

# THE CHRISTIAN

"FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD."—Paul.

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## The Christian.

### IS THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST UNDERSTOOD?

B. U. WATKINS.

(Continued from the "Christian Standard.")

With this view of the subject also accords the text of Matt. v. 17: "Think not I am come to destroy the law, and the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

There were a great many *jots* and *tittles* of the law, the fulfillment of which it would be very hard to find in the gospel. There are numerous bolts, screws, and nails in a complicated structure, the proper use of which none but the architect or engineer can be expected to understand and describe. Yet all of them have their utility, which will be realized and fulfilled when the structure is put to its utmost tension. So we may be certain that every part of the law was needed when the whole system was put to its utmost power of resistance in bringing the nation from the Red Sea to Calvary, through the terrible wars and persecutions of idolatrous nations. And it is as plainly unreasonable to demand of us an explanation of every *jot* of the law, as it would be to solicit the architect of the St. Louis bridge to give definite explanation of every bolt, screw, and nail of that stupendous structure. We know that it answers the purpose of the architect; hence every bolt, screw and nail is justified.

So we know that the law gave a grand introduction to Christ. And as this was the great design of the law, every jot and tittle of the law was justified. None of them passed away from the law, none of them rusted out—but the bridge held up until the Nation was carried clear over to the government of their own expected Prince Messiah!

But to return to John's baptism. It belonged to the legal dispensation. It had the same reference to the gospel that the law had generally. With this difference: It was necessary that the last activities of the law should assume some intensity, in order that it might, in some degree, assimilate itself to the incoming reign. John was the prophet that gave the Jewish ceremonial its grandest similitude to the gospel of Christ. Hence, in his day, he was the greatest prophet born of women; but the least prophet in Heaven's kingdom is greater than he! So, we still know, that the law was not the gospel; and Moses was not the Christ. For we know that the law died only at the death of Christ. And if Jesus himself was a minister of the circumcision (see Rom. xv. 8), as long as he lived in the flesh, how much less could John claim anything more!

John's baptism differed from Christian baptism—

1. In the authority by which it was adminis-

tered. The one was under the law; the other under Christ, and by his authority.

2. Although they were both for remission of sins, they differed in this: John's was a legal, prospective remission; but the remission promised in Christian baptism is instantaneously present.

3. John's baptism was not to initiate the Jews into Judaism, for they were already in it, nor into the coming kingdom of Christ, for it was not then in existence. But Christian baptism initiates penitent believers into Christ.

4. John's baptism meant, in its legal signification, the last act of the law's remissive process. Hence it was not initiatory, but rather completory—the last effort of the law to save men from sin! But Christian baptism is an abiding institution of the Church, for the initiation of its membership. Consequently, it carries with it the notion of remission. For in Christ alone is remission of sins. Hence, whatever brings us into Christ, brings us into remission of sins.

#### OBJECTIONS.

1. If John's baptism was of the law, what shall we say of the baptism of Christ's disciples, in the days of his personal ministry?

Ans. Just the very same that we say of John's: It was under the law, and of the law. For Christ was a minister of the circumcision in the days of his flesh; and his personal ministry was not to relax the authority of the law and the prophets. But had Christ introduced a new law of remission in his personal ministry, it would have had the effect to relax, or let down the authority of the law. And such was no part of his earthly mission.

2. But you do not pretend to say that the Holy Twelve who preached on the day of Pentecost were not baptized with Christian baptism?

Ans. We know the law lived until Christ died. We also know that there was no kingdom of Christ on earth till he died, and rose again, and was crowned King in heaven, and sent down the spirit as witness of the same, on that glorious day. Hence, any baptism previously administered, could not belong to the heavenly reign, which had not yet been inaugurated.

3. How could they preach Christian baptism if they had never submitted to it themselves?

Ans. Christian baptism could not antedate the apostolic commission. And between the commission and Pentecost we hear of no directions for their baptizing each other, before "going into all the world." But as to how they could do this, it is easy enough to see. As the apostles were the first who had authority to perform Christian baptism, they had a right to administer it, by virtue of their commission, irrespective of any qualifications they may or may not have had previously.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

REST in the promise, do not snatch the comforts. Take it from God, do not give it yourself.—J. H. Evans.

#### GOD A REFUGE FOR US.

One autumn day I stood on the sea-coast where the waves, stirred by a recent tempest, dashed furiously upon the rocks. In one place, rushing into a cavern, the surge through an opening in the top sprang in a column of spray and foam high into the air. The sight was so sublime that many persons came from the city to see it. While looking upon the scene exhibiting the ocean in such power and grandeur, I observed that the rocks, even those upon which the surf broke with such fury, were covered with a multitude of very small shells. So, in the very presence of the stormy sea, smitten every instant by the thundering surf, the little shells, clinging with trustful fingers to the great rocks, found shelter and life. Here were creatures, symbols of frailty, having no strength of their own, finding complete safety and refuge by clinging to the immovable rocks, even though the waves in their wildest fury were dashing upon them.

So, thought I, is it between God and ourselves. Our own safety is in clinging to Him. Are you tried by the fierce onset of many difficulties? Cling the closer to the rock of your strength. In trial God is a refuge for us. Does Satan endeavor to overcome you by the fierceness of his temptations? Then cling to the rock of your strength. Nothing can pluck you from God's hand, if you trust in him; even the gates of hell shall not prevail against you if your hopes are fixed upon the Rock of Ages. God is a refuge for us.—Selected.

#### LORD'S DAY SICKNESS.

Day before yesterday was Saturday. It rained. Yesterday was the "first day of the week when the Disciples came together to break bread" in memory of the Saviour. Very many of the disciples were absent. I made inquiry concerning them, and was informed that they were sick. Teachers were absent from their classes in the Lord's day school. The seats of many were vacant at the Lord's table. The occupants were sick. This is Monday. I have just been down street, and while there I saw every one of those sick Disciples entirely recovered, strong and healthful, busily engaged in their daily avocations! This is certainly a strange climate, where good (?) people are suddenly and severely attacked on the Lord's day with a sore malady that lasts but one day! What is the cause, and what is the cure?—Lancelot.

In Mr. Spurgeon's fund of illustrative stories is one of a man who used to say to his wife: "Mary, go to church and pray for us both." But the man dreamed one night that when he and his wife got to the gate of heaven, Peter said: "Mary, go in for both." He awoke and made up his mind that it was time to become a Christian on his own account.

I know of no promise which does not stand upon doctrine.—J. H. Evans.