

Baptism

A Simple, but Informative Exposé



Baptism

New Testament baptism had its origin in the command of Jesus Christ to make disciples and baptize them (Matt 28:19). In the origination of this ordinance there is a particular order established; the first act was to make disciples, then those disciples were to be baptized. This is the pattern that is carried out in the book of Acts. Peter commanded that his hearers should first repent, then be baptized (Acts 2:38). Only those who heard the gospel, understood and responded to it through faith and repentance, could be baptized (Acts 2:41). Those who responded to Philip's message first believed, then were baptized (Acts 8:12), similarly with the Ethiopian (Acts 8:38), with Paul (Acts 9:18), the Caesarean Gentiles (Acts 10:48), Lydia (Acts 16:14-15), the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:32-33), and Crispus (Acts 18:8). All of these references indicate that baptism follow belief; repentance and faith precede the ordinance of baptism.

Baptism signifies identification. New Testament baptism involves identification with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection. Being baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 2:38) stresses association with Christ in the rite. It is a public declaration that the believer has been united to Christ by faith in His death and resurrection.

What is Baptism?

What act of being immersed under water to publicly identify with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Romans 6:3-5) It is a clear calculated decision of a believer to declare before God, the angels; those in his local church, as well as his family that he wants to live his life for Jesus Christ according to the Bible. (I Cor. 4:19; I Peter 1:12; Ephesians 3:10) It is not a common ritual that should be taken lightly.

Who Shall be Baptized?

Every person that has made a decision, in his heart, to believe in Jesus Christ. When one understands he is a sinner (Romans 3:10, 23) and therefore cannot save himself, and acknowledging he needs a savior he calls upon Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31) and receives Him by faith. When the Gospel is clearly understood (Acts 8:38) and this believer chooses to agree with the Bible that his old sinful nature was crucified with Christ and he is alive today as a brand new creation, one who has been raised from the dead with Christ. Baptism then is an outward symbol of a volitional choice to believe in Christ.

Why Should Someone be Baptized?

First and foremost, we are baptized in obedience to Jesus' command given to His disciples to make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Secondly, to publicly make a definitive statement that he has placed his trust in Christ for salvation and plans to live his life with and for Christ. This believer is in fact identifying with Christ Himself in His death, burial and resurrection, as well as other Christians, in the family of God.

When Should We be Baptized?

The example we see in scriptures is that as soon as someone understands the Gospel and believes (Acts 8:2), or as stated in (Acts 2:11) they receive the Word of God, they can be baptized. It is important to note; however, that many Jews who believed had to denounce the faith of their families, as well as the national leaders of Israel. Their decision to be baptized was not a casual decision of convenience! Instead it cut against their culture as they made a decision to become a disciple of Christ and leave Judaism, then they were baptized. *Contrariwise in American culture, it could almost be socially acceptable to be baptized with a Christian's baptism. Therefore baptism should be carefully explained to the baptism candidate and an effort made to disciple them and then baptize them.* (Matthew 28:19) **This is the purpose of this expose'.**

How Should a Believer be Baptized?

A believer should be totally immersed under water in an orderly manner, which would encourage reverence for the Lord. It is a great benefit to have friends, family as well as members of the body of Christ present to witness a baptism as it provides an opportunity for fellowship, support and encouragement. Joking, laughing or horseplay should be discouraged as it can foster irreverence and familiarity for the presence of the Lord at a sacred function.

Where Should a Believer be Baptized?

Any place that would be agreed upon by the Pastor and those he is baptizing. It must have plenty of water and provide an atmosphere of reverence. Public places many times are excellent as spectators can look on and this may provide a forum to share the Gospel privately or openly.

Is There Ever Any Basis to be Rebaptized?

Yes. There is one passage where people are rebaptized and that is Acts 19:1-7. These were disciples of John the Baptist and had been rebaptized by John, but they had never been baptized into Christian baptism because they had left the country before John pointed out who the Messiah was. Therefore, they did not know that Jesus was the Messiah. In that passage Paul lets them know that Jesus was the Messiah that John had predicted would come. Once they believed, Paul proceeded to baptize them into believers or Christian baptism. Since John's baptism was not Christian baptism, they needed to be rebaptized.

If a person has been truly Biblically baptized, there is no necessity for rebaptism. Rebaptism should not be practiced just to join a new church as it sometimes is. Rebaptism should not be practiced just because one happens to be by the Jordan River and wants to be baptized for ceremonial reasons in that river!!!! If one has been Biblically baptized, there is no basis for rebaptism.

If someone was baptized in an improper mode of baptism, then this calls for a rebaptism. If one was baptized before he became a believer, he is to be rebaptized. If one was baptized as an infant, he is to be rebaptized. If one was baptized in a wrong mode, either by pouring or sprinkling, then that calls for a rebaptism because these are not Biblical baptisms.

Infant Baptism

Should infants be baptized? No

Why do some practice this?

1. Episcopalians, Lutherans and Catholics practice it as a means of Baptismal regeneration. They believe the outward act of baptism saves the child.
2. Some covenant or reformed movements baptize infants to bring them into the covenant family and thus under covenant promises.
3. Many believe that infant baptism was the antitype or fulfillment of circumcision. The Bible doesn't teach this, however. It teaches the fulfillment is believing in the heart. In Acts 15 in the Jerusalem Council concerning what standards to place on new converts, it was never determined to replace circumcision with baptism. Also, why baptize female infants?!
4. Many assume that household baptism (I Cor. 1:16; Acts 16:15, 33; 18:8) included infants, but this is not fact. Even if it were true, a prerequisite of baptism is always believing.
5. Many churches and religious institutions have adopted infant baptism, even though it is not congruous with Scripture. They chose to turn away from the Word of God instead of turning away from their traditions.

We Don't Believe in Baptizing Infants for the Following Reasons:

1. The most important concept to understand is that baptism is a statement exercised by the volition to consciously identify with someone, their message, or a group. An infant cannot make that kind of choice.
2. No where in the Word of God does it specify to baptize infants.
3. There is no example in the New Testament where an infant is baptized.
4. Infant baptism was not practiced or accepted in the early church.
5. Baptism does not save and usually that's why infants are baptized.
6. Infant baptism creates a false sense of security and an allusion that a person is not accountable to make a decision to believe in Christ because he's been baptized! Therefore, many are born and grow up in church without ever being born again, although they faithfully attend church.

Baptism- Sacrament or Ordinance?

Much of religion today would teach baptism as a sacrament. We believe it is an ordinance that should absolutely be observed.

Baptism as a Sacrament: The act of baptism or any other sacrament conveys the idea that the outward performance has the ability to convey or merit some form of favor or grace. When we perform, God bestows His grace. This of course is just the opposite of grace, which is freely given without merit or performance. Therefore, we believe in baptism as an ordinance and not as a sacrament.

Baptism as an Ordinance: An outward practice which Christ instructed His disciples to observe as a visible sign or public declaration of that which they have already believed.

For a practice to become an ordinance, it must adhere to certain criteria:

1. Did Jesus command it?
2. Did the apostles observe it and instruct it in the book of Acts?
3. Was it further expounded in the Epistles?

If all three are present, it is an ordinance.

We adhere to only two ordinances:

1. Baptism
2. Communion or the Lord's Supper

We do believe, however, many other commands for which the church has been instituted, i.e.:

1. Great Commandment- To love one another.- John 13:34,35; 15:12,13
2. Great Commission- To win the lost by proclaiming the Gospel. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47
3. Making Disciples- By teaching the Word of God categorically.- John 20:30,31; Acts 1:8

The answer to each of these criteria can be found in the following verses:

1. Commanded by Christ? Yes- Matt 28:19
2. Practiced in the book of Acts? Yes- Acts 2:38,41; 8:12,13,36,38; 9:18; 10:47,48; 16:15,33; 18:8; 19:9
3. Expounded in Epistles? Yes- Romans 6:3-5; Col 2:11,12

NOTE: Baptism was not a major emphasis in Pauline theology.

- The word '*baptizo*' is used *80 times* in the New Testament
- Of those 80 times, Paul used this word only *16 times*
- *Five times* referred to baptism of the Spirit and *11 times* referred to actual water baptism

- Of the *11 times*, Paul spoke of water baptism *6 times*. He emphasized that Christ didn't send him to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.- I Cor. 1: 13-17
- *Three times* Paul referred to baptisms that occurred in the book of Acts
- The remaining *2 times* Paul spoke of water baptism, he makes it clear it was not part of the Gospel.- I Cor 1:17,18

Therefore you can see that Paul put much more weight on Spirit baptism than on water baptism.

Methods of Baptism

Controversy exists concerning the methods by which one considers himself to be baptized. Two basic ideas exist: Immersion and Non- immersion. Non- immersion would include sprinkling or pouring. Immersion would submerge its victim under the water completely (until one completely surrenders his rights to live independently with God)

The idea of sprinkling or pouring comes from two avenues: 1) A wrong interpretation of the Greek word "Baptizo", using a secondary meaning of the act "to bring under the influence of" where the primary and correct meaning of the word itself would be 'to immerse'.

What if water is not available for immersion? Remember, the outward practice of baptism does not convey or merit favor before God, therefore the emphasis is on obedience to God and not how wet you get! If at all possible, you should be fully submersed, but if for health reasons, or if a person is extremely feeble, or there is not water available such as may be the extreme case of a shut in, then sprinkling or pouring would suffice.

Remember, if the thief upon the cross was not baptized, but Jesus said "Today you shall be with Me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)

If at all possible, the correct mode of baptism is immersion. At least ten supporting argument exist commanding baptism by immersion in the Bible:

1. The word "baptizo" in the Greek means to fully immerse. The English word "Baptism" is actually a transliteration of the Greek word "Baptisma" which correctly translated means to immerse! (Matt 28:19)
2. When someone was baptized in the Bible, it uses prepositions such as "into" and "out of" which clearly imply immersion. (Mark 1:5; Acts 8:38,39)
3. This implication is true of Jesus, He was immersed. (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:9,10)

4. John the Baptizer baptized by immersion, actually leaving and moving to a location that had a sufficient water supply. (John 3:23)
5. Nowhere in the New Testament does it speak of sprinkling, or give any examples thereof.
6. There are words in the Greek for sprinkling and/or pouring, but they were not used.
7. Immersion best pictures what the Spirit has already done as we were buried with Him (pictured by being raised again from the water. YOU HOPE! Some may have to stay under longer for complete cleansing!)
8. The Jewish custom of proselyte baptism was immersion and John's was immersion, and all the Jewish traditions adhere to this same method.
9. The New Testament early church adapted immersion as the only acceptable means of baptism, with the exception of someone completely incapable of such methods.
10. The Greek Orthodox Church, a sister to Roman Catholicism, uses immersion because of their clear understanding of Greek.

Baptism of the Spirit

A definite problem with some that believe in baptismal regeneration is their misunderstanding of key passages concerning baptism and baptism of the Spirit. Baptism of the Spirit could be defined as "The work of the Holy Spirit in placing the believer into union with Christ as the head, and with other believers as the body of Christ." Romans 6:4 says "...we are buried with Him by baptisms unto death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father...." This passage is not dealing with a physical water baptism, but a spiritual baptism; a baptism of the Spirit into the body of Christ. The spiritual lesson is actually taught through the illustration of physical water baptism which was clearly understood.

Galatians 3:27 says- "*For as many of you have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" This is not water baptism, but a baptism unto the body of Christ by the Spirit.

I Corinthians 12:13 says- "*For 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.*" So it is believing in Christ that baptizes me into the body, and not water baptism.

The Spirit places the believer into union with Christ and into union with other believers in the body of Christ.

1. **Baptism of the Spirit into the body of Christ includes all believers in the age.**

In I Corinthians 12:13, Romans 6:3-6 and Galatians 3:27, 28 indication is made that all that have believed have been baptized into Christ's body.

2. **Baptism of the Spirit is unique to this age.**

It did not occur in the Old Testament.

- Acts 1:5- The church had not yet begun, but Jesus promised "...Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days 'hence'."
- Acts 2:1-4- Holy Spirit filled them. It was sensational! - Verifying a brand new work.
- Acts 10:44- Holy Spirit fell on them which heard the Word and had obviously already believed.
- Acts 11: 15-17- Peter explained this happening to them as it had to them in the beginning, just as Jesus had promised. (Acts 1:5) Notice in verse 17, God gave them the same gift as He gave to us who believed on the Lord Jesus.

3. **Baptism of the Holy Spirit brings believers into union with one another** in the body of Christ. Despite race, culture, or current spiritual condition.

4. **Baptism of the Holy Spirit brings believers into union with Christ** as we are baptized into Him the moment we believe.

5. **The baptism of the Holy Spirit may not be experiential.** There doesn't necessarily have to be signs or miracles following baptism of the Spirit to authenticate its veracity.

6. **Baptism of the Holy Spirit is done completely by the Holy Spirit** at the time one puts his trust in Christ for salvation. There is no subsequent baptism that empowers the believer for service although there may be subsequent fillings that follow throughout the believer's lifetime.

Misunderstood Verses Concerning Baptism

Mark 16:16- Many would take this verse in support of Baptismal Regeneration. There are two definite problems with this presupposition. The oldest and best manuscripts do not include Mark 16:9-20. IN fact no manuscripts before the 4th century include this passage. Therefore to use this passage to teach you must be baptized to be saved would hold little weight. Also, this passage does not state negatively if you aren't baptized you are not saved. *Thirdly*, some statements in this passage are incongruous with the whole of Scripture, i.e. if you speak with tongues as evidence of salvation, you must also raise the dead, and then you may as well drink some battery acid!!! Ha ha!!!

Acts 2:38- To understand this verse as well as Acts 3:19, you must understand the isagogics behind Peter's statement and interprets this passage within that context.

The national leaders of Israel had publicly and judicially rejected Jesus Christ as messiah three distinct times, thus bringing national judgment upon Israel. For Jews from this generation to believe in Jesus as Messiah and Lord, they had to repent (metanoia- change their mind) about the judicial rejection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, neither baptism nor repentance is necessary for salvation.

John 3:5- Some also mistake “born of water” as the same as baptism. The two are not even closely related. Born of water was a Jewish expression depicting natural childbirth.

Acts 22:16- This verse two distinct acts. The first is calling upon the name of the Lord, forgiveness follows. Then after believing, he should arise and be baptized.

I Peter 3:20, 21- This passage does not teach baptismal regeneration, but teaches that the act of baptism is symbolic of a clear break from the old life. Many of these Jewish believers had refused to be obedient to Christian baptism because of the possible persecution that may follow; therefore, they avoided this act of identification. This left their conscience plagued because of an area they chose not to obey the Lord in. Cleansing of the conscience comes from the blood of Christ. Hebrews 9:14 and the consistent hearing of the Word of God Psalm 119:9; Eph 5:26; John 15:3. The outward act of baptism cannot cleanse the conscience, but it is a definitive symbol of the break from the old life and the cleansing that has already taken place.

