

Is Your Baptism Valid?

Christians are often placed in situations where they must define the role of baptism. This has caused many to accuse us of believing in “water salvation.” Nothing could be further from the truth. Baptism that is administered as God prescribes in His word must meet certain guidelines. There are many religious bodies who practice a type of baptism. To engage in an action and call it baptism does not make it the baptism. Baptism as it is practiced by Catholic and denominational religions does not meet the guidelines of scriptural baptism.

The proper subject for baptism is a penitent believer (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). This rules out infant baptism. Infant baptism is performed because of the belief that infants need salvation. This is not the case (Luke 18:16). Obviously, infants do not have the mental ability to sin and are innocent.

This brings up the question, what does one need to know for their baptism to be valid? Over the years, some have advocated that denominational baptism is valid as long as the mode was by immersion. Christians are sometimes faced with a person who was baptized in a denominational church (which denies the necessity of baptism to obtain salvation), who will, after a period of Bible study, claim that they were baptized for remission of sins. The person is not being dishonest when they make this claim. What is happening is that they are recalling a past event (their denominational baptism) using their current knowledge (baptism is essential to salvation).

Baptism is something a person does, not something that is done to them. Therefore, one must have knowledge of the purpose for baptism. The purpose for baptism is the remission and washing away of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Those who believe that baptism is an outward act of an inward grace or that it gives one membership into a denominational church have been baptized for the wrong reason. The person should be encouraged to be baptized properly.

Baptism will only accomplish its purpose when it is participated in by one who repents of sin (Acts 17:30; Luke 13:5). To become penitent, one must experience godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10). Those who submit to baptism for any reason other than sorrow for their sins only “get wet.” Is your baptism valid?

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