

CHAPTER 5 LET'S BE BAPTIZED

In our preceding study, we learned there are but two ordinances--the Lord's Supper and baptism. We also learned that an ordinance is a tradition or a rite we practice. Baptism is not a sacrament. By this, we mean it has no saving power. Later in this study, we will look at some specific verses of Scripture which deal with the matter of baptismal regeneration and show that it is a non-Biblical supposition.

Next, I want to emphasize that baptism should follow our conversion experience. Only believers in our Lord Jesus Christ should be baptized. Many people have a certificate of baptism which is dated soon after they were born. They cannot remember the service nor did they express their desire to be baptized. This decision was made for them. Their parents had the best in mind for them, I am sure. They wanted their children to follow the Lord, and therefore, followed the teachings of their church in having them baptized.

This was my experience. I grew up in a church which baptized infants. My parents, wanting the best for me, had me baptized when I was still an infant. I grew up in this church. When I was twelve years of age, I took some classes and then joined the church. However, it was not until I was eighteen years of age that I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and committed my life to Him.

Because I had grown up within the church, I continued to fellowship with them. However, after two years of the study of God's Word, I became convinced that I needed to be baptized and that the baptism should be by immersion. Even though I was not unhappy with this church, the course of events led me away from its practices as I endeavored to be obedient to my Lord and His Word.

The Greek word BAPTIZO did not have any religious significance when it was first used in the Greek language. It was used of fullers who dipped their garments in dye. The word was also used when an individual might dip a vessel into water to draw some out, or when a person would draw some wine out of a vessel by dipping a cup into a bowl.

Later, the word took on religious meaning as certain sects of Judaism began to practice ceremonial cleansing by bathing. John the Baptist gave the word new meaning as he baptized people who repented of their sin. You

CHAPTER 5 LET'S BE BAPTIZED

will note that all of his baptisms took place in the Jordan River. Even though it states in Mark 1:4 "John did baptize in the wilderness," it is explained in the next verse, "they went out unto him...and were all baptized by him in the river of Jordan." If we had only verse 4, we might be led to think John used some well out in the wilderness from which he drew the water and sprinkled his converts. But, no, he took them down to the Jordan for the baptism. He needed a large body of water because he needed to dip the people in the water for the baptism.

John the Baptist had the privilege of baptizing the Lord Jesus Christ even though he personally felt unworthy for the task. Yet, our Lord came to him and identified with his ministry and message by being baptized. All four gospel writers make it clear that Jesus went down to the Jordan River to be baptized of John. Both Matthew and Mark state specifically that the people were baptized "in the Jordan."

Later, the disciples of our Lord baptized many people who committed themselves to the message of Christ.

However, Christian baptism did not take place until after the commission of our Lord was given in Matthew 28:19 and 20, and the gospel was declared ten days later on the day of Pentecost by the Apostle Peter.

All of these baptisms were by immersion. The word "baptize" means "to dip" or "immerse." The Scriptures give testimony to the fact that they baptized "in" water. Never do we find baptism taking place in the New Testament at a well of water or from a pitcher or out of a bowl. Archeology and church history also testify to immersion as the primitive mode of baptism. Even men who teach sprinkling as a mode for baptism testify that the first mode was by immersion.

Recently, I visited the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth. It is a beautiful edifice built by gifts from the Roman Catholic churches of all the nations in the world. Just below the altar of this structure are the remains of a church built in the second or third century. The monk who was guiding us through the church commented about the baptismal fount which was used to baptize people by immersion in the early centuries.

One of the church's great historians, Philip Schaff, who was a member of a church which practices sprinkling, states that there can be no doubt that

CHAPTER 5 LET'S BE BAPTIZED

immersion and not sprinkling, was the original form of baptism. Luther and Calvin, reformers who practiced sprinkling, also acknowledge immersion was the original method of baptism but felt that to be unimportant in relation to the reform needed within the church.

You may ask how sprinkling came about the answer to this is not clear. It is believed that it was practiced first among the church of Egypt by Christian parents who were given the option of baptism for their children. This became a controversy by the end of the second century and the beginning of the third century. Later, it grew into an accepted practice after Constantine authorized the church as an official religion by the Roman Empire.

The convenience of this mode, along with the growth of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, led ultimately to the adoption of this method of baptism. The church began to teach that it was necessary to be baptized to be saved. This logically led to the baptism of the children for parents would not want their children to perish. Therefore, they would have them baptized as infants.

There are many today who still believe in baptismal regeneration. They believe it is absolutely necessary for a person to be baptized to be saved. Not all people who believe this, practice sprinkling as a mode of baptism. Many who follow the practice of immersion believe this doctrine.

Look up these Bible Reference Groups number 1 and 2. The first group deals with what we have discussed. Group 2 deals with verses relating to salvation and baptism.

Reference Group Number 1

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. John baptized in the Jordan. | Matthew 3:5, 6;
Mark 1:3-5 |
| b. John baptized Jesus | Mark 1:9 |
| 4. Disciples of Jesus baptized people | John 4:1,2 |
| B. Christian baptism | |
| 1. Commissioned | Matthew 28: 19, 20 |
| 2. First practiced | Acts 2:38 - 41 |

CHAPTER 5
LET'S BE BAPTIZED
Reference Group Number 2

1. We are saved by grace Ephesians 2:8-9
 Romans 4:4-5
2. Passages of Scripture which are misunderstood.
 - a. The new birth John 3:3-7 cf. John 1:12-13
 - b. Belief and baptism. Mark 16:16
 - c. Repentance and baptism. Acts 2:38

Look at each of these verses very carefully. Notice Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 4:4,5. They state plainly that we are saved by "grace through faith." Faith is simply our trust in the trustworthiness of God. It clearly makes reference twice to the fact that we cannot contribute to our salvation by stating that it is "not of yourselves" and in verse 9 "not of works." There is nothing we can do to save ourselves. In Romans 4:4-5 it states that if we were able to do some work for our salvation, it would not be a matter grace. It is our faith that justifies us before God.

If we were saved by baptism, then it would not be of grace. Baptism is an outward work. It would be a debt we would be paying, but Romans 4:5 plainly states "to him that worketh not, but believes...his faith is counted for righteousness" then it cannot be our baptism that causes us to be accounted as righteous.

These verses could be multiplied over and over in the New Testament. It is absolutely clear that we are saved by faith without any works of our own.

There are three passages of scripture which have caused some people to believe that baptism is necessary for salvation. Unfortunately each of these scriptures are taken out of context to arrive at this interpretation. Let's look at each passage in its context.

Turn in your Bible to John, chapter 3, and verses 3 through 7. Jesus states in verse 3 that it is absolutely necessary for a man to born again to see the kingdom of God. Notice in verse 5, He states it is absolutely necessary for a man to be "born of water and of the spirit" to enter into the kingdom of God. Then he states in verse 7 that a person must be born again. What is this new birth that Christ is talking about? That is the matter of concern in this passage. Some interpret the birth "of water" in verse 5 as baptism.

CHAPTER 5 LET'S BE BAPTIZED

They say we must be baptized in order to enter the kingdom of God. But may I ask you to read the entirety of the passage again and look for anything that refers to baptism in any of the other verses.

Baptism is never mentioned in the entire passage, either before verse 3 or after verse 7, nor is the term used in those verses. It simply states one must be "born of water."

Now let's look at this passage more closely, and you interpret. How many births are implied in verse 3 when it says a man must be born again? I believe we can safely say at least two births are implied. How many births are specifically mentioned in verse 5? There are two births; a birth of water and a birth of the Spirit. How many births are mentioned in verse 6? The answer once again is two births. Note "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" is the second birth. How many births are implied in verse 7? Once again, the answer is two. "You must be born again."

Could it be that the first birth has reference to our physical birth and the second birth has reference to our spiritual birth? Our spiritual birth is of God, as we place our faith in Him.

Note Nicodemus' question to Christ's first assertion to the second birth. Nicodemus right away referred to a second physical birth. Can a man enter a "second time into his mother's womb?" he asked. Jesus explained that a man must be born of water and of the Spirit in verse 5. Then in verse 6, he clarifies the birth of water to be the birth of the flesh and the birth of the Spirit to be of the Spirit.

I believe that the birth of water refers to our natural birth and not to baptism. Certainly, we must be born physically before we can enter into physical life, and then we must have a spiritual birth if we are to enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus had a physical birth and Christ was emphasizing his need for a spiritual birth--a birth of God through faith in Christ as it states in John 1:13.

Now look at Mark 16:16. Those who believe in baptismal regeneration use this verse to prove we must be baptized to be saved. It is true that it states "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," but it does not say "He that is baptized shall be saved" The phrase of the verse qualifies the first phrase for it makes it clear that believing is what gives us

CHAPTER 5 LET'S BE BAPTIZED

salvation--not the baptism. It plainly states that failure to believe leads to damnation. Baptism is not mentioned in the last phrase. Every indication in the New Testament leads us to believe that most people were baptized after they committed their lives to Christ. Therefore, to understand baptism to follow belief was natural. After all, this is what the Lord admonished us to do. However, that does not mean it is the baptism which saves us.

The other passage has given some people difficulty in their understanding of this truth. It is Acts 2:38 where it states, "Repent and be baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Every passage of Scripture must be taken in its context. The first question we need to ask is, who were the people being addressed? They were faithful Jews at the feast of Pentecost. These were people who had come from all nations to keep this feast. They were the faithful who believed in the coming of the Messiah.

Peter accused them of crucifying the One who was both Lord and Messiah (verse 36), and this convicted them of their error. They cried out to Peter and the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" This was asked in the light of their error of crucifying the One they had longed to see coming to this earth. Peter then admonished them to repent of their sin and identify themselves with the Messiah, Jesus, for the remission of their sins. The identification took the form of baptism. Note in verse 41, they first "gladly received his word" and then were baptized. In other words, they believed the message of Peter that Jesus was the Christ, and then they were baptized to identify with Him.

SELF CHECK NUMBER 1

1. Underline the word which best describes the original meaning of the "baptize." (a) sprinkling (b) pouring (c) dipping
2. Do we believe in baptismal regeneration? _____
3. In John 3:35, what is the Lord referring to when He speaks of the birth "of water"?
4. Underline the best answer. When we come across verses of Scripture which seems to contradict others truths of the Bible, we should:
(a) not pay any attention to the verse.

CHAPTER 5
LET'S BE BAPTIZED

- (b) read the context to see what the entire passage says.
- (c) believe exactly what my church teaches about the passage.

(Ask your facilitator for answers this Self Check)

Read Reference Group Number 3

- B. It is a matter of obedience.
 - 1. Christ commissioned the apostles to "make disciples."
Matthew 28:19-20
 - a. Go to people.
 - b. Baptize converts
 - c. Teach converts to observe all things.
 - 2. Being baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ" means "by the authority of Jesus Christ." Acts 8:16; 10:48; 19:5
- C. Baptism symbolizes our identification with Christ. Romans 6:1-11
 - 1. The old man is considered dead with Christ.
 - 2. The old man is buried with Christ Colossians 2:12
 - 3. Our new man has arisen with Christ. Galatians 3:27
- D. Baptism is an act of consecration. Romans 6:6
- E. Baptism predicts the future hope of the resurrection.
Romans 8:11 1 Corinthians 15:51-54

Although baptism is not essential to salvation, it is a testimonial that the Believer has entered into a vital relationship with the Triune God. It is a rite that should only be exercised upon those who have definitely received the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. If the person being baptized has not received Christ in a personal way, the practice becomes a meaningless ritual which will profit nothing. Baptism is to be an outward testimony to an inward faith. If a person has gone through an act of baptism before he committed his life to Christ, he should be baptized again.

Jesus commissioned the early apostles to make disciples of all nations. In the King James Version of the Bible, the word "teach" in Matthew 28:19 is a word which would be translated better "make disciples." That is the main verb of verses 19, and 20. There are three words which tell how this discipling is to take place. First, they were to be "going," translated "go ye."

CHAPTER 5 LET'S BE BAPTIZED

Second, they were to be "baptizing" and third, they were to be teaching the convert to observe all things the Lord had commanded them to do. The going was before they become disciples, and the baptizing was to be the first thing after they become disciples. The teaching continues on until the believer is translated to heaven.

The apostles were given this commission, but the baptism is a responsibility that is placed upon both the messenger and the recipient. The messenger must baptize those who believe to be obedient; and the recipient must be baptized to be obedient. The new Believer is then showing his obedience to Christ as well as giving a testimony to his relationship with Christ.

Some have questioned the formula of the baptism that is given in the book of Mathew because it differs from that of the book of Acts. In Matthew, it states "they are to be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Whereas, in the book of Acts on several occasions, it simply states that they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Subsequently, some have baptized in "Jesus" name only. They have tried to make a difference between the formula given in Matthew and that given in Acts. However, the expression "in (or into) the name of Jesus Christ" simply means "by the authority of Jesus Christ." Scholars have parchments dating from this period of history which use the phrase "in (or into) the name" of commercial adventure where property was transferred or paid "into the name" of someone. Paralleling this to the passages of the book of Acts, we can say the person baptized "in the name of the Lord Jesus" bore public witness that he had become the property of the Lord Jesus. Jesus was now Lord and Master. It does not indicate that there is a conflict between what Matthew is teaching and the writer of the book of Acts is teaching about baptism. To become the property of Jesus Christ is to become the property of the Triune God: for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one in Being.

Baptism symbolizes our identification with Christ. In Romans 6:4 it says "we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life." What happened to Christ happened to us. Note the context of the passage. In chapter 5, the apostle speaks about the grace of God that can cover any sin. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. In other words, there's enough of God's grace to cover the sin.

CHAPTER 5 LET'S BE BAPTIZED

The question arises, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may continue to abound?" The answer is a strong negative--God forbid!! Another translation has it, "May it never be!" We are dead with Christ, if we are dead, we cannot go on living in sin. Note Romans 6:11. We are to reckon or count this to be true. But Christ was not only crucified and buried, He was also resurrected by the power of God. Therefore, we are to reckon or count ourselves to be alive unto God as well.

The symbolism then is: Christ died on the cross for my sin--I died with Him. He was buried in the tomb--my sins were buried with Him. He arose from the grave--He gives me new life to live each day in His power. When we are baptized by immersion, it is picture of our relationship to Him. We are laid down in the water as they laid Him in a Palestinian tomb. The water covers us as if we were dead. We are then raised up as He was raised out of the dead; to live a new life for His glory. Note Romans 6:5 and the language of symbolism. "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection." Baptism does not symbolize a new birth or the washing away of our sins. It symbolized our identification with Christ.

Baptism is also an act of consecration,. We have died to our old relationships to sin, and we are now living a new life in a new union to the resurrected Christ. We are saying to others that we are leaving the things of the world behind and are going to live for Christ in the future. It is true that a Believer will wrestle again with temptation and sin, but the victory will come only as we reckon by faith to be dead to sin. The old nature wants to hang on to its pleasures and wants to assert itself but if we by faith count it dead, then we will have the victory over sin.

Baptism not only symbolizes the past, but it is also a beautiful picture of what shall happen to us in the future if the Lord does not come for us before we experience physical death. Our body shall some day die and be laid in a grave and the sod shall cover us. But that is not the end for the Believer. The Believer shall be resurrected by the power of God. In Romans 8:11 you read, "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also give life to your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." Bodily, we shall be resurrected from the grave and transformed from a corruptible body to an incorruptible body. This mortal shall put on immortality. Just as we are helpless to raise ourselves from the water when laid down backward, so we

CHAPTER 5
LET'S BE BAPTIZED

are helpless to raise ourselves from the dead. But Christ shall raise us up by His Spirit. The symbolism is one of hope.

Do Self Check Number 2

1. Look up Matthew 28:19, 20. Give the three words which testify a person is made a "disciple" of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Different translations will vary but see if you can pick out her words.)
2. Underline the best answer. Baptism symbolizes:
 - (a) our identification with Christ.
 - (b) the new birth
 - (c) the washing away of our sins
3. Are we to consider ourselves to be dead to sin?
4. True or False. Baptism is a picture of our future resurrection.

Look up Reference Group Number 4

Conclusion

1. We are joined to Christ the Head of the Church Colossians 1:18
Ephesians 5:23
2. We should join with the local church in our area. Acts 2:47.

In conclusion, let me point out that if you have been saved through faith in Christ, you have been joined to the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. He asked these preaching to gospel to baptize those who believe. If you have not submitted to baptism by immersion, may I encourage you to do so. To put off this ordinance is to be disobedient to your Savior.

Since you are joined to the Head and the Head is joined to the body, the church; you, too, should belong to the visible church. In the book of Acts,

CHAPTER 5 LET'S BE BAPTIZED

it states, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." That means they were baptized and united with the visible church.

Ask the Pastor of the church if you can become an active part of the local body of believers. I am sure your request will cause his heart to rejoice along with every other member of the local body of believers.

In our next study we shall learn of the purpose of the church.

Pray: "Heavenly Father, thank you for Jesus Christ who died to deliver me from my sin. Thank You that He now lives to empower me to live a life victorious over sin. Strengthen me that I may demonstrate by my life that I belong to You. I ask this in Jesus name. Amen"