

BAPTISM

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*About the author...*

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Introduction

Our study today will look at a number of questions concerning baptism:

1. What is baptism?
2. What is the purpose of baptism and is it essential for salvation? Is baptism an outward symbol after you're saved or are your sins forgiven at baptism and is therefore essential to salvation?
3. Who should be baptized?
4. Is denominational baptism valid?

Shortly before Jesus ascension to heaven, Jesus gave his apostles what is called the "Great Commission."

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

In the gospel of Mark the commission is worded this way. *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15-16). In both places we notice the mention of baptism.

C In Matthew it is related to the process of making disciples

C In Mark it is mentioned in connection with salvation.

Whatever the purpose of baptism, it must be important to Jesus, for He commanded it!

What Is Baptism?

First of all, a definition of baptism is in order. The word "baptize" in most of the Bible

translations we have today is actually a transliterated word (where English letter equivalents are substituted for the Greek letters in the original word). Instead of translating the meaning of the word into the English equivalent, the Greek word in the original text is just changed into an English word.

The Greek word translated "baptize" is the word "baptizo". "Baptizo" is defined in *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* as, "1) to dip, to immerse, submerge (of vessels sunk); 2) to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water; 3) to overwhelm" (57). *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines "baptisma" (translated "baptism") as "consisting of the process of immersion, submersion, and emergence" (50). As can clearly be seen, the New Testament writers intended to indicate that baptism is an immersion. The mistranslation of using the transliterated word began with the King James translators because the church of England (who sponsored the translation) did not want the word "immersion" used for baptism. The only Bible translation that I know of that correctly translates the Greek words we call "baptism" is McCord's *New Testament Translation of the Everlasting Gospel*. For example in Mark 16:16 McCord translates, "He who believes and is immersed shall be saved..."

Baptism does not always mean "dunking in water," but it does always mean "immersion." An example would be in Matthew 20:23 where Jesus asks James and John, "Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" What is Jesus referring to here when He mentions His baptism? Not His water baptism. Rather Jesus is giving a picture of the agony that He is about to endure. H. Leo Boles in his commentary on Matthew has stated concerning this, "Incidentally we see what is meant by baptism; it is not a mere sprinkling of suffering, but an overwhelming of suffering in death" (247)

Suffice it to say, most times that baptism is mentioned in the New Testament, immersion in water is meant. Yet one must still examine the context of the passage to see what is truly being discussed.

What Is The Purpose of Baptism?

What does man say as compared to what the Bible clearly teaches? The *Handbook of Religious Quotations* gives us the following information:

- C The *Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* on pages 20-21 states, "Baptism is not essential to salvation ... but it is essential to obedience, since Christ commanded it. It is also essential to membership in the church which is his body" (Dawson 10)
- C The Baptist paper *Good News* in their March 2, 1972 issue wrote: "Is baptism necessary for salvation? I don't beat about the bush about it at all. I come out with a plain, definite, **no!** No, baptism doesn't save, doesn't help save, and I'll go even further to say that it doesn't have anything in this world to do with the saving of a soul" (Dawson 6)
- C The Seventh Day Adventist "Baptismal Vow" requires a person, *before* baptism, to answer this question: "...have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, and do you believe that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven your sins, and given you a new heart?" (Dawson 12).

This is why, when a person expresses a desire for baptism, most churches schedule him/her for a baptismal service someday in the future. They believe the person is saved, even though he has not been baptized, so there is no hurry. This is standard doctrine in nearly all Protestant denominations (though many make no major point of it).

Scriptures about the Purpose of Baptism

© **Mark 16:15,16 - He who believes and is baptized will be saved.**

Where does this passage place salvation in relation to baptism? Does salvation come before baptism or as a result of it? We can no more be saved before baptism than we can before believing. It is like $1 + 1 = 2$. Take away either of the "1's" and you no longer have two. Likewise if you take away either faith or baptism, you no longer have salvation.

Someone may respond, "It says you will be condemned if you don't believe, but it doesn't say you will be condemned if you are not baptized." The Bible does not always spell out what we have to do to be lost. It tells us what we have to do to be saved and expects us to realize that, if we don't do it, we will be lost. It says we must do **two** things to be **saved**. To be lost, you only need to omit one of them. If you don't have faith, you probably would not be baptized, and if you did it would not do any good. To be lost is easy - just don't believe. To be saved is harder - you must both believe and be baptized. Further, the person who has a true faith will believe that baptism is necessary. Jesus said to believe the **gospel** (vs 15). What does the gospel say? "*He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.*" What if I don't believe that? Then I don't believe the gospel! What does the passage say about people who don't believe the gospel?

Note the difference between what men say and what the Bible says:

© **Men say:** He who believes is saved and may then be baptized.

© **The gospel says:** He who believes and is baptized will be saved.

Both faith and baptism are essential in order to receive salvation. Remember, following human doctrines that differ from the gospel leads to condemnation (Galatians 1:8; Matthew 15:9; etc.).

© **Acts 2:38 - Repent and Be Baptized for Remission of Sins**

Where does this passage place remission in relation to baptism? Are sins forgiven (remitted) before baptism or as a result of it? Note that the **purpose** of baptism is clearly stated: it is **for remission** of sins.

What does "for remission of sins" mean? Some say that "for" means "because of," like "He received a ticket for speeding" - he received the ticket because he had been speeding, not in order that he might speed. "For" can have this meaning in English, but the word cannot mean this in Acts 2:38 (see ASV and other translations.)

Consider the people to whom Peter was speaking. If "for" means "because they already had remission," then Peter must have been talking to saved people. Was he? He had just convicted them of the sin of killing Jesus (36), and they were pricked in their hearts and asked what to do (37). They did not already have remission, but stood in need of receiving it. Peter then told them to "repent." If they already had remission, why did they need to repent?

The command to repent proves these people were not already saved, but were still sinners needing to receive remission. After verse 38, Peter told them to "be saved" from the wicked generation (40). If they were already saved, why tell them to be saved? Clearly these were not saved people being told what to do because they had remission. They were lost sinners being told what to do to receive remission. Hence, "for remission of sins" means "in order to receive remission."

Consider the parallel to Matthew 26:28. Acts 2:38 says be baptized "for remission of sins." Matthew 26:28 says Jesus blood would be shed for many "for remission of sins." Did Jesus shed His blood because people already had remission of sins? Not at all. He did it so people who did not have remission **could receive** it. Likewise baptism is not administered because people already have remission but so people who do not have it can receive it.

Suppose a person is baptized not realizing that this is the purpose for which he should be baptized. Suppose he believes he was saved before baptism. Would he be baptized in order to receive remission? How could he, if he believes he already has it? How then could his baptism be according to the pattern of God's word?

C 1 Peter 3:21 - Baptism Saves Us

Noah illustrates how we are saved. Verse 20 says he and his family were saved "by (or through) water." The flood water destroyed the wicked, but it also saved Noah because it bore the ark up, delivering (saving) Noah from death. This illustrates the fact that baptism is what saves us. This does not mean that we are physically washing dirt from our bodies. The power is not in the water but in the death and resurrection of Jesus. But we contact that blood in baptism.

C Galatians 3:27 - We Are Baptized into Jesus

How many people are in Christ? Just as many as have been baptized into Him. What if a person has not been baptized into Him? Then that person is not in Him. Why is it important to be in Christ?

C Ephesians 1:7 - Forgiveness of sins is in Christ.

C 2 Timothy 2:10 - Salvation is in Him.

C 1 John 5:11,12 - Eternal life is in the Son

C Ephesians 1:3 - All spiritual blessings are in Christ. [Cf. Romans 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 4:7]

If a person is outside Christ, he does not have forgiveness, salvation, eternal life, or spiritual blessings. But how does one come into Christ? He must be baptized into Christ. Then what is the condition of one who has not been baptized or who does not believe baptism is for the purpose of being saved?

Hearing, believing, repenting, and confession are all essential steps toward Christ, but baptism is the step that puts a person **into** Christ. Before baptism, a person is still outside Christ, still without forgiveness and the other blessings that are in Christ. If he wants those blessings, he must be baptized for the purpose of coming into Christ.

Who Should Be Baptized?

The following announcement appeared in a denominational bulletin: "This afternoon there will be a meeting in the north and south ends of the church building. Babies will be baptized at both ends." While amusing, there's more wrong with this statement than mere grammar alone. Are babies really fit subjects for baptism?

Most of those who practice "infant baptism" actually do not baptize their infants. No, they usually sprinkle, pour, or dab small amounts of water on the infant. According to its very definition, to baptize means to immerse. As one notices the cases where folks were being baptized by first century teachers (including Jesus and John the immerser), they went to the water, then went down into the water and came up out of the same.

Infant baptism is objectionable for several reasons.

- C *First, infant baptism is an unauthorized change in God's pattern for baptism.* God tells us whom to baptize. He tells the conditions people must meet in order to be baptized, but babies do not fit. To baptize babies is to act by human authority without divine authority.
- C *Second, infant baptism leads people to believe they are saved when they are not.* God requires people to be baptized for the remission of sins when they are old enough to make their own decision about the matter. But many people have been baptized as babies. Then, when they are old enough to be responsible for their conduct so they should be baptized, they refuse because they believe they have already done so. But their infant baptism was not Scriptural. So the person goes through his whole life never having been Scripturally baptized, and therefore he never has received forgiveness of his sins!
- C *A final objection to infant baptism is that it is almost always done by sprinkling or pouring, not by immersion.* But the Bible says that baptism is a burial (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12). A person must go down into the water and come up out of it (Acts 8:38,39; Mark 1:9,10). Bible baptism requires much water (John 3:23). Infant baptism does not fit God's pattern on any of these points. The evidence clearly shows that Bible baptism is an immersion, not a sprinkling or pouring.

There is no mention of infant baptism in the Bible. Where some may become confused on this is that in Acts 11:14; Acts 16:15, and 1 Corinthians 1:16 it is said that entire households were baptized. The assumption is then made that this must necessarily include infants. However, there are several things that preclude this conclusion.

- C The bible teaches, "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezekiel 18:20.) Matthew 18:3 states that we need to become as little children. If children are born with sin, then why would the Lord tell us to become such in order to enter into His kingdom?
- C Numerous passages teach that baptism is preceded by faith or reception of the message (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:41; 8:12). Infants are incapable of such faith or reception of the Word.
- C Acts 2:38 states that one must repent. Infants cannot do such.
- C Romans 10:10 and Acts 8:37 teach that one must confess faith in Jesus. Again an infant is incapable of speech.

So who should be baptized? The one who hears and acts on that hearing with belief. In their belief they then repent of their sins, not anyone else's. They are capable of confessing Jesus and are then baptized (immersed) for the remission of their sins.

Is Denominational Baptism Valid?

Many, even in the Lord's church, believe and teach that if one is baptized for the remission of sins, we must accept their baptism.

C *Are they then willing to accept those from the Latter Day Saints denomination? If not why not? Here is what they believe and teach as stated in the foundational LDS doctrine given as their Fourth Article of Faith: "We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion **for the remission of sins**; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost" (emp. JS) (Smith 1). Surely none would be so naive to accept a member of the LDS without being properly baptized.*

C *Would they accept one from the Seventh Day Adventist denomination? If not why not? Here is what they believe and practice concerning the mode of baptism.*

By baptism we confess our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and testify of our death to sin and of our purpose to walk in newness of life. Thus we acknowledge Christ as Lord and Saviour, become His people, and are received as members by His church. Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ, **the forgiveness of our sins**, and our reception of the Holy Spirit. It is by immersion in water and is contingent on an affirmation of faith in Jesus and evidence of repentance of sin. It follows instruction in the Holy Scriptures and acceptance of their teachings (Rom. 6:1-6; Col. 2:12, 13; Acts 16:30-33; 22:16; 2:38; Matt. 28:19, 20). (*What... 1*)

C *What about baptism in the Christian Church denomination? I believe we all realize that most of the Christian Church denomination also baptize for the remission of sins. Now for some reason many of our brethren will accept this denomination's baptism where they outright reject the others just mentioned. My question to them is why? I will state four reasons why one brother gave he believed it (Christian Church denomination baptism) to be invalid just as I do.*

1. First, they (as unbelievers, thus not in fellowship with God) have no authority to take his covenant into their mouths and try to teach others (Psalm 50:16).
2. The baptism they practice is not into the one body...they are a different body (1 Corinthians 12:13).
3. They have no authority to invoke the name (or authority) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18,19; Mark 16:15,16; Colossians 3:16).
4. According to Acts 8:12, the gospel presentation consists of at least these

points: "*But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings* [#1-the gospel: death, burial, and resurrection] *concerning the kingdom of God* [#2-the church] *and the name of Jesus Christ* [#3-the name Christian ONLY and what it means], *they were baptized* [#4-the plan of salvation unto remission of sins], *both men and women*" (Haley).

The christian church denomination does not teach the truth regarding these subjects.

As has been said correctly by so many: "YOU CANNOT BE TAUGHT WRONG CONCERNING SALVATION, THE UNIQUENESS OF THE ONE CHURCH AND THE ESSENTIALITY OF BAPTISM AND BE BAPTIZED CORRECTLY!" Another fine brother says it this way. "Is denominational baptism valid? Can one hear, believe, obey and be added to that which is without God and Christ, that which is evil, that which is corrupted, tainted, that which is a lie and be added to the one true church? I do not believe it for a moment. If God did take one from a denomination and add him to the Lord's church (and He does not) then God would be doing that without that persons knowledge or consent" (Yeager).

Even though many of our "sound" brethren believe and teach that there are not "Christians" in denominations (and there are not), they still teach that some denominational baptism is valid. Brethren we cannot have it both ways! We cannot sneak into the Lord's church through a denomination!

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