



Baptism?

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There is much confusion within the religious world concerning the topic of baptism. There are some who teach that baptism can be a sprinkling or pouring of water while others teach that baptism must be an immersion in water. And there are some who teach that baptism is a burial in water for the remission of sins and others who teach that baptism is a burial in water not for the remission of sins. Then there are some who teach that baptism is only for adults while others teach that baptism can be administered to children and infants. And then there are those who teach that baptism involves the Holy Spirit and has nothing to do with water. **All of these various teachings are enough to confuse anyone!**

There is only one way to solve this question about baptism but it involves three distinct aspects:

1. All of us must open our hearts and minds to what God has said on the subject within the pages of holy writ.
2. All of us must evaluate each teaching to see if they are really according to God's word — the Bible.
3. All of us must have the courage to accept what the Bible teaches no matter if it is contrary to what we have previously believed or practiced.

If each of us will follow these three guidelines, the question of baptism and any other religious question would be solved.

A study such as this is important because the subject is important. The importance of baptism can be seen in the fact that after Jesus was resurrected and before He ascended into heaven, He gave us His “Great Commission” which included

baptism. Listen to the words of Jesus: *"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen"* (Matthew 28:18-20).

Of all that Jesus could have said before He ascended up into heaven, He sent Christians on a mission to teach and to baptize.

THE PROCEDURE OF BAPTISM

What is meant by procedure is the fashion or the mode in which baptism is done. In this point, we are attempting to answer two questions: 1. Is baptism immersion, sprinkling, or pouring? 2. Is baptism associated with water?

In Acts 8:26-39, the account of the conversion of the eunuch of Ethiopia is given. Philip the evangelist *"preached unto him Jesus"* and when *"they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?"* After the eunuch's confession, *"they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."* Because the eunuch was traveling, he would have been carrying water. If sprinkling or pouring were acceptable practices, there would be no reason for Philip and the eunuch to go **"down into the water."** Thus, from this passage we learned that baptism is associated with water and that it is an immersion.

Also notice that by inspiration, the apostle Paul described baptism as a burial. In Romans 6:3-5 he wrote, *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."*

Thus, we see that baptism portrays Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Immersion fits this description while sprinkling and pouring do not.

THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM

Sin has a bondage (John 8:34) and when a person has the "remission of sins," he is set free from the bondage of sin which causes death (Romans 6:23). Baptism is to wash away or cleanse one of sin and, thus, frees one from the bondage of sin. For this reason, Peter on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus answered the

question, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” by telling them to “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:37-38). And Saul of Tarsus was told to “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Thus, baptism is the new birth of water and of the Spirit that gives entrance into the kingdom of God — the church as Jesus taught Nicodemus in John 3:3-5.

THE PRE-REQUISITES TO BAPTISM

Before one is baptized, he or she must be *taught*. Remember in the Great Commission, Jesus said to teach and then to baptize. In the above examples, those persons on Pentecost were first taught by Peter and the rest of the apostles (Acts 2:14ff). Saul was first taught by Ananias and the eunuch was first taught by Philip. In each example as a result of teaching, they believed that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). Thus, *belief* must also precede baptism. Further notice that *repentance* must precede baptism for Peter said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you...” (Acts 2:38). Finally, confession must precede baptism as in the example of the eunuch of Ethiopia. Thus, before a person is baptized, he or she must be taught, believe that Jesus is the Christ, repent of sins, and confess Jesus before men. Since infants could not do these things, they are not candidates for baptism?

THE PARTITION OF BAPTISM

By inspiration Peter wrote that Noah's contemporaries . . . *"sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 3:20-21). Just as Noah and his family were saved by or through water, baptism saves us from sin. Please note that water separated or divided the saved from the lost.

Paul wrote of a similar figure in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2. He said, *"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."* In this figure the Red Sea separated the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. In the same way, baptism separates us from the bondage of sin.

Thus, we see that baptism is God's dividing line. It separates the lost from the saved and it separates bondage from freedom. Just as Noah and his family crossed the dividing line when they entered into the ark and just as Israel crossed the dividing line when they crossed the Red Sea, we cross the dividing line when we are baptized in the right way and for the right purpose.

GOD'S PART IN BAPTISM

As a result of baptism, God redeems the penitent believer through the blood of Jesus (Colossians 1:14).

As a result of baptism, God forgives the penitent believer of his or her sins (Acts 2:38).

As a result of baptism, God adds the penitent believer to Christ's church (Acts 2:41,47) which Christ will save (Ephesians 5:23).

As a result of baptism, God sanctifies the penitent believer (1 Corinthians 6:11) by making him or her part of "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9).

As a result of baptism, God justifies the penitent believer freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24).

Thus, we have learned that the Bible teaches us that baptism is a burial in water for the remission of sins. That by necessity excludes any and every other opposing doctrine. The Bible has simplified what man has made confusing.

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