

GOSPEL GUIDE

UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST?
HOW CAN I, EXCEPT SOME MAN SHOULD GUIDE ME? (ACTS 8:30,31)

In This Issue:

Love That Condemns • 1

Conversion • 3

Isaiah Shows
the Foolishness
of Idolatry • 4

Is Sprinkling
Baptism? • 5

Balaam • 6

Consequences
of Denying the
Word of God • 8

Influence • 8



Love That Condemns

LOVE IS ESSENTIAL to our happiness and well-being on earth. A home not bound by strong ties of love and devotion is a tragic corruption of the sacred institution of marriage. The child who is not loved may often become a problem child. Love is also essential to our eternal well-being. When Christ was asked, “Which is the first commandment of all?” He answered, “The first of all the commandments is, “Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:28-30). God so loved us that he gave his Son to die for us. We are to show our love for him by honor, reverence, obedience, service. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15.) “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:8).

But we must with care choose what we love, for some love can condemn eternally.

1. Love of the world. We may have a proper regard for the good earth created by God for our good, but we are not to love that which is characteristic of the world John shows how foolish is such a love.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof:

After 33 years of publication in printed form, GOSPEL GUIDE now appears in electronic form. It is an eight page publication designed to teach basic principles of the gospel of Christ.

Mail Address:
305 Coffee Avenue NE
Russellville, AL 35653 US

e-mail Address:
Gospel-Guide@MyWay.com

web page:
www.gospel-guide.org

Editor: Billy Norris

LOVE THAT CONDEMNS

but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17).

Love of the world is foolish because one cannot love God and the world at the same time. (Matthew 6:24). Love of the world is a low, base, lustful love. Love of the world is a wasted love, for the world is doomed to destruction. But many have chosen the world as the object of their affections. Some who have at one time shown a love for God have turned their love to the world. “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Timothy 4:10).

2. Love of pleasure. In pointing out the perilous times of the last days Paul enumerates the sins that will characterize those days. “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy ...traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:1-4). Some pleasures

may be sinful within themselves—pleasures derived from satisfying the lust of the flesh. Other pleasures may be seemingly harmless, and yet become sinful when love for them is greater than love for God. The pleasure may be nothing more than occupying a good, comfortable easy chair when the saints are assembled to worship their Father (Hebrews 10:25). The pleasure may be a visit by relatives or friends, a picnic, a trip, a little more sleep, a ball game—perhaps harmless within themselves but deadly sinful when preference is given to them, and love for them is greater than love for God.

It is said that there is a strange plant in South America which finds a moist place and sends its roots down, and becomes green for a little while, until that spot becomes dry. Then it draws itself out and rolls on to another moist spot, where it repeats the same process. After all its wanderings it is only a bundle of dry roots and leaves. Those who seek the pleasures of the world, drink and thirst again. They find no true contentment, and their lives are as bundles of unsatisfied desires and hopeless thirsts.

3. Love of money. Paul places this love as the root of all evil. Many have sold their souls because of it. “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For

the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:8-10). Balaam loved “the wages of unrighteousness.” (2 Peter 2:15). Gehazi lied in order to obtain a talent of silver and two changes of garments. The lie brought him two talents of silver and two changes of garments, but also leprosy for himself and his seed forever. He went out from the presence of Elisha a leper as white as snow (2 Kings 5:20-27). Judas, one of the twelve, loved money enough to steal (John 12:6), and enough to betray his Master for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16). But that which he thought he wanted so much he threw away and went out and hanged himself (Matthew 27:3-5).

Good may come out of the wise and proper use of money, but evil is in the love of it. One does not have to be wealthy to love it. One who has little or none of it may love it more inordinately than one who has far more. The love of it even causes people to rob God of that which is rightfully His (Malachi 3:8,9).

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...” (2 Timothy 3:1,2). A group traveling in Japan heard a bird that seemed to have for its only note, “Me! Me! Me! “ They called it “the me bird.” People may prove themselves to be a species of these birds. They may feel little or no obligation for others. Their interests, their desires, must come first, for the whole universe was made solely for

LOVE THAT CONDEMNS

them. Jesus, however, laid down a different principle when he said, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). Paul further said, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3). The one who applies this teaching will not have to bestow love on self, for there will be many others, who in true appreciation and esteem, will bestow an abundant love.

5. Love of preeminence. Diotrephes is a notable example of such love. "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbideth them that would, and casteth

them out of the church" (3 John 9,10). This type of love is the very opposite of humility required by the Lord. Men may seek preeminence on their own, but those who humble themselves in the sight of the Lord will be lifted up (James 4:10). This ambitious love for preeminence has caused much heartache. It has brought wars. It was a basic cause in the development of the Catholic hierarchy. Different bishops sought preeminence over others, until finally the bishop of Rome prevailed and was acclaimed the pope, the "universal father."

6. Love of praise. "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42, 43). Through the ages men have valued the praise of men above the praise of God, and have sought to please men rather than God. King Saul finally admitted his sin in not destroying the Amalekites and all their pos-

sessions, as God told him to do, by confessing to Samuel, "I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice" (1 Samuel 15:24). We have known people who refused to obey the gospel, even when they knew their responsibility and wanted the forgiveness of their sins, because they were afraid that they would offend friends, or other members of their family. Jesus has taught that we are to have no fear of men, but that we are to fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28).

7. Love of titles. In condemning the Pharisees Jesus said that they loved to be called of men, "Rabbi, Rabbi" (Matthew 23:6,7). In the scriptures "reverend" is used only in reference to God (Psalm 111:9), but men have applied this as a title to themselves.

God's word clearly lets us know what we are to love, but with equal clarity points out to us what is not to be the object of our affections. — BN

Conversion

"FOR THIS PEOPLE'S HEART is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matthew 13:15). "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3.)

Conversion, an Act of Man

Much of the religious talk that we hear concerns conversion. While the need for conversion is admitted, and the evident concern of most religious people is lauded, we also must hasten to add that most of the talk of conversion is not Bible talk at all, and most of the time very little Bible is given for what men call conversion. According to

ISAIAH SHOWS THE FOOLISHNESS OF IDOLATRY

“He cuts down cedars for himself, And takes the cypress and the oak; He secures it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it. Then it shall be for a man to burn, For he will take some of it and warm himself; Yes, he kindles it and bakes bread; Indeed he makes a god and worships it; He makes it a carved image, and falls down to it. He burns half of it in the fire; With this half he eats meat; He roasts a roast, and is satisfied. He even warms himself and says, “Ah! I am warm, I have seen the fire.” And the rest of it he makes into a god, His carved image. He falls down before it and worships it, Prays to it and says, “Deliver me, for you are my god!” (Isaiah 44:14-17). He prays to his god which is nothing more than a lifeless chunk of wood. Jeremiah said, “O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

CONVERSION

most religious teachers, conversion is a miraculous change brought about by the operation of the Holy Spirit in the person, for the person himself is utterly incapable of any initiative in the matter of conversion. From the first passage above, however, it becomes immediately apparent that the change Jesus stressed comes about as a result of hearing, seeing, and understanding the will of God. Furthermore, it is not, as some say, a sign that God has pardoned sins, but an act on man's part which will gain for him the pardon of God, called healing in Matthew 13:15.

From the second passage used it is clear that conversion is a responsibility enjoined upon man, not an act performed upon man, for in the verse used Jesus was showing his disciples what they needed to do, or whom they needed to imitate, in order to be greatest in the kingdom, not what God does for men to make them great in the kingdom. Another passage which can serve a useful purpose in this study is Acts 3:19: “Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out “ Because the remission or blotting out of sins is the blessing promised in this verse and in Acts 2:38, it seems reasonable that the apostle Peter would give the same instructions. In one case he said to repent and be baptized; in the other, to repent and be converted. While repentance is common to both verses, the other requirement appears to vary until we realize that baptism is surely involved in bringing about

the conversion of the individual. We realize the part baptism plays in the change when we remember that baptism into Jesus and his death is what men obey when they become free from sin and rise to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4, 17). Yes, conversion does involve man's obedience, for the change effected in conversion involves man's will, unless, of course, we say that God converts an unwilling convert in opposition to the teaching of the entire Bible.

Man, a Free Moral Agent

Conversion, in fact, requires the free moral agency of man, otherwise, it would not be Bible conversion at all, but compulsion. The American Standard Version makes it clear in Acts 3:19, and Matthew 18:3 that conversion is a willing act on man's part by its use of the verb “turn.” Man has the choice of turning or not turning; his turning or failing to turn is not, therefore, a predestined act of God. Conversion also requires the understanding on the part of the individual. Unless a man understands his sinful condition and the Divine remedy for his condition, he cannot be converted. Jesus indicated in Matthew 13:15 that an understanding of God's will is a requirement for conversion to take place. The Word of God is also a requirement of conversion, for without it there can be no understanding of God's will. In this connection, the Psalmist in Psalm 19:7 said, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” How does the Word convert the soul? A study of the Word reveals to the person his undone condition and God's pre-

CONVERSION

scription for rectifying it: the Word gives the necessary understanding so there will be sufficient incentive for turning and knowledge of how to turn. There was gospel preaching, either private or public, in every case of conversion in the Book of Acts, just as Jesus had required in giving the commission (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:46-47). Since men seem so much determined to involve a miraculous operation of the Spirit in conversion and drawing men to God, let us also add that God draws men in the same way that He converts them—through teaching them, giving them an understanding of His will (John 6:44-45). A final requirement of conversion is the actual turning in obedience to the Word of God. Mere knowledge of

the Book is not enough. God wants men taught so that they can obey. It always follows that one cannot be taught incorrectly and baptized correctly. The quality of the conversion is always determined by the quality of the teaching. After men have been taught enough that they know to obey and want to obey, they should obey unto the salvation of their souls. (Hebrews 5:8-9).

The Changes Involved

If conversion is a change or a turning, what changes are involved? There is the initial change of principle or guide in life, brought about by hearing the Word of God. When the person allows the Word to guide, the rule of sin as a guiding principle in life is canceled. The parable of the sower shows that the Word must become his permanent guide. Hearing God's Word

produces faith, which changes the heart and thereby cancels the love of sin (Romans 6:17). The believer is then moved to repent of his sin and alter his conduct, thereby canceling the practice of sin (Acts 26:20.) The Bible also teaches that there must be a change of relation, brought about by baptism into Jesus Christ, which cancels the guilt of sin (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 5:17). These are the changes involved in the conversion of every person whose conversion is genuine.

The Bible also teaches that there are consequences of conversion, demands that the Lord makes of us who have been converted to Jesus Christ. Those of us who have been truly converted need to study the Bible to learn our obligations as converted people and then perform them. — Bobby Graham

Is Sprinkling Bible Baptism?

THERE ARE, I SUPPOSE, many millions of people who sincerely believe the answer to our question is “Yes.” They were sprinkled, either at infancy (a subject to be considered in a later article) or later in life, and are confident that they have been baptized. Assuming that we all believe only BIBLE BAPTISM is pleasing to God (a far fetched assumption?), and therefore of any spiritual benefit, our question is of great importance.

The Meaning of “Baptizo”

When appealing to word definitions on this subject, someone will say, “I can prove by ‘Mr. Webster’ that sprinkling is baptism!” Well, there are two things to be consid-

ered here. (1) “Mr. Webster” defines words in accordance with their common useage. (2) The New Testament was written in the Greek language. If the Greek word (baptizo) for baptize would not allow sprin-

klung or pouring when the New Testament was written, then neither will “baptize” permit such today.

The word BAPTIZE or BAPTISM is not actually translated, but is “transliterated” (“To represent or spell in the characters of another alphabet”—Web.) from the Greek word BAPTIZO. The meaning of that word can be of considerable help to us in resolving our question; therefore, let us give some time to it.

Use of “Baptizo”

in Greek Literature

ARISTOTLE, B.C. 384 — “They say that the Phoenicians, who inhab-

BALAAM

Balak, the king of Moab, offered Balaam—considered as one with special powers—an attractive reward if he would curse the children of Israel. Balaam, accepted Balak’s offer, but every time he opened his mouth God saw to it that he blessed instead of cursing the children of Israel. Read Numbers chapters 22 through 25. Chapter 25 shows Israel turning to idolatry and satisfying the lust of the flesh. The apostle John writing to the compromising church in Pergamos referred to Balaam and his works. “But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, *who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality*” (Revelation 2:14). Balaam, “who loved the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Peter 2:15), conceived a way to curse the children of Israel and pad his pocketbook.

If the influence of Balaam was in the church in Pergamos, there is the possibility that such an influence could find its way into the church today—if the price is right.

“For the **love of money** is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10).

SPRINKLING?

ited the so-called Gadira, sailing four days outside of the Pillars of Hercules with an east wind, came to certain desert places full of rushes and sea-weed; which, when it is ebb-tide, are not BAPTIZED, but when it is flood-tide, are overflowed.” (Wonderful Reports).

JOSEPHUS, A.D. 37 — “Continually pressing down and BAPTIZING him while swimming, as if in sport, they did not desist till they had entirely suffocated him.” (Antiquities, Bk.15).

PLUTARCH, A.D. 50 — “And, dying, they filled the marshes with blood, and the lake with dead bodies; so that, until now, many barbaric bows, and helmets, and pieces of iron breastplates, and swords, are found BAPTIZED in pools” (Life of Sylla).

LUCIAN, A. D. 135 — “And if the winter’s torrent were bearing one away, and he with outstretched hands were imploring help, to thrust even him headlong, BAPTIZING (him), so that he should not be able to come up again” (Rimon, or The Man-Hater).

“Baptizo” as Understood by Lexicographers

1. Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine periods (from B. C. 146 to A.D. 1100), by E. A. Sophocles — “Baptizo, (*bapto*), to dip, to immerse, to sink, to be drowned, as the effect of sinking.”

2. In a letter to J. B. Briney (1889) Prof. J. H. Thayer says, “As to the meaning of BAPTIZO – to which your subsequent questions

relate — all reputable lexicographers are now agreed that its primary meaning is ‘to immerse.’”

3. In that same year (1889) Prof. M. W. Humphreys, then of Vanderbilt University, said, “There is no STANDARD Greek English lexicon that gives sprinkle or pour as meaning of BAPTIZO.”

4. Prof. W. S. Tyler of Amhurst College said, in that same year, “I do not know of any good lexicon which gives SPRINKLE as a rendering of BAPTIZO.”

(The four preceding statements taken from FORM OF BAPTISM by J. B. Briney).

Statements of Religious Leaders

BLOOMFIELD (Episcopalian) — “He (Christ) underwent the rite of baptism by being plunged into the water” (Notes, Vol. I, p. 158).

HOLTZMAN (Presbyterian) — “What led him to the Jordan was his business as a BAPTIZER. This action, consisting in complete immersion...”

LANGE (Lutheran) — “And were baptized, immersed, in Jordan, confessing their sins.”

HUGO GROTIUS (Arminian) — “That this rite was performed, not by sprinkling, but by IMMERSION, is indicated by the peculiarity of the name, the places chosen for its observance, and the many allusions of the apostles, which cannot be referred to sprinkling.”

CALVIN (Presbyterian) — “... it is evident that the term BAPTIZE means to IMMERSE, and that this was the form used by the primitive church.” (Institutes, Vol. III, p. 344).

SPRINKLING?

DR. ALBERT BARNES (Presbyterian) in Notes on Romans — “It is altogether probable that the apostle in this place had allusion to the custom baptizing by IMMERSION. This cannot, indeed, be proved, so as to be liable to no objection; (can anything be so proved? — cgm) but I presume that this is the idea which would strike the great mass of UNPREJUDICED readers” (caps. mine — cgm).

ADAM CLARKE (Methodist) — “Alluding to the IMMERSION practiced in the case of adults, wherein a person appeared to be BURIED under water, as Christ was BURIED in the heart of the earth. His rising again the third day, and their emerging from the water, was an emblem of the resurrection of the body.” (Com. on Colossians 2:12).

History of Affusion

The question arises, if sprinkling or pouring is not authorized by the Sacred Scriptures, then when, and by what authority did such begin? Concerning this Dr. Philip Schaff says, “The change was gradual and confined to the Western churches. The Roman Churches, as we have seen, backed by the authority of Thomas Aquinas (Italic mine -cgm), “the Angelic Doctor,” took the lead in the thirteenth century “ (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, p. 51).

DR. BLUNT (Presbyterian) says: “The INNOVATION of affusion or pouring water on the baptized, afterward began in the Latin

Church, and has become the general Western usage” (Dictionary of Doctrinal and Historical Theology, new edition, p. 75).

HEFELE (Catholic Bishop) — “The church (RCC-cgm) has always been tender towards the sick; she has always hastened to confer baptism upon them, because it is necessary to salvation; and for that reason SHE INTRODUCED CLINICAL BAPTISM.” (Caps. mine — cgm). (History of Church Councils, p. 153).

Jesus Christ claims “ALL AUTHORITY” (Matthew 28:18), and mankind is warned not to go beyond His doctrine (2 John 9). We are cautioned that WHATSOEVER we do, “in word or in deed,” is to be authorized by Him (Colossians 3:17). These statements, by men who might have good reason to diligently seek BIBLE AUTHORITY for other than IMMERSION for baptism, acknowledge that sprinkling and pouring for baptism stand only in THE AUTHORITY OF MEN!

Clear Statements in English Scripture

In Romans 6:4 the apostle Paul states, “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.”

In Colossians 2:12 the inspired apostle affirms that the Colossians were “BURIED with Him in baptism, wherein ye are also risen with Him...” Thus, in baptism there is a BURIAL and RESURRECTION,

in likeness to the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Is there any such likeness in SPRINKLING?

There are other statements in our English translations which imply that baptism is more than sprinkling or pouring a small amount of water on the “candidate.” We are told that “John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there “ (John 3:23). In Acts 8:38 we are told that “they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” Sprinkling neither requires “MUCH water,” nor does it require either the “candidate” or the administrator to go “down into the water.” However, a BURIAL in water would require both!

Conclusion

In the light of all this, to conclude that the action of New Testament baptism is anything other than IMMERSION, is to go contrary to the common use of the word BAPTIZO in the days of the writing of the New Testament; contrary to the most reputable lexicographers; contrary to some of the most notable religious scholars; and contrary to clear and easily understood statements in the English text of the New Testament. We thus conclude that the answer to our question is “NO, sprinkling is NOT BIBLE BAPTISM; such can be only IMMERSION.”

— Charles G. Maples, Sr.

CONSEQUENCES OF DENYING THE WORD OF GOD

To some there is no place in the classroom for the Genesis 1:1 account of creation. It is myth. To them there is place for their theory of evolution in the classroom, even though it is nothing more than an *unproven* theory. Perhaps they have not thought through the consequences of their denial of the word of God. Perhaps they have no fear of denying the word of God.

God's name in Genesis 1:1 is plural. He said, "Let **Us** make man in **Our** image" (Genesis 1:26). Christ was with God in the creation (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16,17). If Genesis 1:1 is a myth, truth is wiped out. Christ's intimate association with His Father in Creation is wiped out. His dying on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, His place in God's great plan of salvation is wiped out. The whole family of man is doomed because a handful of finite, imperfect men would have you believe that the word of God is only a fable. The Son of God said of his Father "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). Whom do you believe?"

Influence

MANASSEH, KING OF JUDAH, is an example of one having a bad influence that could never be recalled.

"So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hear. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem in His kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He is God."

Then Manasseh took away the strange gods and idols out of the house of the Lord and commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel; but the record says, "Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places..." (2 Chronicles 33:9-17).

Hezekiah, the father of Manasseh,

was a good man, instituted reforms in Judah, and no doubt led his people back to God; but his son, for a large part of his life, was entirely different in the evil influence he had upon the people of Judah. These two men show that the righteousness of the father does not pass to the son by inheritance.

Further, Manasseh shows us that we should ever, ever be careful of the influence we may have upon others. Though this man turned back to God, having finally learned that only God's way is right, he could never call others whom he had led astray back to God.

Parents in later life may sometimes make great changes, but too late to reach their children whom they led astray either in morals or false religion.

Be careful of your influence today and every day. "But whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:6, ASV). — BN

Contact Information: