

Understanding Baptism

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Do you know how many times baptism is mentioned in the Bible
 - 1. 89x in the NT—
 - 2. another several references to it without using the term, (e.g., “washing of regeneration”)
 - 3. Anything mentioned that often must be fairly important
- B. Just about every Christian-based religious group has some sort of doctrinal position about it — often different in one way or another
 - 1. necessary
 - 2. not necessary
 - 3. only because Jesus was
 - 4. for infants, grown-ups
 - 5. to get into the church
 - 6. to save long dead family members
 - 7. by sprinkling, immersion, Holy Spirit
- C. Consequently, there’s a good deal of confusion about it—often misunderstood
 - 1. Not only do unchurched folks find it confusing ...
 - 2. But often NT Christians find themselves somewhat tempted to compromise God’s teachings about it
 - a) wondering why so many well educated theologians teach different things about baptism
 - b) pressured by those who argue on the basis of personal feelings
 - c) Not knowing exactly where in the Bible to turn to show the truth
- D. This morning I’d like to take a look at the what the Bible says about baptism

II. IS BAPTISM REALLY NECESSARY?

- A. Jesus says so, He commands it
 - 1. **Matthew 28:18, 19** “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...’”
 - 2. **Mark 16:15, 16** “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.’”
 - 3. **John 3:3-5** “Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God....Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

- a) What did Jesus mean by “being born again”?
 - b) Justin (c.AD 150) “Then they are led by us to where there is water, and in the manner of the regeneration [reborn] by which we ourselves were regenerated [reborn] they are regenerated [reborn]...For Christ also said, ‘Unless you are regenerated [reborn], you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.’”
 - c) Tertullian (Baptism [203 AD]) “[N]o one can attain salvation without baptism, especially in view of the declaration of the Lord, who says, ‘Unless a man shall be born of water, he shall not have life.’” [Jn. 3:5]
 - d) What was Jesus talking about, when He talked about being “born again” — He’s talking about baptism
- B. Because Jesus commanded it, the apostles commanded it
1. Acts 2:38 “Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”
 2. Acts 10:46-48 “...Then Peter answered, ‘Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?’ And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.”
- C. Practiced by every first century Christian
- D. Why? It is clearly **critical** for salvation
1. Mark 16:15, 16 “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be **saved**; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”
 2. Acts 2:38 “Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the **forgiveness of your sins**; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
 3. 1 Peter 3:21 “Corresponding to that, baptism now **saves you**--not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,”
 4. Titus 3:5 “He **saved us**, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, **by the washing of regeneration** and renewing by the Holy Spirit,”
- E. There’s no equivocation, no indecisiveness, no “ifs, ands, or buts” about it; baptism is really necessary for salvation

III. How IS IT TO BE DONE?

- A. Baptism is an anglicized form of the Greek word *baptidzo*
 1. The Greek word always means **to immerse**
 - a) The books all say it

- b) It matches how Romans 6:4 “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”
- c) And the **Greek** Orthodox Church, which reads the Bible in Greek, practice baptism by immersion
- 2. **Never** translated...
 - a) pour (ekcheo)
 - b) **sprinkle** (rhantizo)
- B. **(Lexicon shot)** Christian baptism is immersion in water
 - 1. here’s no equivocation, no indecisiveness, no “ifs, ands, or buts” about it; baptism is by immersion
 - 2. **If you haven’t been immersed in water, you haven’t been baptidzo-ed**

IV. **To whom is it done?**

- A. Done to sinners (not children)
 - 1. Acts 22:16 to wash sins away
 - 2. But we’re all sinners, right?
 - a) Rom. 3:23
 - b) But not all...
 - (1) Ezek. 18
 - (2) children are not, because they have not sinned
- B. **Done to those who have heard the Gospel** and want to respond to it in faith (Romans 10:17)
- C. **Done to those who are able to believe** that Jesus really is the Son of God
 - 1. John 3:16
 - 2. Including what He was doing on the cross
- D. **Done to those who recognize their sins** and want to change their hearts and behavior to follow Jesus—repentance
 - 1. Acts 2:38
- E. **Done to those willing to confess** that Jesus is Lord
 - 1. Romans 10:9,10
- F. Not for...
 - 1. children
 - 2. not for the dead
 - 3. not for the unwilling
- G. There’s no equivocation, no indecisiveness, no “ifs, ands, or buts” about it; baptism is for the believing, repenting, confessing, willing sinner who has heard the Gospel

and wants to obey the Lord

V. **What's necessary afterward?**

- A. Not a “one and done” deed for salvation
- B. **The start of a new kind of life** to be lived faithfully ‘til death (Romans 6:1-4)
- C. Discipleship is **necessary**
 - 1. The natural outcome of **believing** that Jesus is the Son of God and Lord
 - 2. The natural outcome of **repentance**
 - 3. The natural outcome of a **persevering hope** in the promise of Heaven for the faithful
 - 4. The natural outcome of a **love** for the Savior who first loved me
- D. There's no equivocation, no indecisiveness, no “ifs, ands, or buts” about it; baptism is the new birth, the start of a new life following Jesus

VI. **CONCLUSION**

- A. **In a nutshell, baptism is...**
 - 1. **is integrally connected with salvation**
 - 2. **is by immersion**
 - 3. **is for old enough to willingly believe, repent, and confess**
 - 4. **the beginning of a new kind of life following Jesus**
- B. Baptism is fairly straightforward—the Bible isn't complicated about it; confusion is unnecessary
 - 1. Why all the confusion?
 - 2. **I've got a theory: what would Satan do?**
 - a) **Eden**
 - b) **Today**
- C. **If you haven't been baptized, please hear this biblical plea...**