

BAPTISM

Romans 6:1-4 Mark 1:9-11 Matthew 28:19

Introduction: Within the Christian world, there has been much discussion and various interpretations of baptism. Some sprinkle with water, some pour water on the head, some immerse. Some teach that baptism is essential to being saved, some sprinkle infants with water declaring them to be "saved." Jesus submitted to baptism (immersion) at the hands of John the Baptist and then had His disciples baptize those who began to follow and believe in Him. Upon His leaving and ascending into heaven, Jesus instructed believers to go into the world and teach and baptize. So, just who is right? What does baptism do? Who is to be baptized?

I. THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM

1. Baptism does not save, nor does it help to save.
 - Baptism is not a condition of salvation nor of the remission of sins.
 - Being baptized literally into Jesus Christ, into His death, into the remission of sins is not what baptism is all about.
 - Being baptized into Christ is a figurative/symbolic act, even though one might go to the actual place, if known, in the Jordan river and be baptized, that doesn't add a thing.
 - Being literally baptized into Christ, His death, His resurrection is no more possible than when partaking of the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, those two elements literally turning into the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.

2. While baptism does not save, nor is a condition of salvation, it does symbolize a salvation that comes by faith in Jesus Christ.
 - Baptism is an external washing where salvation is an internal or spiritual cleansing, a purification of the heart by faith. This cleansing is symbolized in baptism.
 - Paul shows baptism as being symbolic in the text, speaking of the Christian as one who has died (but really is still alive) to sin, and has risen to walk in newness of life, all symbolized by his/her being baptized.
 - Baptism is a symbolical death and resurrection of the believer.

3. The believer's death to sin and his/her resurrection to a new life came through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - *Galatians 2:20 - "...I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, BUT Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me ..."*
 - *"...therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life..." (text)*
 - The believer's baptism symbolizes his/her death to sin and spiritual resurrection, but it is a death and resurrection grounded in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

II. THE ACT OF BAPTISM

1. What is the proper manner/act of baptism?
 - Immersion and immersion only constitutes the act of baptism.
2. Baptism described in the New Testament times shows immersion to be the act of baptism.
 - *Mark 1:9-10*- states that Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan and that coming straightway up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened.
 - When Philip baptized the eunuch, they went down into the water and came up out of the water (*Acts 8*)
 - The Greek language has words for sprinkle, pour and immerse (dip). "...*baptizo*..." is the word used to describe baptism and it means to immerse/dip under.
3. Perhaps the strongest explanation/argument is what is so significant about "baptism."
 - What is the meaning and purpose of baptism? What is it for?
 - The fundamental facts of the gospel are the death and resurrection of Jesus as the ground of salvation and that baptism is meant to symbolize, represent Jesus' death, burial and His resurrection.

III. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

1. The only person properly qualified for baptism is one who has heard the gospel, accepted its message and believed in Jesus Christ as his/her savior.

IV. WHO IS TO ADMINISTER BAPTISM?

1. The "clergy" or the officially recognized ministry is responsible for baptism and has the authority to baptize.
 - However this draws a line of distinction between "clergy" and "laity" and neither is mentioned in the New Testament.
 - The pastor or other "ordained" minister or official acts as a representative of the congregation or the church and has no authority other than that which comes with being such a representative or spokesperson.
2. Some say that any individual Christian can baptize, but this leads to all sort of irregularities and confusion within the Church.
3. Then there is the Church congregation that has the responsibility to administer baptism and whoever baptizes rests with the congregation.
 - Since baptism is generally recognized as the means of publicly confessing Jesus Christ and identifying oneself with the Church congregation or community of believers, then baptism is a public, Church family affair and is not a secret, private act.
 - There is a community responsibility in the act of baptism.

CONCLUSION:

1. Jesus died, was buried and rose again, baptism symbolizes that and any believer in Jesus is immersed.