

Elements Of Proper Baptism

Introduction. Acts 16:13-15 is one of the many 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 theory 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. Ulrich Zwingli influenced the teaching of 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.

When people accept 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. If we can "speak where the Bible speaks" (Hebrews 8:5), and put aside denominational teaching, we can get a clear view of the proper elements of baptism, which we will attempt to expound upon in this lesson.

I. ***It Must Have The Proper Name***

- A. 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.
- B. 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 (1 Samuel 25:5, 9; Esther 8:8-11; Philippians 2:5-11).

II. ***It Must Have The Proper Medium***

- A. In Ephesians 4:5, Paul says there is "one baptism." However, there are several baptisms mentioned in the New Testament. Which one is it?
 - 1. 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). This cannot be the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5.
2. The Holy Spirit baptism. John and Jesus both foretold the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:4-5).
 - a) While 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.
 - b) 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).
 - c) 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.
 3. The baptism of fire (Matthew 3:7-12). This baptism was meant figuratively for the punishment of the wicked.
 4. Baptism in water (Mark 16:16). This baptism had universal application. It is meant for everyone who accepts the gospel until the end of the world.
- B. 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.

III. ***It Must Have The Proper Action***

- A. The Greek word used for "baptism" means to "immerse, dip or plunge." Every competent biblical scholar will agree that baptism is an immersion in water. Not a one of them will translate baptism into sprinkle or pour.
 1. In the LXX, the Greeks had a word for "sprinkle" (*rantizo*). These two words are used in juxtaposition in Leviticus 4:6.
 2. 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."
- B. Baptism is an act which requires:
 1. "Much water" (John 3:23).
 2. "A going to the water" (Acts 8:36).
 3. "A going down into the water" (Acts 8:38).
 4. "A coming up out of the water" (Matthew 3:16).
 5. It is described as a burial or an immersion in water (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12).

- C. 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."
1. "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."
 2. If they had been translated in the King James Version and other versions as they should have been, controversy over whether baptism was immersion or sprinkling would not have existed. The Church of England was practicing sprinkling for baptism and King James was its leader. If those scholars would have translated the words as "immersion" and "immerse," it would have created chaos in the Church of England.

IV. ***It Must Have The Proper Subject***

- A. Only believers are to be baptized (Acts 8:37-38). Baptism is not for infants (Romans 7:9). 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.
- B. 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, but notice that it says that "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."
- C. The Immaculate Conception of Mary alleviates 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." Incredibly, the Catholic Encyclopedia states, "No direct or categorical and stringent proof of the dogma can be brought forward from Scripture."

V. ***It Must Have The Proper Reason***

- A. Baptism is for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; 22:16). The word "remission" means "a dismissal or release."
1. Some say that baptism is simply "an outward sign of an inward grace." They say it is only a token to others of what has already happened in the heart (Acts 2:38; cf. Matthew 26:28).
 2. If you believe and were baptized and received \$1,000,000, would you do it? Sure you would. You would do it because you realize that baptism is necessary to receive the sum of money. Why will people not see this in respect to salvation?

B. Who should be rebaptized?

1. Those baptized as infants. Infants do not meet the requirements of baptism (sinning, being taught, repenting, and confessing Christ). Since an infant can do none of these, it is impossible for him to be scripturally baptized. Children who reach the point of consciousness of sin need to be baptized or rebaptized.
2. Those who have received the wrong mode of baptism (sprinkling or pouring). We have already seen the correct mode of baptism. Does it make a difference to God? Did it matter to Nadab and Abihu what kind of fire they offered before the Lord (Numbers 3:4)? Did it matter to Uzzah that he listened to the specific requirements of God (2 Samuel 6:3-7)?
3. Those baptized by the wrong authority. We cannot baptize people by the authority or in the name of a person or a church. Baptism must be administered in the name of deity (Matthew 28:18-19; Acts 2:38). Anyone baptized in the name of a person or a church is still in need of scriptural baptism.
4. Those baptized for the wrong reasons. Scriptural baptism involves being baptized for the reasons given in scripture. When people are baptized denying these reasons, having believed error, those baptisms are invalid. Someone may say, "I was already saved before baptism," "One church is as good as another," and "Baptism is not necessary in order to be saved." Unscriptural statements prove unscriptural baptism.

Conclusion. 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.