

Does Baptism Wash Away Wives?

Introduction. Peter not only teaches what baptism does, but just as clearly what it does not do, which is cleanse the body (1 Peter 3:21). There are other actions baptism cannot accomplish. For example, baptism cannot save an unbeliever or someone who is impenitent (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). There are those who say that baptism can erase an adulterous relationship in the past so this will be the focus of our lesson today.

I. ***Does Baptism Cleanse An Adulterous Relationship?***

- A. Adultery takes place when a person joins himself to one person while bound to another (Romans 7:2-3).
- B. Baptism does not change a sinful act or relationship into a holy one.
 - 1. Let's say that a homosexual is baptized. May he continue his practice or do his practices become holy (cf. 1 John 3:4)?
 - 2. Revelation 21:8 says that "whoremongers" (or fornicators, sexually immoral) will have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.
- C. Adultery is continuous action (Matthew 19:9).
 - 1. If adultery were a one-time act, when would the sin occur?
 - a) At the completion of the marriage ceremony? No. What is adultery?
 - b) At the first conjugal contact? If so, why would their first contact be wrong, but the second be right?
 - (1) Why would not every conjugal contact be adultery?
 - (2) If the second contact is not sinful, what made it acceptable?
 - (a) Was it the first contact? Nothing else has changed!
 - (b) If so, committing a sin makes further identical acts sinless!
 - (3) Would this not work for the homosexual as well?
 - 2. In Matthew 19:6, for God to approve a marriage, He must do the joining.
 - a) If a marriage that God rejects becomes approved by baptism, then baptism becomes God's means of approving two in marriage. Where does New Testament teach this?
 - b) In Romans 7:2-3, the adultery continues as long as the former spouse lives! She is an "adulteress" as long as she is married to another man while her first husband is living.

II. ***Repentance Precedes Baptism***

- A. Repentance demands that sinful acts and relationships cease.
 - 1. The definition of repentance is "to change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins ... i.e., conduct

- worthy of a heart changed and abhorring sin" (Thayer, p. 405).
2. The definition of fruit is "to exhibit deeds agreeing with a change of heart, Matthew 3:8; Luke 3:8" (Thayer, p. 326).
 - a) Acts 26:20 explains "fruit" as "works."
 - b) Acts 2:40 tells us that Peter spoke "many other words" and they continued steadfastly in the "apostles' doctrine" in Acts 2:42.
 - (1) Luke does not record everything Peter said. For example, Peter never said, "Quit denominationalism," but we know that one must be saved.
 - (2) No one passage records everything, or else we would not need the rest of the New Testament. Later writings record additional necessary information. For example, one will not find the information in 1 John 4:2-3 in Acts 2.
 - B. In Luke 3:3, 8, 10-14, John specifically told the crowd what they must do.
 1. If repentance is real, then specific actions must follow.
 2. Repentance was not just a feeling within the heart such as deep sorrow.
 - C. In Ezra 10:10-11, true repentance regarding the foreign wives required separation.
 1. This was an extremely emotional time (Ezra 10:1).
 2. There were even children involved (Ezra 10:44).
 - D. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, what does repentance require?
 1. A thief steals cars. After his baptism, may he keep his stolen cars? May he continue to steal?
 2. Two homosexual men marry. One hears gospel and is baptized. May he keep his homosexual partner? May he continue to practice homosexuality?
 3. An adulterer is baptized. May he keep his adulterous partner? May he continue to practice adultery? What must Herod and Herodias do to repent in Mark 6:17-18? What must they do to show fruits of repentance?
 - a) The statement, "And such were some of you," in 1 Corinthians 6:11 contrasts their former and latter practices.
 - b) Paul asked in Romans 6:1, "Shall we continue in sin ...?" May the idolater continue to worship false gods? May the adulterer continue in his adultery? No, baptism calls on us to repent, to change lives, not to remain as we were before.
 - E. Colossians 3:3 uses the expression, "died" and vs. 4 says, "our life."
 1. Vss. 5-8 says that they had once "walked" and "lived in" these sins. However, notice that vs. 5 says, "mortify" and vs. 8 says, "put off all these."
 2. How would one "mortify" polygamy, homosexuality or adultery?

F. In 1 Timothy 5:6, Paul uses the term *spatalao* which means "riotous living; to give oneself to pleasure" (Thayer, p. 583). This woman is "dead while she liveth." Is she not living in sin? Homer Hailey denies that one can live in adultery:

1. "To demand that a remarried divorced couple break their marriage covenant on the basis of repentance rests on the assumption that their marriage is 'an adulterous marriage' or that 'they are continuing to live in adultery.' This has not been proved by scripture ..." (pp. 72-73). He ignored Colossians 3:3-8 and 1 Timothy 5:6!
2. "The apostle also said that fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, etc., would not inherit the kingdom of God in that condition ..." (p. 66). What is the difference between "living in adultery" and "in that condition"?
3. "Nowhere did Christ or an apostle teach that repentance demands the breaking of a marriage relationship such as we have been discussing when one obeys the gospel ... To teach such is to teach a doctrine solely of man. It is to accept the doctrine of doing penance rather than the doctrine of grace" (p. 74).

III. ***What About A Christian's Wives?***

- A. If an unbeliever's wives are washed away at baptism, then why not say the Christian's wives are washed away when he "repents"?
 1. Both are forgiven by the same blood (Matthew 26:28; 1 John 1:7).
 2. What can baptism do for one that prayer cannot do for the other?
- B. In 1 Corinthians 5:13, the Corinthians were told to put away the wicked man.
 1. Why were they told to do this? Because he has his father's wife (5:1).
 2. In 2 Corinthians 2:6-7, Paul said the punishment was sufficient. Why? Only one fact is different: he no longer has his father's wife.
- C. In 2 Corinthians 12:20-21 and Revelation 9:20-21, the Bible very plainly states that the one who does not stop sinning has not repented.

Conclusion. Everyone has a choice. Pharaoh, in Exodus 9:27, 34, clearly continued to do what he had done before. However, Nineveh turned away from their wicked works (Jonah 3:10). In Matthew 12:41, Jesus proclaimed that they repented. The important fact is that God saw their works and knew they had repented (cf. Matthew 3:8). The same can be said for those in adultery. Let us do our best to teach the truth to people in sin.