

Subject: *What the Bible Teaches about Baptism*

Scripture: *Acts 2:36-42*

I heard about a college student who was soon to graduate and only needed a few more credits. He heard about a course in bird-watching. Everybody said the course was an easy A and the professor only required students to take some field trips and look at birds through binoculars. So he signed up, but it didn't quite work out as he planned. The teacher assigned to teach the class left and another professor took his place. He required students to read and do research and was really serious about birds. On the final exam the teacher put forty pictures on the front wall of nothing but the legs of different birds and the students were asked to identify the birds. The student was so disgusted he wadded up his paper and threw it in the trash can and was about to storm out of the classroom when the professor asked, "Young man, what's your name?" He rolled up his pants and said, "You tell me?" There are some things we really need to know. We should know what the Bible teaches about baptism.

Baptism is one of two ordinances that Christ gave to the church. Some Christians use the word "rites" or "sacraments," but we will use the word ordinances, which means something ordered or ordained by the Lord for His church to do. The two ordinances are communion (the Lord's Supper) and baptism. Both of these are memorials or reminders of what Jesus did to save us from our sins and how we are spiritually connected to Him by faith and obedience. In order to understand the importance of baptism we need to understand the nature and importance of the gospel.

What Is the Gospel?

It is the good news that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again to save us from our sins.

***1 Corinthians 15:1-4**¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ² By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. ³ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.*

The gospel of Christ is the only soul-saving message.

***Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

Therefore we must preach the Gospel, believe it, defend it, share it, and remember it. God has given us the ordinances of communion and baptism as object lessons to remember the Gospel. It is true that a picture is worth a thousand words. Baptism pictures a believer being united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

There are so many different interpretations and ways that churches baptize. Some say that baptism is optional; it may be for some but not for everybody. Some say you must be baptized to be saved. Some say infants should be baptized. Some say that baptism may be done by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, whatever is best for you. No doubt Satan is behind this confusion. What could do greater damage than to confuse the gospel message and to have Christians disagree on such an important teaching?

THE PRIORITY OF BAPTISM

Baptism is not optional, but mandatory for every follower of Christ.

- Jesus commanded us to be baptized

Matthew 28:18-19 ¹⁸ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

- All believers were baptized

Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

THE PRACTICE OF BAPTISM

- The word baptize means to plunge, dip, or immerse

Our word baptism has been transliterated from the Greek language.

- Jesus was baptized by immersion

Mark 1:9-10 ⁹ And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. ¹⁰ And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him.

- Both Jesus and John the Baptist baptized by immersion

John 3:22-23 ²² After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. ²³ And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

- Philip the evangelist baptized by immersion

Acts 8:38-39 ³⁸ 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. ³⁹ And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

THE PICTURE OF BAPTISM

- It pictures our union and identification with Christ

Romans 6:1-3 ¹ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ² God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? ³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

It is like a uniform that identifies a person (military, firefighter, policeman).

- It pictures the beginning of our new life in Christ

Romans 6:4 *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. Our old life is gone and buried, and we have been raised to walk in newness of life.*

- It pictures the certainty of our future resurrection

Romans 6:5 *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.*

The meaning of baptism is related to the method of baptism. Baptism is a picture of death and resurrection, and that can only be pictured by immersion.

THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM

- Baptism is not required for salvation

This is a false doctrine sometimes called “baptismal regeneration.” The Bible refutes that idea. The thief on the cross beside Jesus was saved, but not baptized. Jesus said, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” He did not say, “I’m sorry you didn’t have a chance to be baptized and so I can’t save you.” It is also refuted by a careful study of Scripture, especially references to Paul’s ministry.

1 Corinthians 1:14-17 ¹⁴ *I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;* ¹⁵ *Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.* ¹⁶ *And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.* ¹⁷ *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.*

- Baptism is not for infants but only for believers in Christ

The Bible doesn’t teach it, but it does teach believer’s baptism. When the Bible refers to the salvation and baptism of households it means everyone in the family was saved and baptized (example of Lydia’s family, Acts 16:14-15; the Philippian jailer’s family, Acts 16:30-33).

- Baptism is an act of obedience after salvation

Acts 2:38 *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

“For the remission (forgiveness) of sins” means “because of the forgiveness of sins.” We say a person was promoted for good work or rewarded for good behavior.

- Baptism is a public confession of faith in Christ

Matthew 10:32 *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.* Baptism is like a wedding ring. It shows that we have a special relationship with Jesus. We should never confuse the symbol with the relationship. When you get married, you stand before a preacher and say your vows, but when the wedding is over, you don’t just get a ring, you get a wife or a husband.