

TOPICAL STUDIES

BAPTISM AND REBAPTISM



SUMMARY: Baptism is an act of worship of a consenting adult taken to be added to the Lord's church. The scriptural form of baptism is by immersion of a consenting adults for the remission of sins. It is our understanding that if you were baptized in a church which did not teach the scriptural form, the scriptural reason, and the scriptural impact of baptism, you need to be rebaptized.

Baptism is an act of worship of a consenting adult taken to be added to the Lord's church. The use of the word "baptism" in the New Testament is a transliteration of the Greek word "baptiso" rather than a translation to the English word immerse. Acts 2:38 would properly be translated "Repent and be immersed for the remission of sins". Sprinkling or pouring (affusion) are not scripturally authorized alternatives.

Starting the new church on the day of Pentecost, Peter said in Acts 2:38: "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins". Peter did not need to give an explanation of what the term meant. That meant it was clear the audience already knew what it meant. This is verified by the fact that alternatives to immersion were not occurring for more than 100 years later.

VERSES NOT INDICATING THE MODE OF BAPTISM:

There are numerous verses mentioning baptism which give no indication of the mode of baptism. Consider Acts 2:38 as an example.

VERSES INDICATING BAPTISM WAS AN IMMERSION:

Matt. 3:16, Mk. 1:10 John was baptizing and baptized Jesus, and Jesus "came up immediately from the water".

John 3:5 NASB "Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

John 3:23 NASB "John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized" Why did he need much water?

Acts 2:38 NASB "Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" This is said as the word baptized meant immersion in the first century. See discussion of the definition of baptism which follows.

Acts 8:36-39 NASB "As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water,

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Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.“ If sprinkling or pouring were acceptable alternatives, they would not have needed to locate a body of water, go down into the water, or come up out of the water.

Romans 6:4-6 NASB “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,”

Colossians 2:12 NASB “having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”

Ephesians 4:5, NASB “one Lord, one faith, one baptism,” would suggest that there is only one kind of baptism rather than choices.

VERSES WHICH INDICATE POURING (AFFUSION) OR SPRINKLING ARE SCRIPTURAL:

None we can find.

Historical references indicate pouring over one’s head or affusion was being done by some in the second century. The first case of sprinkling was in the third century (AD 251) of Novation who was on his death bed. In AD 1311 the Council of Ravenna officially substituted sprinkling for baptism in the Catholic church.

There appears to be no question but that in the first century baptism was a burial or an immersion in water. There is indication that many baptisms may have been “face first” into the water than our customary laying backwards. This is due to the shape of some Jewish Mikveh which were likely used and were small in comparison to contemporary baptistries. The Jewish Mikveh were used for Jewish purification rites. Christening is associated with removal of the “original sin”, which is not a scriptural concept. An unscriptural cure for an unscriptural problem.

FORM OF BAPTISM

The first century definition of the word translated as baptism in the New Testament is pertinent to the understanding of this subject. It is, however, clouded by 2000 years of doctrines, modifications, and perceptions. Our old standby, Nestle’s Interlinear Greek-English New Testament translates the Greek to “to be baptized”, using the transliterated word. If the word for baptism meant to be immersed, Nestle avoids the problem.

Hugo McCord, a deceased member of the church, was approach in the 1980’s about doing a Bible translation for Nelson Publishing. He wanted to use the word immersion in Acts 2:38 but Nelson Publishing said it would limit their potential audience. Instead of inking the deal,

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McCord published his own and it is called McCord's New Testament Translation of the Everlasting Gospel.

The figure on the right is from page 18 of the GREEK DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT from ABINGTON'S STRONG'S EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE OF THE BIBLE. Paragraphs 907-911 show all the definitions of baptism related words, with most of the definitions being somewhat vague. The definition #911 is the most pertinent, specifically stating that it means "to whelm, i.e. cover wholly with a fluid".

It then goes on to soften the definition by saying only in the N.T. it might mean something else.

Can you imagine the distinction required to suggest that a word meant something in the first century, except when the New Testament was written. The New Testament writers were not some radicals trying to reinvent the Greek language. They were simply trying to document the truth.

REASON FOR BAPTISM

Originally consenting adults were baptized. It became official doctrine in A.D. 1311 to sprinkle babies.

This was to presumably to counteract the "original sin" of Adam and Eve of which it was thought babies were guilty. It is suggested that it was a "marketing" decision to get the children committed to the church early.

"but Jesus said, 'let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.' " Matt 19:14 Jesus thought the small children were so sinless that they were representative of what we should all become.

EFFECT OF BAPTISM

Calvinistic teachings of the 16th century emphasized the salvation is the free gift of god. You can do nothing to earn your salvation.

906. βάλλω **ballō**, *bal'-lo*; a prim. verb; to throw (in various applications, more or less violent or intense):—arise, cast (out), × dung, lay, lie, pour, put (up), send, strike, throw (down), thrust. Comp. 4406.
907. βαπτίζω **baptizō**, *bap-tid'-zo*; from a der. of *qrr*; to make whelmed (i.e. fully wet); used only (in the N. T.) of ceremonial ablution, espec. (techn.) of the ordinance of Chr. baptism:—baptist, baptize, wash.
908. βάπτισμα **baptisma**, *bap'-tis-mah*; from *q07*; baptism (techn. or fig.):—baptism.
909. βαπτισμός **baptismōs**, *bap-tis-mos'*; from *q07*; ablution (cerem. or Chr.):—baptism, washing.
910. Βαπτιστής **Baptistēs**, *bap-tis-tace'*; from *q07*; a baptizer, as an epithet of Christ's forerunner:—Baptist.
911. βάπτω **baptō**, *bap'-to*; a prim. verb; to whelm, i.e. cover wholly with a fluid; in the N. T. only in a qualified or spec. sense, i.e. (lit.) to moisten (a part of one's person), or (by impl.) to stain (as with dye):—dip.
912. Βαραββᾶς **Barabbas**, *bar-ab-bas'*; of Chald. or. [1247 and 5]; son of Abba; Bar-abbas, an Isr.:—Barabbas.

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If you are requiring baptism for the remission of sins, you are performing a work and are thereby earning your salvation.

So you must have salvation before you are baptized, and baptism is an outward show.

The Bible teaches baptism is “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Pick your choice of human logic or what the bible says.

IS THIS CRITICAL?

How critical is it that you are baptized by the scriptural form, for the scriptural reason, and that you understand the impact of what is happening?

You are highly intelligent, literate, and probably own several Bibles. Do you think you will have a lax judgment?

REBAPTISM

It has been the custom of the Churches of Christ to not accept the baptism of a denominational group **to become a member of that group**, even though it may have been done with the correct intent and procedures. Why would you call this a custom? The Churches of Christ have no earthly headquarters to issue an earthly ruling on an issue like this. Each congregation is locally autonomous. It has been a practice generally accepted in Church of Christ congregations, or customarily accepted.

It is our understand that this became our custom because to do otherwise would make each congregation responsible for making judgment calls on what actually happened, the actual intents, and the memory of the prospective member is a pressing situation (Then and now).

Additionally, when a congregation accepts the baptism of a church such as a Methodist church which normally teaches sprinkling, the message received would be that a Methodist baptism was acceptable. Any details would be lost in the conversations.

It can set a potentially a bad precedent:

1. It is questionable to accept someone’s baptism and give them comfort that they are all right when they may not be so.
2. If their baptism was not all right and you gave them comfort that it was all right, you incur some portion of liability judgment day (Teachers incur a stricter judgment, James 3:1)
3. It is a simple matter to follow the New Testament example of rebaptism (Acts 19:1-6) and be sure.

In the first paragraph above under the heading of REBAPTISM, the statement “to become a member of that group” is highlighted. This is because there are no qualifications of the baptisor. If a person goes into a Methodist church and asked to be baptized by immersion for the forgiveness of sins to become a member of Jesus’ church and walks out, that is one

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thing. If they continue to attend the Methodist church and therefore present that the teaching of the Methodist church are acceptable, it becomes a different thing at some point.

A friend Leon did this in a Baptist church which taught he was saved before baptism and it was a sin to say baptism was for the forgiveness of sins as that would be earning your salvation. He had attended the Baptist church for several years and continued for several years thereafter. What should he do?

Consider the following scenario to try to understand what is happening: George is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit by immersion for the remission of sins on June 1 in a denominational building where unscriptural baptism is taught.

1. Under which of the following conditions can we give comfort that George is saved on June 2 of the same year:
 - a. He had read the Bible, learned the truth, went to the first church building he found and requested baptism but promptly thereafter found and attended a scriptural church.
 - b. He had attended that denomination for the past 10 years as a child.
 - c. He had attended that denomination for the past 10 years as an adult.
2. Under which of the following can we give George comfort that he is saved 10 years later:
 - a. He continues to attend that denomination and wears its name, although he speaks against the baptismal practices of that denomination.
 - b. He continues to attend that denomination and wears its name and does not speak against the baptismal practices of that denomination.
 - c. He becomes a leader of that congregation and teaches the baptism of that denomination.
3. Where would you draw the line in participation in our congregation:

a. Attending our worship services	la	lb	lc	2a	2b	2c
b. Partaking of communion at our services	la	lb	lc	2a	2b	2c
c. Added to our membership rolls.	la	lb	lc	2a	2b	2c
d. Becoming a Bible Class teacher	la	lb	lc	2a	2b	2c
e. Becoming a Deacon or Elder	la	lb	lc	2a	2b	2c
4. When we accept the baptism of a 2a person but not a 2c person, would everyone understand that we were accepting 2a and not 2c, or would it be teaching that we were accepting baptisms of that denomination. Would your acceptance of 2a or even lb be encouraging people of all alphanumeric combinations to trust in a questionable baptism?

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5. When you encourage people to trust in questionable baptisms by giving the comfort of acceptance, are you effectively teaching error?
6. A problem of the above is that it is neatly divided into 30 different categories. This is an oversimplification as there are lots of subcategories between those categories. Wherever you come up with clarity between two points, someone will present a case midway between the clear points which will not be so clear.

The answer to this is that the leaders of all congregations need to be able to practically handle this situation. Is it reasonable to put on the shoulders of every leader the responsibility of making these judgments when the details are sketchy, sometimes prejudiced, and frequently forgotten? Is that a reasonable thing for a new prospective member to ask of the shepherds who are already busy shepherding? Is it our job to be submitting to Jesus. Is this not a reasonable submission to be making it so that everyone is clear on the situation?

For you individually, if you have concluded that the Church of Christ is the right place for you to be and it is a problem for you to be rebaptized, consider the plight you may be putting someone else in. The leaders of the congregation have a personal responsibility for your soul on judgment day. Is it reasonable for them to have to make questionable decisions with each new member realizing some will be wrong, or is it more practical for each new member with a questionable baptism to simply be rebaptized? Rebaptism will not be a bad thing, and it gives everyone an assurance of having followed the scriptural example.

YOUR PARENTS:

One point sometimes heard is that if I am baptized by immersion and/or become a member of the Church of Christ, I am saying my parents are going to Hell. First thing to realize, especially if your parents have already passed, is that nothing you do is going to impact their judgment. They will take their lives to judgment and see what happens. If they are alive and you conclude that your following the gospel scripturally says bad things about their choices, it should be your role to make that demonstration for their sakes.

Secondly, you need to look in the opposite direction. If you are concluding that following the scriptures is an indication that your parents may be in trouble but want to continue as you are for the honor of your parents, what happens next. Will your children honor you by putting their judgment at risk also? Whereas you likely have no impact on your parent's judgment, you will be a serious influence on your children's judgment.

REBAPTISM CONCLUSION:

It is our understanding that if you were baptized in a church which did not teach the scriptural form, the scriptural reason, and the scriptural impact of baptism, you need to be rebaptized. We will only know on judgment day if what we are saying is right. You are a free moral agent and can make your choice. However, do you want to gamble with eternity?

QUIZ OF THE DAY:

Who was the first person recorded in the Bible as objecting to being re-baptized according to the word of God? See how many clues you need to read to know the answer.

Clues:

It was a man

He was baptized in the Jordan river

He was commanded to do immersion (what baptized means)

He had a better idea of what to do instead

He needed to be rebaptized repetitively

He needed to be baptized first so he could be rebaptized

He was baptized 7 times or rebaptized 6 times

It was not for the remission of sins

He was a Gentile

He was from Aram

He was an army captain

He was cured of leprosy

II Kings 5:1-27

He was cured of leprosy by Elisha

Answer: Naaman