

Baptism, How, Who, Why, and When

There are a number of baptisms mentioned in the New Testament. There is the baptism (immersion) of the Holy Spirit, fire, of suffering, the baptism of John, and water baptism (Acts 1: 5, Matt. 3: 11, 20: 22, 21: 25, Acts 10: 47, 48). However, by the year AD 62 there was only one baptism (Eph. 4: 5). Subsequent to Paul's inspired statement regarding "one baptism," the apostle Peter wrote, "And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you..." (I Pet. 3: 21, NASV). The baptism to which Peter alludes is clearly water baptism (vs. 20).

It is evident from the Great Commission that water baptism was to be an indispensable part of the preaching of the saving gospel (Matt. 28: 18, 19, Mk. 16: 15, 16). The Book of Acts, the record of the fulfillment of the Great Commission, contains the consistent examples of people being baptized in water as part of their coming to God (Acts 2: 38, 41, 8: 12,13, 36-40, 9: 18, 16: 33, 18: 8, etc.). It is also apparent that the baptism of the Great Commission (applicable to all men) was water baptism (Acts 8: 38, 10: 47). In spite of the simple presentation of water baptism found in the scriptures, there remains much confusion about baptism. We shall attempt to remove this confusion by approaching baptism from the standpoint of how, who, why, and when should a person be baptized.

How were people in the First Century baptized? Intelligent reader, the water baptism of the New Testament was immersion (Acts 8: 36-39, cf. Jn. 3: 23, Matt. 3: 16). Baptism is a burial (Rom. 6: 4, Col. 2: 12). Sprinkling and/or pouring do not fulfill the requirements of baptism being a burial. In fact, the common Greek noun (baptisma) transliterated baptism means immersion, "baptism, consisting of the processes of immersion, submersion, and emergence..." (W.E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words). The first recorded case of pouring was not until 251 AD. The case of 251 AD was considered the exception, even by its promoters. It was not until 1311 AD that sprinkling and/or pouring were accepted by man (thirteen centuries too late for apostolic approval, see quotations regarding "baptism" in Quotations, accessed from the home page).

Who is to be baptized? The simple answer is the taught are to be baptized (Jn. 6: 44, 45). Disciples are made by teaching and baptism (Matt. 28: 19, ASV). Baptism is for those who believe, are penitent, and confess that Jesus is the Son of God (Mk. 16: 15, 16, Acts 2: 38, 8: 36, 37, KJV, Rom. 10: 9, 10). It is of no surprise, then, to read: "But when they believed Philip preaching...they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8: 12, see 5: 14). (Again, please visit Quotations, see "baptism," and "infants"). Beloved, the practice of "baptizing" infants came after the writing of the New Testament and is without divine authority or approval (see 2 Jn. 9-11).

Why should one be baptized? Water baptism has multiple accomplishments. One should be baptized in order to obtain the remission of sin (Acts 2: 38, 22: 16). All spiritual blessings and redemption are in Christ (Eph. 1: 3, 7). However, baptism is the act that gains entrance into Christ or places one in Jesus (Gal. 3: 26, 27, I Cor. 12: 13). One should be baptized to be saved

(Mk. 16: 16, I Pet. 3: 21), to put on Christ (Gal. 3: 26, 27), and to be born again (Jn. 3: 5). Baptism is a command of God and is essential to obedience (Acts 10: 47, 48, obedience is necessary to being saved, Heb. 5: 8, 9).

Concerned reader, water baptism stands between the lost and a spiritual washing in the blood of Jesus (Acts 22: 16, Matt. 26: 28, I Pet. 3: 21). Furthermore, baptism stands between the sinner and being a new creature (2 Cor. 5: 17, Gal. 3: 27, Rom. 6: 5, 6), the promise of the Spirit (Acts 2: 38, cf. 3: 19), and the death of Jesus (Rom. 6: 3-5). Moreover, one cannot partake of the blessings of the Kingdom of God and exercise a good conscience without water baptism (Jn. 3: 3-5, I Pet. 3: 21).

When is the appropriate or scriptural time to be baptized? Many religions practice periodical baptisms (monthly, etc.). This practice reflects the lack of belief of the foregoing teaching of the scriptures. When the people asked what to do in order to be saved and Peter told them to repent and be baptized for the remission of sin, we read, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized..." (Acts 2: 37, 38, 41). When the man from Ethiopia had Jesus preached to him, his immediate response was, "see, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8: 36.) The Jailer heard the gospel at a very inopportune time (Acts 16: 25 ff.). Notwithstanding, we read "...and was baptized he and all his, straightway" (or immediately, dm. Vs. 33). It is obvious that the scriptures do not teach "water salvation" or "baptismal regeneration." However, the people were immediately baptized in apostolic times because baptism was a necessary part of preaching and accepting Christ, the people understood the urgent and essential nature of water baptism.

My friend, if you have not been scripturally baptized, "what doth hinder me (you, dm) to be baptized?" (Acts 8: 36.)