

MORMON SCRIPTURE—The Articles of Faith, Part VIII

By Marvin W. Cowan

The third LDS Article of Faith says, “all mankind may be *saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.*” Then Article four lists four principles (or laws) and ordinances necessary for salvation. We previously discussed faith and repentance which are the first two principles in Article four. Next is “baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.” The 10th LDS Prophet, Joseph Fielding Smith said, “Baptism is the method, or law, given of the Lord by which the remission of sins shall come” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. I, p. 152).

Mormon Apostle James Talmage wrote, “...Baptism is necessary for salvation; inasmuch as remission of sins constitutes a special purpose of baptism, and as no soul can be saved in the kingdom of God with unforgiven sins, it is plain that baptism is essential to salvation” (*Articles of Faith*, p. 128). And LDS Apostle, Bruce McConkie said, “Baptism serves four purposes: 1. It is for the remission of sins. 2. It admits the repentant person to membership in the (LDS) Church and kingdom of God on earth. 3. It is the gate to the celestial kingdom of heaven. 4. It is the means whereby the door to personal sanctification is opened” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 70).

On the next page McConkie said that the Lord was not baptized for the remission of sins since He had no sin. Then he said, “He (Christ) had to be baptized to gain admission to the celestial kingdom.” But, Jesus Himself declared, “I am the Door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved” (John 10:9). He said He is the Way to the Father (John 14:6) and Paul said He is the only Mediator between God and men (I Tim. 2:5). The Bible does not teach that the One who made all things (John 1:3) needed to be baptized in the earthly water He created in order to qualify Him to enter His Own Heaven!

If baptism remits or cleanses from sin, why does I John 1:7 say, “the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses from *all sin*”? And if baptism can cleanse away sin, why did Christ die on the cross? I Corinthians 15:3 declares, “Christ died for our sins.” Galatians 2:21 also says, “If righteousness came by the law [or by baptism or anything else], Christ died in vain.” Baptism was commanded by our Lord and it is important to do anything He asks us to do, but that doesn’t mean it saves anyone. He taught His disciples to pray (Luke 11:1-4), but prayer doesn’t save anyone either.

Jesus repeatedly taught that those who *believed* on Him would be saved or have eternal life (John 3:15-18, 36; 6:47 etc.). And He cannot deny or contradict Himself according to II Timothy 2:13. Therefore, He did not teach that baptism saves. John 4:2 declares that Jesus did *not* baptize anyone even though his disciples did. If baptism is essential to salvation, why didn’t Jesus baptize? Paul also said in I Corinthians 1:14, “I thank God I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius.” Didn’t Paul want to see people saved? Some claim he only said that because of the divisions in the Corinthian church, which is partly true. But Paul went on to say in verse 17, “For Christ sent me *not to baptize* but to preach the gospel....” If baptism is essential for salvation, why didn’t Christ send Paul to baptize? Verse 21 answers that question when Paul said, “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching [i.e., the message preached] to *save them that believe.*”

And what was the message that Paul preached? He stated it very clearly in verse 23,

“We preach Christ crucified....” Paul never preached that baptism ever saved anyone. Some claim Peter taught that baptism remits sin in Acts 2:38 when he said, “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 Spirit.” The word “for” comes from the Greek word *eis*, which can also be translated “because of.” Even the English word “for” means “because of” sometimes. If someone takes an aspirin “for” a headache, is he taking the aspirin to get a headache or “because of” a headache he has? Acts 2:38 could be translated, “...Be baptized ‘because of’ the remission of your sins” [which were cleansed by faith in Christ’s atoning blood (I John 1:7).]

LDS baptisms must not only be done by immersion (submerging the one baptized) but it must also be done “under the hands of a legal administrator” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 69). A legal administrator is one who has the priesthood in the LDS Church. Joseph F. Smith, the sixth LDS Prophet said, “What is the Priesthood? It is nothing more or less than the power of God delegated to men by which man can act in the earth for the salvation of the human family...by which they may baptize for the remission of sins and lay hands on for the reception of the Holy Ghost, and by which they can remit sin with the sanction and blessing of Almighty God. It is the same power and priesthood that was committed to the disciples of Christ while He was upon the earth...” (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 173).

LDS Apostle, Orson Pratt also wrote, “But who in this generation have authority to baptize? None but those who have received authority in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: All other churches are entirely destitute of all authority from God; and any person who receives baptism or the Lord’s Supper from their hands will highly offend God; for He looks upon them as the most corrupt of all people. Both Catholics and Protestants are nothing less than the ‘whore of Babylon’ whom the Lord denounces by the mouth of John the Revelator as having corrupted all the earth by their fornications and wickedness” (*The Seer*, p. 255).

While Mormonism still teaches all of this, they usually try not to be quite so offensive in the way they proclaim it since they now want to be called Christians along with other churches. In the Bible Jesus never laid His hands on the twelve nor anyone else and gave them “priesthood.” The Bible never even mentions that a legal administrator or someone with “priesthood” is needed in order to baptize or do anything else. Nor is there any record of who baptized the twelve apostles nor of who the twelve baptized. Nor can any Mormon prove that he has the “priesthood” he claims to have because it doesn’t exist. We will discuss LDS Priesthood more when we discuss the fifth Article of Faith.

Next month we will consider the LDS doctrine of baptism for the dead. For those who would like to read more about the LDS view of baptism, my book *Mormon Claims Answered* will be helpful.