

Elements Of Proper Baptism

Acts 16:13-15 is only one of the several examples in Acts of people believing the word and being baptized into Christ. True Christians have stood almost alone in the religious world on the subject of water baptism. We have insisted that immersion to a penitent believer is essential to salvation from past sins. Whereas the Bible teaches baptism as a condition of salvation, denominations have promoted the idea that baptism is simply a "sign" or "symbol" of the salvation which one has previously received through faith alone.

What many people do not realize is that churches of Christ teach and advocate the biblical view of baptism, dating back back to the first century and continuing almost unabated until the time of the Protestant Reformation. A man by the name of Zwingli influenced the teaching of most modern denominations on the subject of baptism, leading them astray from the biblical position and culminating in what is now the majority view which rejects the essentiality of baptism to salvation.

When people begin to hold to the idea that we can go back to the biblical pattern and reproduce scriptural teaching and practice today, one of the characteristics of biblical teaching will be baptism for the remission of sins. Hebrews 8:5 says, "*See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*" If we can "speak where the Bible speaks" and put aside denominational teaching, we can get a clear view of baptism. There are several proper elements of baptism which need to be explored.

It Must Have The Proper Name

Some believe that the statement that is made when someone is baptized, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:46-48), is a formula which makes a person's baptism legitimate.

But Matthew 28:19 is not giving us a formula of what must be said. Baptizing someone in the name of Jesus means that we recognize His authority (Ephesians 1:22-23). So it is not what we say, it is what we do (Acts 4:12). The name equals authority (Esther 8:8-11; 1 Samuel 25:5, 9; Philippians 2:5-11).

It Must Have The Proper Medium

In Ephesians 4:5, Paul says there is "*one baptism.*" However, there are several baptisms mentioned in the New Testament. Which one is it? First, the baptism of John (Mark 1:4). The ministry and baptism of John was intended to be of limited duration because of its limited purpose -- to prepare the way for Christ (John 3:26-30). This fact is illustrated in the case of those whom Paul found at Ephesus. After being taught by Paul, they were "*baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*" (Acts 19:1-5) because the New Covenant of Christ superseded the Old Covenant (under which John preached) when Jesus died on the cross (Hebrews 9:15-17). This cannot be the "*one baptism*" of Ephesians 4:5.

Second, Holy Spirit baptism. John and Jesus both foretold the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:4-5). The baptism of the Spirit had a vital part in the beginning of the gospel age; it is evident that Holy Spirit baptism was not the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5. Holy Spirit baptism was administered by the Lord from heaven (Matthew 3:11; Acts 2:1-4, 16-18). Holy Spirit baptism was a promise to be received by those for whom it was intended (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5). Holy Spirit baptism was for the purpose of providing miraculous power to be used in the confirmation of the gospel (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4). Only a few persons received this baptism, which would have made the point in Ephesians 4:5 irrelevant.

Third, the baptism of fire (Matthew 3:7-12). Whether speaking of the final judgment, or the judgment of the Jews during the destruction of Jerusalem, this baptism was meant figuratively for the punishment of those who rejected Jesus. Fourth, water baptism (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:16). Proof of the element of water will be discussed in the next point. This baptism had a universal application. It is intended for every person who will accept the gospel until the end of the world. Water baptism must be the "*one baptism*" of Ephesians 4:5 because it is the only baptism which all Christians have in common. It is connected with faith and repentance and precedes salvation, being for the remission of sins.

It Must Have The Proper Action

The Greek word used for "*baptism*" means to "immerse, dip or plunge." Every competent Bible scholar will agree that baptism is an immersion in water. Not one of them will translate baptism into "sprinkle" or "pour." In the LXX, the Greeks had a word for "sprinkle" (*rantizo*). These two words are used in juxtaposition in Leviticus 4:6: "*And the priest shall **dip** his finger in the blood, and **sprinkle** of the blood seven times before the Lord, before the*

vail of the sanctuary." The word was used in the classical Greek of the blacksmith who tempers red-hot steel in water and the act of dyeing the hair. Therefore, the word means "completely submerged" and our present-day English equivalent would be "sunk." Baptism is an act which requires "much water" (John 3:23), "a going to the water" (Acts 8:36), "a going down into the water" (Acts 8:38), and "a coming up out of the water" (Matthew 3:16). It is described as a burial or an immersion in water (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12).

To prepare for the 1611 King James Version, the king order his 54 scholars to use the word "*baptism*," and specifically charged them not to use other translations of the day which rendered it "immersion." "*Baptism*" and "*baptize*" are Anglicized forms of the Greek words *baptismos* and *baptidzo*; they are not native to the English language. Had these words been translated literally, they would be "immersion" and "immerse." If they had been translated in the King James Version and in all versions of the Bible as they should have been, there would probably have not been so much controversy over whether baptism was immersion or sprinkling. The Church of England was practicing sprinkling for baptism and King James was the "head" of the Church. If those scholars would have translated the words as "immersion" and "immerse," it would have created chaos in the Church of England.

It Must Have The Proper Subject

Only believers are to be baptized (Acts 8:37-38). Baptism is not for infants. Paul wrote in Romans 7:9, "*For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*" Paul was not guilty of sin until some point in his life where he knew the commandments of God. Every instance of people being baptized in the book of Acts shows us that they believed and had the capacity to repent and confess before they were baptized.

According to the Catholic Church, a baby has the inherited sin of Adam. Catholics claim that he "transmitted sin" to all of us. But Jesus was the son of Adam (Luke 3:23, 38). Did He inherit Adam's sin? Catholics claim the classic text on inherited sin is Romans 5:12: "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,*" but notice that all have sinned, not just Adam!

The Immaculate Conception of Mary takes care of the problem of original sin by stating that Mary passed on this sin; she did not receive the sin of Adam. She was "preserved exempt from all stain of original sin." But incredibly, the

Catholic Encyclopedia states, "No direct or categorical and stringent proof of the dogma can be brought forward from Scripture."

It Must Have The Proper Reason

Baptism is for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). The word "*remission*" means "a dismissal or release." This is further enhanced by Acts 22:16 which says that baptism "*washes away*" our sins. This is why baptism is able to "*save us*" (1 Peter 3:21). Many claim that baptism is simply "an outward sign of an inward grace." They say it is merely a token to others of what has already happened in the heart. If you believe and were baptized and received \$100,000, would you do it? Of course you would. You would do it because you realize that baptism is necessary to receive the sum of money. Now why will people not see this in respect to salvation?

In the light of this overwhelming evidence, who among us can deny that baptism is essential for our salvation? The pattern for salvation and conversion was the same in each instance relative to the matter of baptism. Baptism was required of each individual who would move spiritually from an unsaved state to a saved state. Baptism is a condition of salvation, a change of relationship, and a time for purification. If you have believed and decided that you are going to live your life for Christ by repenting of your sins, then you need to confess His name before men and be baptized for the remission of your sins.

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