

pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Acts 8:38-39, Romans 6:3-5).¹

The Significance of Baptism

Just before he returned to heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ gave to his followers the Great Commission, which states, “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 alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Mt 28:19-20) Baptism is the second part of this commission. He gave it not as a choice, but as a command. Thus, baptism is a church “ordinance” like the Lord’s Supper.

Baptism is not a “sacrament.” A sacrament is “A formal religious act in which the actions and materials used are the channels by which God’s grace is communicated, either actually or symbolically.”² The idea of sacraments is manmade and not found in the Bible. Baptism is not a channel of God’s grace. It is an act of obedience, an identification with Christ, and a public testimony of salvation. “And he [Peter] commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.” (Ac 10:48) Every Christian ought to be baptised after he or she is saved to obey the Lord’s command and out of love for the Lord. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (Joh 14:15).

¹The five fundamentals of the Faith are: 1) The Bible is the Word of God. 2) Jesus Christ is God. 3) Jesus bled and died for our sins. 4) Jesus rose bodily from the grave. 5) Only repentance and faith in Christ’s atonement can save us from eternal judgment in the Lake of Fire.

²“Sacrament,” Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary

The Meaning of the Word Baptism

Our English word “baptism” comes from the Greek word “baptizw, baptizo” which means “to immerse.” Strong’s Greek Lexicon defines it “to immerse, submerge; to make overwhelmed.” Thayer’s Greek Lexicon defines *baptizo*, “to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk).” It is to plunge under the water, not to sprinkle or to pour water over. Baptist historian Thomas Armitage tells us that “All ecclesiastical writers agree with Venema that: ‘Without controversy baptism, in the primitive Church, was administered by immersion into water, and not by sprinkling.’”³ Bible examples of baptisms also support the original meaning. “And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.” (Joh 3:23) “And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.” (Mr 1:5) “And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:” (Mr 1:10) “And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” (Ac 8:38)

Baptism Always Follows Salvation

Scriptural candidates for baptism were always believers in Christ. They had repented of their sins and turned to Christ alone for salvation from hell. In the Great Commission (above) Jesus commanded to teach all nations,

³Armitage, Thomas, *The History of the Baptists*, Maranatha Baptist Press, 1976, p. 160.

then to baptise them. The word translated “teach” is “mayhteuw, *matheteuo*” which means “to make a disciple.” Baptism was to follow becoming a disciple of Christ. The Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip if he could be baptised, “And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” (Ac 8:37) The only people who ought to be baptised are those who have a clear testimony of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.

Baptism is Not Part of Salvation

Salvation is by grace through faith alone. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*” (Eph 2:8-9) Paul clearly distinguished baptism as an ordinance separate from salvation. “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” (1Co 1:17) The few verses that appear to link baptism and salvation must be interpreted in the light of the overwhelming majority of verses on the subject. Multitudes of verses explain God’s plan of salvation but never mention baptism. For example, “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” (Joh 3:15)

Infant Baptism is Not Found in the Bible

Infant baptism comes from church tradition, not from the Bible. There is not even one example of infant baptism in the Bible. Infants cannot possibly believe on the Lord for salvation, and the Bible teaches that repentance

and faith in Christ must always precede baptism.

J. M. Cramp in his book *Baptist History* quotes several non-Baptists on this subject. North British Review, *Presbyterian*, "Scripture knows nothing of the baptism of infants. There is absolutely not a single trace of it to be found in the New Testament." Professor Jacobi, University of Berlin, *Reformed Church*. "Infant baptism was established neither by Christ nor by the Apostles." Dr. Woods, *Congregationalist*, "We have no express precept or example for infant baptism in all our holy writings."⁴ Armitage again tells us that "we have no record of one martyr, confessor, writer or member, in any Church being baptized as a babe, for the first two hundred and fifty years of Christianity."⁵ Those who teach that infant sprinkling replaces Old Testament circumcision have no Scripture to support their claims. It is a manmade teaching of the Roman Church which Reformed churches have not put away. We must conclude that infant baptism is not Scriptural baptism, but an erring church tradition. Though humbling, a Christian who was baptised as a baby still needs to be baptised by immersion now that he or she is saved.

Baptism by Immersion Pictures Death, Burial and Resurrection

Both **Romans 6:4** and **Colossians 2:12** tell us that baptism pictures death, burial and resurrection and our identification with Christ's

⁴Cramp, J. M., *Baptist History: from the Foundation of the Christian Church to the Present Time*, London, 1871, pp. 6-7.

⁵Armitage, p. 179

burial and resurrection. No other mode of baptism besides immersion can form this picture. We do not sprinkle dirt over a dead person; we completely bury him.

Conclusion

Baptism is not part of salvation, but every Christian ought to be baptised after he or she is saved to obey the Lord's command and to express love for the Lord. Baptism pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord. It is an act of obedience, identification with the Lord, and a public testimony. Immersion represents the original meaning of the word and is the only mode of baptism mentioned in the Bible. Since infant baptism is not the baptism commanded in the Bible, a person who was sprinkled as a baby still needs to be baptised after salvation. Baptism ought to be administered by a church that believes the fundamentals of the faith. A person baptised in church that rejects the fundamentals of the faith needs to be baptised properly.

If you have trusted Christ alone to save your soul, but have not since been baptised by immersion, you really need to do so. Why not talk to your pastor about it right away?

Baptism in the Bible



by Pastor Scott Childs

What Is Baptism

Biblical baptism is when a man, authorized by a local church that believes the fundamentals of the faith, publicly immerses in water a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as an act of obedience and a testimony of his salvation. The believer must first give evidence that he has repented of his sins and trusted Christ alone for eternal salvation. Biblical baptism is by immersion only and has nothing to do with salvation. It always follows salvation and