

DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMS

- I. Introduction.
 - A. When considering the issue of baptism, many believers likely think of Christian baptism, the immersion of a believer into water after salvation.
 - B. However, there are a number of baptisms referenced in the Word of God, some of which involve water and some of which do not.
 - C. Baptism as a rite of immersion was not begun by Christians, but taken from Jewish and pagan forms, and invested with new meaning.
 - 1. The emphasis on Jewish washings, as well as pagan ritual washings, was upon the cleansing factor.
 - 2. However, this emphasis is one that a thinking person would reject, unless that person believed that physical means (water) could remove spiritual pollution from the body.
 - 3. Some pagans, as well as Philo and Josephus, disputed the idea that physical bathing could wash away defilement or sins from the soul.
 - 4. *“For Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness toward one another, and piety toward God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body: supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 18:117*
 - 5. The Bible removes any doubt that external rituals can cleanse the soul from sin. IPet. 3:21 cf. Heb. 10:1-11
 - D. The two primary views of water baptism are the sacramental view and the ritual view.
 - 1. The sacramental view.
 - a. This view rests on an interpretation of Scripture that views salvation as a drama which is played out in the progression of time.
 - b. The term **sacrament** comes from the Latin, *sacramentum*, which refers to a token, pledge, or down payment.
 - c. This view declares that three things happen to one who has been elected by God and undergoes the process of water baptism.
 - 1.) He dies with Christ to his old self.
 - 2.) He rises with Christ to become a new creature.
 - 3.) He is incorporated into a living community of believers.
 - 2. This view obviously confuses several issues including:
 - a. mistaking ritual for reality.
 - b. failure to distinguish between salvation, Ph1 and Ph2.
 - c. believing that baptism (a ritual) is efficacious (reality).
 - 3. Since those that hold this view believe baptism actually accomplishes certain things, they regularly administer this rite to infants, who are then theoretically "saved", and entered into union with Christ and the Church.
 - 4. The original Baptist view.
 - a. This view declares that baptism is the initial washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

- b. It further indicates that this was the assignment that the risen Lord had commissioned His followers to administer to later followers, as a token of their salvation.
 - c. This view states that several blessings are associated with baptism, including:
 - 1.) the forgiveness of sins. Acts 2:38
 - 2.) union with Christ. Gal. 3:26
 - 3.) receiving of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38
 - 4.) membership in the body of Christ. ICor. 12:13
- 5. Generally, this view teaches that the outward ritual confirms and seals to the recipient the knowledge of these blessings, rather than imparting these blessings.
 - a. They stress the cognitive nature of the ritual rather than the sacramental nature of it.
 - b. Generally, although not exclusively, they employ immersion as the correct form of baptism.
 - c. The hallmark of this view is that baptism is restricted to believers.
- 6. This view fails to understand the full nature of the difference between ritual and reality.
- 7. Neither of these views, or variations on them, fully address the issue of water baptism, which will be dealt with in greater detail.
- 8. This doctrine will describe and define the eight, distinct baptisms found in the Word of God.
- 9. It should also be noted that baptisms are declared to be part of the elementary doctrines of the faith. Heb. 6:1-2

II. Vocabulary.

- A. There is no Hebrew vocabulary for our English term baptism, although the Jews were certainly familiar with ritual washings. Ex. 29:4, 30:19; Mk. 7:4
- B. Greek vocabulary.
 - 1. βάπτω (bapto), verb, 3X, to dip, dip into or submerge.
 - 2. βαπτίζω (baptizo), verb, 80X, to dip repeatedly, to immerse or submerge one object into another.
 - 3. βάπτισμα (baptisma, n.noun, 22X, the institution or ordinance of baptism, immersion, or submersion.
 - 4. βαπτισμός (baptisoms), m.noun, 4X, a purification that is effected by washing in water.
 - 5. βαπτιστής (baptistes), m.noun, 14X, a baptizer, one who administers baptism; this term is used only of John the Baptist in the New Testament.

III. Definition and description.

- A. The word group deals primarily with the concept of identifying one object with another.
- B. This is usually accomplished by immersing the object in view into something else.
- C. In Homer, Ulysses' spear which pierced the eye of Cyclops was said to sound like, "the smith when he baptized the hot metal into the water to temper it."
- D. In Xenophon, new recruits were required to dip their spear tips into the blood of a pig as a ceremony symbolizing the reality that their spears would shed further blood.
- E. The term never means to christen or name, as it is commonly used in certain denominations today.
- F. Christian, water baptism is defined as the action of one believer immersing another believer into water as a token or ritual of the present, internal reality of salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and of Spirit baptism.

1. The ritual is designed to portray the believer's union with Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection; thus, it is designed to emphasize retroactive positional truth (RAPT) and current positional truth (CPT).
2. It does not effect these realities, it is merely a claim ritual that is designed to depict the fact that these realities are present.

IV. Wet or ritual baptisms.

A. John the Baptist. Matt. 3:1-11; Mk. 1:4-5; Jn. 1:25-33

1. This baptism was based on repentance or a change of mind.
2. Israel was largely in unbelief and had substituted ritual for reality, adhering to a works oriented approach to salvation.
3. John the Baptist taught that the people must change their mind in regard to this matter and believe on the One who was coming after John to take away their sins. Jn. 1:29

B. The baptism of Christ. Matt. 3:13-17; Mk.1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-23

1. It should be evident that Jesus did not come to John to be baptized to demonstrate a change of mind, nor did He come to confess any sins to John. Matt. 3:6
2. His baptism was designed to picture something quite different; as He was baptized in the Jordan river, He demonstrated his identification with humanity and the real baptism He would undergo with respect to the sins of the world. Lk. 12:50

C. Christian baptism.

1. This ritual was commanded of the disciples by the risen Lord prior to His final ascension. Matt. 28:16-20
2. It was a regular practice of the Church from the day of Pentecost forward. Acts 2:38,41, 8:26-38, 9:18, 10:44-48
3. Paul indicates that it was a regular feature of his ministry, although he himself did not baptize many. ICor. 1:10-17
4. It was still understood and taught as a common and accepted practice at the time Peter writes his first epistle (c. 63-65 A.D.) IPet. 3:21
5. Water baptism is the normal and expected response from a believer that has had his sins forgiven and his conscience cleansed. IPet. 3:21
6. It is to be administered to believers only. Acts 2:41
7. It portrays the realities of retroactive and current positional truth; it is simply a visible teaching aid for the invisible baptism of the Holy Spirit. Rom. 6:3-4; ICor. 12:13

V. Dry or real baptisms.

A. The bearing of sins by Jesus is called a baptism for the obvious reason that He was willing to identify Himself (bear) with the sins of humanity. Lk. 12:50

B. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, which occurs at the point of faith in Christ, places the believer into union with Christ. Rom. 6:3-4; ICor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27

1. In every dispensation, the Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration. Jn.3:1ff.
2. In the Church Age, the Holy Spirit regenerates (Tit. 3:5), baptizes (ICor. 12:13), seals (Eph. 4:30), indwells (Rom. 8:9), and imparts a spiritual gift to each believer. Rom. 12:4-6; IPet. 4:10
3. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is peculiar to the Church Age, and is the basis for equality, unity, and royalty in the Church Age.
4. Jesus foretold this reality during the Incarnation. Jn.14:17; Acts 1:5

5. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the ministry whereby the Holy Spirit enters the believer into union with Jesus Christ, so that the believer shares the election and destiny of Christ, Gal.3:26-28.
6. The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs at the point of salvation; it is not perceived experientially, neither is it some second work of grace. Col.2:12-13
- C. The baptism of fire deals with the time of God's wrath; this occurs when Christ returns to planet earth to establish his kingdom. Matt. 3:11-12; IIThess. 1:7-8; Zech. 14:12-15
- D. Israel will undergo the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Millennium, since they were not a part of the dispensation of the Church Age. Joel. 2:28
- E. This was illustrated on the day of Pentecost, as a partial fulfillment of this prophecy. Acts 2:16ff

VI. There is one dry baptism which is typological in nature. ICor. 10:2

- A. The Red Sea crossing is called a shadow of positional truth.
- B. Paul calls this a baptism into Moses.
 1. Moses is a type of Christ.
 2. The cloud overhead is a type of Christ.
 3. The water on either side of the Jews in the Red Sea, which provided protection for them speaks of eternal security.
- C. For the Jews, their identification with Moses was dry; this was not so for the Egyptians.
- D. The same water that protected the Jews, destroyed the Egyptians. cf. IPet. 3:21

VII. Concluding observations.

- A. While some have rejected water baptism as one of the rituals for the Church Age, the command of the Lord has not been rescinded in any of the epistles. Matt. 28:19-20
- B. Therefore, it is the position of this local church that the rituals of water baptism and the Lord's Table are to be observed throughout this dispensation.
- C. While one can make a strong argument that the Bible does not specify the mode for water baptism, contextual evidence strongly argues for immersion as the proper mode.
 1. First the ancient usages of the Greek word βαπτίζω (baptizo—baptize) suggests that full immersion is in view.
 2. Second, why would John make the Jordan river the site of his activities, as opposed to doing it in an urban setting, unless a good deal of water was required? Jn. 1:28
 3. Third, why does John mention that John the Baptist picked a particular site because of the large amount of water present? Jn. 3:23
 4. Fourth, why did people always appear to go down into the water if sprinkling or pouring was what was being practiced? Mk. 1:9; Acts 8:38
- D. The biblical record certainly seems to imply that all those that believed in Christ for salvation engaged in the ritual of water baptism. Acts 2:41, 8:12, 18:8; ICor. 1:13
- E. Water baptism is a ritual, it is not reality; therefore, water baptism is the first act of obedience following salvation, it is not necessary for salvation. Lk. 23:43