

Short Answer Series # 2

How should I be baptised?

Is water baptism a necessary part of the Christian experience? In Mark 16 v 16 Jesus said “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.” So water baptism is a requirement for Christians, unless they lack the opportunity, or their Christian confession happens on their deathbed.

What does the Bible tell us about baptism? In Acts 2 v 38 Peter said “Repent and be baptised.” So, repentance from sin is a prerequisite before baptism. If anyone has not repented first, they will enter the water a dry sinner, and emerge a wet one. And, as infants cannot repent, infant baptism serves no purpose except as a ceremony for the religious.

The word baptise means to submerge under water and emerge from it. Romans 6 v 4 tells us “Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism.” So, obviously, baptism is by full immersion in water. Not by pouring or sprinkling.

In the Great Commission, (Matt 28 v 19) Jesus said “Go ye and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” He said ‘name’ singular, not ‘names’ plural. Father is not a name, neither is Son, nor is the Holy Spirit. They are merely titles to that Name. There are many fathers and sons in this world, but they are not named father or son. They do have names.

In Matt 16 v 19 the Lord told Peter “And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.” And on the day of Pentecost when the Jews realised they had crucified their Messiah, they asked “Men and brethren what shall we do?” (Acts 2 v 37) So, Peter used the keys to open the Kingdom to them, and tell them what that Name is. He said, “Repent every one of you and be baptised in the Name of Jesus Christ.” The Father does have a name, so does the Son, so does the Holy Spirit. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. The One who created all things. (Colossians 1 v 16) The One who has all power in Heaven and on Earth. (Matt 28 v 18) So, Peter told them to do what Jesus had commanded him, and be baptised in *that* Name.

What other references does the Word of God have as to how baptism took place? Acts 8 v 14 “Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. 15 Who when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. 16 (For as yet He was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus.)”

Acts 10 v 47 “Can any forbid water that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptised in the Name of the Lord.”

Acts 19 v 5 “When they heard this, they were baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus.”

So, Scripturally baptism is by full immersion in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the verse we read from Acts 19, Paul had just met Apollos, who had been baptised by John the Baptist; but, Paul showed him that wasn’t good enough now. So he commanded him to be re-baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus. And what if we have been baptised in the titles of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or sprinkled as a child? What would Paul say to that today? He would say exactly the same thing, and command us to be re-baptised in Christian Baptism. Obedience is better than sacrifice. (2 Sam 15 v 22) If anyone hasn’t been baptised Scripturally, they haven’t been baptised yet.

What does baptism do for us? It does *not* save us or forgive our sins. It is, as Peter puts it “the answer of a good conscience toward God.” (2 Peter 3 v 21) It is a confession to the world that we have accepted the death of Jesus Christ as the death we deserved for our sins. We are buried under the water to symbolise that we died with Him. And we are raised from the water to express to the world that we have been raised to walk in newness of life as a Son or Daughter of God. For the faithful there is also the promise in Acts 2 v 38 that you can claim “And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” What is the Holy Ghost? It is Deity, Almighty God living in you, the Temple of God. “Christ in you the hope of glory” as Paul puts it in Colossians 1 v 27.

So, as the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip in Acts 8 v 36 “What doth hinder me to be baptised?” (or re-baptised?) Nothing.

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