

Fundamentals of Belief #11A: Baptism

Edited Sermon Transcript
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We will be continuing, this afternoon, in the Fundamentals of Belief series. The last few months now, we have made it through the first ten fundamentals of belief. To repeat some of the history, the original twenty fundamentals that Mr. Armstrong wrote for the Radio Church of God years and years ago, are the exact same fundamentals that we have incorporated for the Church of God, The Eternal today.

We have added six additional fundamentals that have become relevant because of the times in which we live, the things that have happened within the Church, the apostasy that occurred and the falling away from the truth. The additional fundamentals incorporate those things that Mr. Armstrong could never have anticipated ahead of time. It was needful to add and expand to a total twenty-six. They are fundamentals that do not contradict, in any way whatsoever, the first twenty, but work in harmony.

We have gone through those first ten fundamentals and are up to fundamental number eleven. We have seen, through those first fundamentals, who God is, as opposed to every other teaching of every other religion in the world. We have seen what the true God is, the role of the Father and the Son, and what the Holy Spirit is. We have understood who man is, what our nature is. We have understood what sin and law is. We have recognized the role of Jesus Christ, His death, burial and resurrection, and the significance of all of those things in the overall plan of salvation. Then, most recently, we covered the topic of spiritual conversion.

Fundamental number eleven now, has to do with two ordinances: baptism and Passover. Let me read it.

We believe in TWO ORDINANCES for this age; water baptism by immersion, into Jesus Christ (not a denomination) for the remission of sins, following genuine repentance; and Lord's Supper as continuation of the Passover, observed at night on the anniversary of the death of our Saviour, the 14th of Abib.

That is fundamental number eleven. Now, in planning out how I was going to handle the sermons to cover these topics, when I got to number ten and eleven, I had a little bit of a dilemma. You can't talk about spiritual conversion with fundamental number ten, as we have gone through in the last two sermons, without speaking in detail about baptism, the role of what baptism is all about and what it represents.

We have already gone through the details of repentance, of accepting Jesus Christ as personal Savior, of what is required to receive the Holy Spirit, which is the surrender of baptism. We have gone into quite a bit of detail to talk about that, yet fundamental number eleven turns around and talks about the ordinance of baptism again.

Intentionally, what I did was arrange it so that we talked about the spiritual principles of baptism on those last two sermons on spiritual conversion. When we are talking about baptism as an ordinance, we are taking a little bit different of an approach. Today, we do want to focus on the ordinance of baptism. We will save the topic of Passover, and that as an ordinance, as a command of God, for the next sermon.

Let's talk about this ordinance of baptism. First of all, let me ask this: What are we talking about when we speak of an ordinance? Who knows what an ordinance is? What did Mr. Armstrong mean by using the word "ordinance" when he wrote this fundamental of belief?

The dictionary definition of an ordinance has four parts. The dictionary defines it as 1) an authoritative command or order, 2) a custom or practice established by long usage, 3) a Christian rite, or 4) a statute or regulation, especially one enacted by a city government. We are used to city ordinances, aren't we?

When Mr. Armstrong used the term "ordinance" when he spoke of baptism and Passover, what application was he intending? In the sense of God's truth, we are speaking of a ceremony, a ritual—a ritual that God requires as a token of obedience, of recognition and acceptance of His divine authority. We certainly are speaking of "ordinance" in the terms of a Christian rite or a ceremony—a ceremony or ritual that God commands.

We are talking, when we speak of an ordinance, of a physical requirement. It is not something that we just spiritualize away and say has only a spiritual application, that it doesn't require something on a physical basis whatsoever. No, when we are talking about an ordinance, we are talking about a physical requirement to perform a ceremony—a ceremony and ritual that God expects us to act out.

Our fundamental of belief says that there are two ordinances that apply to Christians today. Two ordinances, specifically, are incumbent upon Christians today—physical ceremonies or rituals that God, absolutely, requires of us in the Church.

By comparison, there were many rituals, ordinances and ceremonial rites that were a part of the First Testament, that which was given under the Levitical priesthood to the nation of Israel. There were many rituals required of Ancient Israel under that First Covenant—sacrifices, washings and all of those things that were temporary in nature because they pointed to Christ who would be the fulfillment of those things.

No, we are not talking about the eternal laws of God, not the Sabbath and the Holy Days. We have gone through that in those past sermons on sin and law, to recognize what those laws are that are immutable, everlasting, from the beginning, and will never end. Those things, by comparison, that were created only temporal, for a particular time and purpose, pointed to the fulfillment that would occur through the very life, ministry, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We talked already about the significance of the law of Moses and defining what the law of Moses really included—that the law of Moses included both those spiritual, immutable laws, as well as the temporal laws that were there only to point to Christ.

So yes, that first covenant included a host of ordinances—carnal ordinances that were required for a temporary period of time of God's people and pointed to their fulfillment in Christ. Let's notice Hebrews 9:1–15:

"Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary." Yes, they were ordinances, in that they were physical rituals and ceremonies which were required to be performed. Yet, even though they were physical in nature, they were part of a divine service. They were created by God to picture spiritual things—to make man, His people, His nation, His Church aware of spiritual things. Even though they were physical and carnal in that sense, they were part of a divine service.

Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. [Meaning, it was physical.] For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.

It was a physical, tangible tabernacle. It was built by the hands of men under the instructions of God, according to His specifications, but it was physical. You could put your hands on it. It was not a spiritual tabernacle. It wasn't an eternal thing; it was something that could be handled and seen by human beings.

For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant . . .

All of those things, obviously, had a divine purpose. They were very much a part of a spiritual worship and yet, they were physical, tangible things.

And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people . . .

That, of course, was on the Day of Atonement. It was a ceremony, a ritual which was required. It was an ordinance for the nation of Israel and for the priesthood.

The Holy [Spirit] this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing . . .

That whole process and that ordinance pointed to Christ. It pointed to the fulfillment of that which would be done by our great High Priest in heaven. He would become that perfect and ultimate sacrifice that would make a way for us to be saved from our sins. The first tabernacle was established with the rituals and ordinances that pointed, as a very prophecy, to that fulfillment.

"Which was a figure for the time then present . . ." That is what those things were there for. They were tangible, physical and yet, they were there as an example to point to something else that was going to happen in the future.

Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect . . .

So obviously, that wasn't their reason for existing. It wasn't why God set them up. It wasn't because doing those particular ordinances, fulfilling those physical, ritual obligations, were themselves going to save man or put man in a perfect relationship with God. No, the blood of bulls and goats, all of those sacrifices and rituals of washings did not cleanse the minds and hearts of man from sin. It did not forgive sin. That had to come through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

These ordinances pointed to the very fulfillment of Christ's sacrifice, but God expected them to carry out these rituals. He expected them to practice them in order to point to that very sacrifice that would come.

. . . in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

They were temporary in nature. Again brethren, we are not talking about the immutable, eternal laws of God. Those things existed long before God gave the Levitical priesthood to Israel and gave these commands of these carnal ordinances. Those things were in existence from the beginning. This was a different portion of the law that was set up for a temporary reason only.

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle [Now we are not talking about that physical tabernacle that was made by the hands of man, which contained those physical items and representations. We are talking about a different tabernacle now.], not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Why were all those things written? Why was Israel required to perform physical ordinances, rituals and ceremonies? Not because it was intended to save them at that time, or bring them into a close relationship with God. No, it was to point to the time when Christ would fulfill that role as our High Priest—that through His blood, those who are called and chosen out of this world for a particular purpose according to God's will, would have access to the very throne of God through the redemption of Jesus Christ. That is what it was pointing to. Therefore, those particular carnal ordinances, once Christ fulfilled that very role through His ministry, death and resurrection, were fulfilled and no longer in force.

So if Christ's sacrifice replaced the ordinances of the first covenant, which specific ordinances are in force for Christians today—those who have been placed within the Body, the Church? The reason Mr. Armstrong used the term "ordinance" is because there are two specific rituals—ceremonies—that are required physically, even of Christians today. The first one we are going to talk about is baptism.

Baptism is an ordinance. It is a specific ceremony. It is a ritual that was instituted. By the examples of the New Testament, Christ's instruction and the examples of the apostles, we understand exactly how God intended that ceremony and ritual to be handled.

Our fundamental of belief says, "We believe in TWO ORDINANCES for this age; water baptism by immersion into Jesus Christ (not a denomination) for the

remissions of sins, following genuine repentance . . ." As I said, we have already gone through the attributes of true repentance. We saw that it requires a call, that someone of themselves cannot decide that they are going to be repentant—that they are going to seek forgiveness of God. There is no forgiveness except for God's calling, which then provides the chance to come into a relationship with God.

Someone off the street or anyone who just picks up the Bible, cannot, of themselves, decide that they are going to repent, seek God and be forgiven. Repentance requires an understanding of what we are. It requires us to know what we are in relationship to God. Except for a call and except for a human mind being opened up to understand spiritual things, there is no way that a human being can see himself or herself. That is why it requires a call.

So, first, we receive a call. Then, we have an opportunity to understand how filthy and vile we are by nature and how opposed we are to the perfection of the Father and the Son. Being taught through the chosen servants whom God has provided, we have an opportunity to learn what is required. Having come to that knowledge and understanding then, if we do repent, we have an opportunity to turn and have that perfect relationship with the Son and the Father and receive the Holy Spirit.

The role of baptism, as we have already seen, is the means by which we make that vow, that commitment. We have repented, recognized what we are, decided that we don't want to live after the flesh any longer and that we want a different way. Baptism is the ceremony—the rite, the ritual—that God has intended for Christians in order to make that vow. Let's notice it in Acts 5:30. Let's look at just a few scriptures to refresh our memories in review.

Acts 5:30–32:

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel . . .

Not for any individual to take it or decide on their own accord that they are going to have it. No, Christ was exalted to be the Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

. . . for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy [Spirit], whom God hath given to them that obey him.

Who is it that receives the Holy Spirit? Only those who obey. And who can obey except those who are called?

Romans 8:8–14:

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Who is it then, brethren, that has a relationship with God, whose prayers are truly heard at the very throne of God and are received of Him as sweet incense at His throne? Only those who legitimately have His Spirit—those who have been called and have accepted what they are, have crucified the self and have begun to live a different life. The Holy Spirit is given only to those who begin to walk a different way.

. . . if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. [How simple can that be?] And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you . . .

Who is it that raised up Jesus from the dead? God the Father. The Father is the one who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead.

"If the Spirit of [the Father] . . ." That is what it is saying here—God the Father, the eternal power of this entire universe, creator and sustainer of all that exists, who ". . . raised up Jesus from the dead . . ."

. . . if the Spirit of him [the Father] that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

How important is it, brethren, that we understand and take seriously the gift of the Holy Spirit in this whole process that is involved in baptism? It is a vow. It is entering into the most important relationship, the most important decision that any human being can ever make. It comes only with a call. It comes only by taking it very seriously and making that commitment, recognizing how critical it is to salvation.

Acts 2:36–39:

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now 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?

These were of those who were called. They understood the words that they were hearing from God's chosen servants who were preaching it at this very moment. They were coming to understand that they were guilty, just like each one of us was guilty of the very crucifixion of Christ—as if we had been there at the time, had personally nailed Him to that tree ourselves, and had ridiculed Him at the base of that stake. We are each guilty. These men came to recognize that they were absolutely, personally accountable. They only understood it because they had a call.

Being called, they were "pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Now that I understand my guilt, I don't like it and I don't want to stay in that state. What should I do?

Then Peter said unto them, 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]. 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.

That is who the promise is to, brethren—to those whom He gives the call. So we went through these scriptures in the last two sermons to recognize and to focus on the role of repentance, what it really means to accept Jesus Christ as our Lord, our High Priest and our Savior; and that baptism is required as that which God commanded before we could receive the down payment of the Holy Spirit and begin to live and walk a new way.

We talked about the spiritual elements of baptism. Why, wherefore, and how important it is. Now, we want to talk about the very elements of the ritual, the ceremony itself, and why they have been established the way they are.

Many people disagree. You have got as many different ideas about what baptism is and how it should be performed as you do churches out there. Everyone has their own idea. Obviously, Mr. Armstrong, at the time, felt compelled to put this in as a fundamental of belief because of the wide disagreement of the proper ways to conduct a ceremonial baptism.

Our fundamental says it is ". . . water baptism by immersion, into Jesus Christ (not a denomination) for the remission of sins, following genuine repentance . . ." Well, let me read you what our official baptismal ceremony is like—the ordinance of baptism.

It begins by asking the individual, "Have you repented of your sins?" Remember, that is what we learned already is the first and most important factor of being able to enter into that relationship, that covenant with Christ. We must recognize what we are.

"Have you repented of your sins?" With an affirmative response, the next question is, "Have you accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?" With an affirmative answer, "What is your full name?" Then, repeating that full name, the minister states, "Because you have repented of your sins and accepted Jesus Christ as your Personal Savior, your Lord and Master, your High Priest in heaven, and your soon coming King, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ (which means by His authority) for the remission of all of your sins." Then, the individual is immersed completely under the water.

Immersed completely under the water. It is a physical ritual. It is not something we just spiritualize away and say, "We can just be baptized in mind and in heart, as long as we accept Jesus Christ." It is not a process where we can just sprinkle water or pour a few drops of water over the individual and say they are baptized. No, there are very specific reasons why Mr. Armstrong taught, through the revelation of Jesus Christ, that we are to be immersed completely under the water.

Let's notice what those examples are. You see, that immersion, brethren, represents a burial. Immersion, completely, totally, fully, under the water, represents a burial. It represents the burial of the old self, the carnal self, that mind and heart

which we have each been born with in the flesh, according to God's design and purpose. It is that which is totally opposed to God in every way, that which must be set aside in order to enter into a relationship with God because God can have no part of sin. He can have no relationship, no fellowship with sin.

We each, according to our natural make-up, are totally separated from God. Therefore, in order to have a relationship with the living God, we must "die" in the flesh and we must become a new creature—a new creation. Baptism by immersion represents the literal burial of the old self.

Romans 6:3–11:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? [That is what it is. It is a death ceremony.] Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into 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.

The death, pictured by the immersion, is not the end. That is not where it stops. Obviously, when Christ died and was placed in the tomb, He was buried absolutely and completely; but that was not the end, was it? No, that death was only the first step. It was the hope of the resurrection—that new life—which makes this process worthwhile.

. . . we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection . . .

We are symbolically buried at baptism by going fully under the water. It represents the watery grave. It is our commitment to crucify the self daily from that point forward, and not give license to every one of those lusts and imaginations of our minds and hearts that seek to overwhelm us continually.

It is the commitment to say that we are going to walk on a different path. We are going to walk in newness of life, following Christ and His example, believing His commandments, accepting them and not being a law unto ourselves. We want what He has to offer. We believe that what He is offering is perfect and leads to peace, harmony, happiness, contentment, and fulfillment in every way.

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him [It is killed. It is, literally, killed.], that the body of sin might be destroyed [these carnal natures], that henceforth we should not serve sin.

As long as we live in the flesh, brethren, we continue to be hounded and hampered by those natures which rise up. Yet, through this commitment and this way of life, we have made the commitment and vow that we are not going to walk after that way. We are not going to live after the ways of flesh.

Yes, we are going to fall in weakness, but we are not going to justify it. We are not going to condone sin in ourselves. We are going to continue to fight, to master, to overcome continually, to crucify more everyday, that carnal nature.

"For he that is dead is freed from sin." Yes, when we are dead, when we are in the grave, we have no more thought. There is no more consciousness; therefore, we cannot sin anymore. Isn't that right? So, if we crucify the carnal nature, if we really crucify it, if it is dead, it no longer sins.

For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him . . .

That is why we are willing to die, isn't it? Not because we think it is the end. Obviously, it's because we have a hope for something better. We are willing to give up the life that we have in this flesh because we believe that what He has offered us is better than the things that come by nature within our own members. That is why we are willing to give it up.

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more [He is eternal.]; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

That is the whole significance of baptism—saying we want to be dead to the pulls of our carnal nature and we want to walk in newness of life instead. We want Christ living in us. We want Christ to fill us up, to motivate our thinking and orientation, so that we can have the benefits, physically and spiritually, that come from that new way of life.

Ultimately, what we are really saying is that we want to be with Him for all eternity in that Kingdom. We want eternal life. We want what He has. He was the forerunner. Christ went first and set the example. He gave Himself up physically and He died. He was renewed through the resurrection into eternal life, and that is what we want as well.

Baptism, as a ceremony, as a ritual, pictures that very process. Immersion into the water is the death of the old carnal self which can never have a relationship with God. Therefore, something else has to happen in order to bring us back to life.

Until we actually die in the flesh, Christ returns and we are changed, we will not have the fulfillment of that eternal life as He does now. However, we do have, through the baptismal ceremony and through that process, the opportunity to receive the picture of that eternal life. We have a down payment of that eternal life dwelling within us, in the form of the Holy Spirit. It doesn't make us eternal in the flesh, but it gives us the power to begin to live after the Spirit and not after the flesh.

Colossians 2:10:

And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power [speaking of Christ]: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ . . .

This is exactly what baptism is doing. It is inducting the individual into the very Body of Christ, into spiritual Israel. It is a spiritual circumcision; that is what is happening.

Buried with him in baptism [That is what occurs.], wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

When you come up out of the water, having gone through that ceremonial death, the crucifixion of the old self and the old man, it is like that resurrection. Yes, you still come up out of the water; you are still physical; and you are still breathing air. You still have your carnal nature; but now, through that ritual, you have made that commitment that you are going to war a spiritual warfare from that time forward. You are going to put on more and more of the very mind and heart of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Does the actual ritual, just the immersion part of it, provide the gift of the Holy Spirit? No, it doesn't, because it is only the first part of the baptismal ordinance.

Before we get to that, a few examples just to substantiate again full immersion as the method that we used in the Church and that Mr. Armstrong always taught from the beginning—as opposed to those denominations that just sprinkle water on the individual or just pour some water over the head. What else, but full immersion into the water, can possibly represent a burial? That is why the Church always taught that full immersion is the only appropriate means to baptize a new member. Let's look at three examples within the New Testament.

John 3:22–23:

After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

Now, if John the Baptist were not practicing full immersion for baptism, then why was it that he, Jesus Christ, or any of His disciples then, went specifically to a place where there was much water? If all that was required was to pour a little scoop of water over the head or sprinkle with the fingers, then why was it required to be a place where there was a large body of water?

Anybody who wants to, can spiritualize or rationalize this away. Certainly, that is very possible and people do it continually; but if you think logically about it, it makes perfect sense, doesn't it? ". . . because there was much water there . . ."

Matthew 3:13–16:

The very baptism of Jesus Himself.

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad 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 fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water . . .

If He went up straightway out of the water, then He must have been in the water, don't you think? He wasn't just standing on the bank of the Jordan River, being sprinkled by John the Baptist. No, He was down in the water—obviously referring to full immersion.

. . . And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him . . .

The Greek word *baptizo*, for baptism, means "dip, immerse, to dip oneself or to wash." How do we know for sure it means immersion in this case? Well, from a technical standpoint, *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* by Arndt and Gingrich says that in non-Christian literature, the word *baptizo* means to plunge, to sink, to drench, to overwhelm.

You are not just talking about a concept of sprinkling or pouring. No, it is an immersion that is taking place. That word means exactly the same thing as when it is used concerning Christian spiritual baptism as well.

Acts 8:36–39:

And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water [This is the example where Phillip baptized the eunuch after preaching the gospel to him.]: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

Phillip, in the example recorded here by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, went down into the water; they baptized and it was a full immersion process. Full immersion is the only thing that can represent a burial.

When someone is buried, don't you put dirt over the entire body? Aren't they buried six feet down? Was Christ, when He was in the tomb, not completely within the tomb and was that tomb not sealed absolutely? If we are supposed to follow

within the example of Jesus Christ and we are talking about a ceremonial ritual, an ordinance that represents the death of the old self, then why would we believe and how could we ever believe that there is anything acceptable except full immersion in the watery grave? It is the only thing acceptable.

The next part of that baptismal ceremony is the laying on of hands. The baptism itself, death itself in the watery grave, does not of itself denote the gift of a new life. It only represents the dying of the old self. So something else has to happen as well, to complete the ceremony, to complete the ordinance, in order to truly begin to walk and to have that relationship with God. That is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit comes only by the laying on of hands.

That is the next important, critical part of the baptismal ceremony. After the individual comes up out of water, then is the ceremony where the minister lays hands upon that individual. He prays and asks God to impart the Holy Spirit, the down payment of that Spirit within his mind and heart, to begin to work with him, lead him, give him the power to walk a different way that he never had within himself before—the opportunity not only to understand the truth, the commandments of God, the requirement for keeping and obeying them, but the very power to be able to begin to live up to it.

It is the gift of the Holy Spirit, working upon and within the mind and the heart, which provides that opportunity to really change our lives. How many people, brethren, in this world, make their New Year's resolutions and set personal goals for themselves? They know that they want to be a better person. They know that they want to have the happiness and the peace that comes from living up to a certain moral standard and requirement. So, they set goals for themselves and make resolutions. They say, "I am not going to do this anymore; I am going to begin to do this."

Then, how many people are absolutely demoralized to find that they can't live up even to the simplest things that most of them set? We highly esteem and honor individuals that do have that kind of tenacity, don't we? We honor ones who do put themselves on a regimen to accomplish a goal.

Maybe, it is to lose weight. Maybe, it is to begin to go to school and to get a degree later in life. Maybe, it is to have a better relationship with certain family members. Certain human beings can use their own personal will power and they can accomplish some incredible things. Don't we hold them in high esteem, when we see an individual who actually has the tenacity to love something enough that they are

willing to make changes in their life to accomplish it? We all sit back and say, "Wow, that is really significant." Why is it significant? Because most human beings can't do it. Most people cannot do it because the pulls of habit within the flesh are stronger than their will to make significant changes in their lives. That is the way we all are by nature.

Even more so, when we are talking about a calling to the knowledge of the true God, His commandments, His perfect will and His way of life, which is totally opposed to the things that come to our natural minds, we have no opportunity whatsoever to live up to those things, except some power is given to us.

Otherwise, we can will all we want, according to the flesh, and we will never make a change. We will spin our wheels in the gravel; we will stand still and even go backward. We will get frustrated and it just won't happen.

Even with receiving the down payment of the Holy Spirit, I promise you, it is a continual battle. It doesn't come easy after that, in any way, shape, form or fashion. It takes a continual battle because those carnal natures are still with us and fighting. The pulls of the flesh and the habits are still there, fighting against the Spirit in every way.

We have to will with the Spirit, to let that Spirit take pressure to begin to lead our minds more and more, to take precedence over the flesh. Baptism is not just the end and from that time forward, it becomes an easy road. Not at all. Once inducted into the Body of Christ, maybe more pressure than ever is placed.

I have seen a number of my close friends, once being baptized, within weeks or months, fail completely. Satan will go after you all the more from that time forward. God provides the protection for those who will to fight. That Spirit will give the means to overcome, but we have to want it and we have to want it more than anything else in our lives.

The laying on of hands is the next part of that ritual by which we receive the down payment of the new life. Having died in the watery grave, the new life representing the resurrected Christ beginning to dwell within us, happens by the laying on of hands.

Acts 8:12–19:

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 [Spirit]: (For as yet [it] was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

They had been baptized. They had done part of the ritual—the requirement to lay down the self in the watery grave—but they still had not received the Holy Spirit because it requires the laying on of hands.

"Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy [Spirit]." The Holy Spirit is the down payment of a new life. Jesus Christ, the very Spirit of the Son and the Father, entered into that individual and began to live a new life. That Spirit is the down payment of eternal life dwelling in the flesh. Can we even comprehend that concept really?

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy [Spirit]. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy [Spirit] was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy [Spirit].

That was someone who wasn't there for the right reason. He was someone who recognized the power. He saw that there was something unique and different, something that he could not deny, but he had a totally wrong orientation towards it. He was there among them for the wrong reasons. Have we not experienced the same thing?

Hebrews 6:1–2:

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ . . ." I have commented on this before. What are we speaking of? Putting aside the doctrine of Christ? Doing away with it? No.

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works . . .

Not going back and re-proving the things that we already accepted. Not going back and second-guessing what we were originally taught as truth from the beginning of the work of these last days. Not going back and second-guessing or trying to technically prove it again. That is what the apostle is saying here.

". . . leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ . . ." Accepting what we had, still believing it is true, not questioning it again. Let's go on now with that foundation and do something else.

. . . let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands . . .

So obviously, baptism and the laying on of hands was considered a very fundamental doctrine. It was taught from the beginning. What he is saying is, "We shouldn't be going back and second-guessing whether we are doing it right." Or, "Maybe we have been in error in how to conduct a baptism."

Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

All of those fundamental pillars of the truth were called into question in the first century church from those who began to second-guess the original teaching they received—just as all of these very things have been called into question again by the last day church of those who were baptized in this very ceremonial ordinance.

They accepted the Jesus Christ as He was preached—Christ who was the personification of all of the commandments and the laws of God, the Sabbath, the Holy Days, the health laws, tithing and all of those things that we received together as a package. Through baptism, they accepted those things as the representation and fulfillment of Jesus Christ.

Yet some, given access to the Holy Spirit through that very ceremony, went back and questioned it some time later. They began to have second thoughts. The apostle is addressing that very weakness of human flesh, that orientation of questioning, second-guessing and the desire to change.

. . . let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

No, brethren, we shouldn't try to lay that foundation again. We have that foundation. We should be spending our time now, building upon the foundation that we originally accepted. Baptism and the laying on of hands is a part of that foundation.

We talked about the concepts of repentance, of accepting Jesus Christ. Let's look at a few more scriptures, because fundamental eleven also references being baptized by immersion, ". . . into Jesus Christ (not a denomination) . . ." Let's look at that for a minute.

When someone is baptized, when they go through this ordinance commanded of Christians—they are buried in the watery grave, they come up committed to live a different way, and they receive the laying on of hands and the imparting of the Holy Sprit for the first time to dwell within them—they are truly inducted into the Body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12–13:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . .

It is through baptism, brethren, that a human being becomes a part of the literal Body of Christ. It is only through that physical ordinance commanded of Christians today.

. . . by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

What is the common denominator that makes anyone a part of Christ? It is having—living within them—the very manifestation of Jesus Christ by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the key ingredient that allows human beings to be a part of Christ and that Body. Christ is manifested in the Church and that Church is His Body. Notice it in Ephesians 1:20–23:

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body . . .

Mr. Raymond Cole is going to go into great detail at the Feast this year, I know, on this very topic of the manifestation of the Body of Christ and its attributes. I am looking very much forward, myself, to hearing those tapes.

. . . hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

When baptized into one body, it is the Body of Christ. It does come through the gift of the Holy Spirit which is that which binds us all together and makes us one. It is the Spirit of truth. It is not a divided Spirit. It is not a process that allows human beings to continue to seek their own ways according to their own minds, according to the flesh and the old body that was supposed to have been crucified in the watery grave, and then having a pretense of thinking that we are all in Christ.

We don't all believe the same things. We have divergent opinions on this doctrine and that doctrine, but we are all in Christ—as if the mind and the Body of Christ, which is the Church, is literally divided. So we call Christ schizophrenic. We say that His body is fighting and pulling within itself and tearing itself apart continually.

Is that the Christ that you are worshiping? Is that the Christ that you believe was commissioned by the Father to do a work on this earth? That is not the Christ I worship. The Christ I worship, brethren, is one who is unified and has a sound mind. He has a unified mind and body that work together in harmony to support the work and the mission of the head of that Body, which is Christ Himself.

When baptized into that Body, we receive the down payment of the Spirit that allows us to begin to walk in newness of life in the resurrected Christ. It allows us to think according to the resurrected Christ, in harmony with those who are preaching the resurrected Christ. The sign of that Church and the remnant of God's Church is the unity of Spirit. They share the Spirit. It is the single Spirit that unifies the Father

and the Son and it is also the Spirit that unifies every single human being led by that same Spirit.

To whatever extent we believe that the Father and the Son are unified, we must expect the Church to be unified. Do you really believe that the Father and Son have differing opinions concerning doctrine and what is truth? Or, are they wholly unified in mind and in purpose?

If so, brethren, then how can anyone led of that same Spirit—the same Spirit that unifies the Father and the Son—have any other manifestation but the same unity of purpose? Not only one with another in the physical body, but also in the orientation of what is right and true concerning doctrine.

No, brethren, those who want to preach division as acceptable have wholly rejected the real Christ. Christ is not divided and He never will be. Even if we are accused of being exclusivists and lacking in love, we will not be deterred. We will not accept and tolerate the concepts that come out of all of these other splinter groups—those who should know better.

I don't intend to give up my crown, my opportunity for a place in that family and I don't think you do either. We are not going to deny that Christ by saying that His Spirit is one that allows division.

Colossians 1:24:

Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church . . .

Jesus Christ's body is the Church. It is not a church denomination. It is not a denomination of any religion. I am sure that is exactly what Mr. Armstrong was dealing with in all of his early writings. I am sure people wanted to define what the Church was and what configuration it was, thinking they were being baptized into a denomination to become a Lutheran, Baptist, Presbyterian or any other denomination. That is not the baptism of Jesus Christ. The legitimate baptism and ordinance that He has ordained is that which baptizes one into the literal Body of Christ and not into a denomination.

Romans 8:11–14 again. We read this earlier, but let's read it again:

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead [The Spirit of the Father. If the Spirit of God the Father] dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die . . .

Those of us who have become baptized are those who don't want to die. We recognize that to live, to really live, requires an orientation that can only come by receiving the Holy Spirit.

. . . if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

". . . led by the Spirit . . ."—the down payment of which is received at baptism and begins to dwell within you. If we cultivate it and don't squelch it, it can grow. If we are willing to continue to crucify the self, then that Spirit will grow and we will receive an ever-increasing measure of the Holy Spirit within us. It will give us incredible power to overcome the self, if we don't quench that very Spirit.

Being baptized into Christ does not mean being baptized into a denomination, even into a physical organization. Make no mistake about it; those who have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and are being led by that Spirit, are unified in nature. They have the same orientation to the undeniable Christ who acts in perfect harmony with the Father, and with an absolute, undeniable doctrine—which is truth—which makes allowance for nothing else to contradict. It is truth and there is only truth; it is absolute.

Those who are led by the Spirit will be espousing that truth; therefore, those who are led by the same Spirit will congregate together. John 10 tells us that there is a time when He will pull His scattered sheep into one fold. We don't have that now, considering all of the firstfruits who are scattered about this world. We look for the day when those who have made that commitment at baptism, will be reclaimed.

At one time, they believed it. For different, varying reasons now, they have scattered; they have been discouraged, lost hope and have been deceived.

We look for the time when they will quit quenching the Spirit and begin again to seek Christ and hear the voice that He will speak. There was also promised to be a remnant, brethren, and I guarantee you, that remnant is speaking the same thing in unity and harmony of mind, purpose and will.

Being with the church, being next to the church, and attending church services does not make one a part of the Body of Christ. It is only the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that actually makes you a part of that Body.

So, it is not a question of being baptized into a denomination of a church or just coming to services every week. No, only those have Christ who have Him dwelling within them through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In past sermons, we have seen the necessary elements of baptism. God ordained it as the means to make that vow, to prove that we want a different way. We have looked at all the spiritual aspects of baptism—why it is required, the elements of repentance and of accepting Jesus Christ, knowing who Christ is before we can accept Him, and laying down the physical life.

Today, we have looked at the physical elements of the ordinance—why it requires immersion into a watery grave and what that represents, and why it requires the laying on of hands in order to receive the down payment of the Holy Spirit. What is it all about?

Galatians 2:20:

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me . . ." That is what happens at baptism, brethren; we crucify the self; we kill the self. Yet, it is a symbolic death because we continue to live in the flesh. However, we begin to live a different way, to seek a different lifestyle.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

When we come to recognize the perfect plan of God, the reasons that He ordained every law, every command and every ordinance for Christians today, what a beautiful, glorious picture.

If we recognize, brethren, the value of baptism as an ordinance, we can receive again further appreciation for that vow that we have already made or for that vow that we should make, if we recognize that God has revealed it to us and has called us. These things are critical, brethren, for our salvation.

Next time, we will talk about the second part of fundamental number eleven, which concerns the Passover.