of the world, for they are included among "all that are afar off," and are therefore only required to accept the terms, and perform the duties on which this promise is predicated. The apostolic order by which the Holy Ghost was received after baptism, is taught in the New Testament. We will quote Acts viii. 5-8 as an introduction to the subject.

"Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them, and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city."

What was the cause of their joy? Had they received the Holy Ghost? There are many in our day who have great joy in their religious devotions, and suppose that their great joy is by the gift of the Holy Ghost, and they would probably imagine that the great joy of the Samaritans was from the same source, but in both cases they are mistaken. They had great joy because they "gave heed unto those things which Philip spake." They gave heed unto

"The true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."—John i. 9.

This is not the gift of the Holy Ghost. If it is, then every man has it. It is that common illumination of the Spirit, "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Without this light the world would be filled with violence and sin of every kind as it was before the flood, when mankind rejected the Spirit of God, and the Lord said "my Spirit shall not always strive with man." Those that zealously endeavor to keep all the commandments of God, have great joy, but it is inferior to the joy of faithful saints who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost. It was subsequent to the great joy of the Samaritans that they received the Holy Ghost.

"But when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

Now let it be distinctly understood that when they "received the word of God" and when they were baptized, they had not yet received the Holy Ghost. Therefore receiving the word of God, is not synonymous with receiving the Holy Ghost. They received the word of God by giving heed unto and believing those things which Philip preached, and they received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands of Peter and John.

This is not the way that many pretend that they receive the Holy Ghost, but it is the apostolic doctrine and

practice. It is the doctrine of the New Testament. It is the doctrine of Christ, for he commissioned his apostles, and sent them forth to preach his Gospel, and to be his witnesses in all the world, and they understood how the Holy Ghost was to be received. The schemes of men, by which they pretend that they receive the Holy Ghost, are a delusion. Are the doctrines of uninspired men better than the doctrines which the ancient apostles taught? Can men, by their own wisdom, know more about the gift of the Holy Ghost than Peter and John, who were sent by the apostles from Jerusalem to Samaria, that the Samaritans might receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of their hands? Was it in consequence of their ignorance of modern inventions, that they were not acquainted with an easier way for the people to receive the Holy Ghost? Even Simon the sorcerer did not deny the fact that by the laying on of hands the Holy Ghost was given.

“And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.”—Acts viii. 18, 16.

Acts xix. 1–6 has another explanation of this doctrine as follows:

“Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto 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. And he said unto them, unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.”

We perceive that these disciples were baptized while they were ignorant of the design of baptism as a preparatory work for the reception of the Holy Ghost. Therefore they were re-baptized, and afterwards received the Holy Ghost when Paul laid his hands on them. There was a regular order in adopting citizens into the kingdom of God. The accommodating and irregular systems of the present day are very dissimilar! The power of godliness was connected with the ordinances when they were administered in righteousness by the authority of Jesus Christ. The same blessings and gifts of the gospel are now bestowed upon the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. To convince the believing Jews that the Gentiles might be saved, the Lord poured out the Holy Ghost upon Cornelius and his friends before they were baptized, but the strong prejudices of the Jews against the Gentiles made it necessary. That purpose was thereby fulfilled. Their case was an exception for an extraordinary purpose.

