

## Baptism: It's Meaning and Mode

- I. Questions and Issues to be Resolved and Answered
  - A. What is the role of baptism either by water or in the Holy Spirit in the local church assembly?
  - B. Does the meaning and usage of baptism refer to a particular mode or effect?
  - C. Does water baptism effect the redemptive power of the blood, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (does “the blood touch the water”?). Is water baptism an absolutely necessary act to receive forgiveness of sins, cleansing, regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit or is it simply a sign of inclusion in the new covenant family indicating a public testimony that one has received the Lord Jesus Christ and the gift of justification by faith?
  - D. Is there a relationship between the issue of faith plus circumcision in the first century and faith and water baptism controversy today? If so, is the latter another gospel?
  - E. Does water baptism need to be practiced at all?
  - F. Does the mode of baptism refer exclusively to total bodily immersion?
  - G. Is baptism by water to be biblically practiced only for believing adults or for infants and children as well?
- II. Examples of Diverse Baptisms (Hebrews 9:10)
  - A. The Immediate context:
    1. “washings” – *baptismos* (noun form of *baptizo*)
    2. Context of Hebrews 9:1-28
      - a. First covenant with divine regulations v. 1
      - b. Role of the Levitical priests v. 6
      - c. Once a year sacrifice vs. 7-9

- d. Other gifts, sacrifices, food, drink, various washings, regulations vs. 9-10
- e. Blood of animals “sprinkled” vs. 12-13
- f. Inauguration of the first covenant with the blood of animals with water and scarlet wool and hyssop “sprinkled on the People ... and tabernacle ...” vs. 19-21
- g. Examples of things “cleansed” in the old covenant v. 23

#### B. The Old Testament context

- 1. Numbers 19:11-13 (see Hebrews 9:13)
- 2. Exodus 24: 6, 8 (see Hebrews 9:19)
- 3. Levitical consecration of Aaron and his sons Lev. 8; 8:19 = “sprinkled blood”
- 4. Leviticus 14:6-7 = cleansing of leprosy (“sprinkle”)
- 5. Leviticus 11:29-44 and 15:11 cleansing of anything “unclean” that is touched (15:11 cf. Mark 7:1-4 cleaning or washing of hands or vessels.
- 6. Numbers 8:6-7 cleansing of the Levites by “sprinkle”

#### C. Prophetic context: Ezekiel 36:25-27

- 1. “Sprinkle clean water” for spiritual cleansing
- 2. “New heart” and “new spirit”
- 3. Explained in John 3:3-8 (born of water and the Spirit)

#### D. The New Testament Context

- 1. Baptism for repentance- Matthew 3:11 (associated with the preaching of repentance and confession of sins – Mark 1:4-5)
- 2. Baptism in water by John - Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:26 (background of John’s baptism: son of a Levitical priest who had the duty to offer sacrifices for Israel’s forgiveness by means of purification rituals)
- 3. Statement by Paul about John’s baptism reflects there were a diversity of baptisms: *And he said, “Into what then*

were you baptized?” And they said, “Into John’s baptism.”  
– Acts 19:3

4. John’s baptism was to ultimately manifest Jesus Christ to Israel

5. Other baptisms

Baptism of Christ Himself by John – Matthew 3:13-17;  
Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22 (discussion later on the  
meaning of Christ’s baptism)

a. Other examples of water baptism – Acts 8:12, 16, 36-38; 10:47; 16:33)

b. Baptism in or with the Holy Spirit – Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5

c. Baptism of cups, pitchers and copper pots – Mark 7:4 is respect to purification by ritual cleansing); (KJV adds couches or tables); “washing” is Gk. *baptismous* from *baptismos*

d. Washing as ceremonial purification before a meal – Luke 11:37-38; “washed” is Gk. *ebaptisthe* from *baptizo*

e. Baptized into Moses – I Corinthians 10:1-5 (to be discussed)

f. Baptized by the Holy Spirit into one body – I Corinthians 12:13

E. Special Discussion on the Baptism of Jesus and into Moses

1. Jesus’ baptism

a. He did not need repentance

b. Submitting to baptism in order to obey the Law as purification of His priesthood – Number 8:6-7

c. A ceremonial act of His ordination

d. He obeyed the Law: His circumcision – Leviticus 12:3 and Luke 2:21, presented in the Temple -Luke 2:22-23; attended the Passover – Exodus 34:23 and Luke 2:42; observed Israel’s feasts – Mark 14:12; Luke 22:3; John 17:10

- e. As High Priest – Hebrews 3:1; 4:14; 5:5; 9:11 (not in the family line of Levi, but designated as priest in the order of Melchizedek – Hebrews 5:6)
- f. Purpose of Jesus’ baptism: “to fulfill all righteousness” – Matt. 3:15

*Here at the very first does the Lord openly announce to John: Placing Myself in the likeness of sinners, taking their sins upon Me, I shall and will fulfill righteousness for them ... This baptism is truly and essentially the true beginning point of that Obedience, the consummation of which, in the death of the cross in order to the resurrection ... This baptism is His anointing to that sacrifice of Himself for sinners which now first properly begins. He afterwards was baptized with the baptism of death in which He, as the Lamb of God, bore our guilt...*

*In it, there is an announcement by the Son of God to accomplish it. This announcement and assumption of covenant obligation the Father accepts and declared Himself “well pleased.” The Holy Ghost makes like declaration by descending upon and baptizing the covenanting Son for His amazing work now assumed at Jordan, but “finished” only on Calvary. (Christic Baptism, pp. 30-31, James Dale)*

- 2. Baptism into Moses – I Corinthians 10:1-5
  - a. Baptized into the cloud and sea
  - b. Water never touched our fathers as they passed through the sea
  - c. Read Exodus 14:1-12 What was the context and issue?
  - d. Read Exodus 14:13-31 What was the result?
  - e. In what respect, then, were our fathers baptized into Moses?”
  - f. A baptism effecting a condition (“they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses” v. 31)

- g. A condition established in relation to Israel to fall into subject to Moses' leadership and influence

### III. Baptisms in the New Testament

#### A. The Disciples Washing by Jesus – John 13:3-11

- 1. Jesus washed His disciples' feet
- 2. He cleansed them by a rite of purification

#### B. Jesus' Commission to His Disciples

- 1. Matthew 28:19;
- 2. Mark 16:16;
- 3. Luke 24:47

#### C. Acts 1 and 2

- 1. 1:5
- 2. 2:38, 41
  - a. 2:38 – what does the preposition mean? *Eis*: Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for** (*eis*) the forgiveness of your sins ...
  - b. “marker of a specific point of reference, for, to, with respect to, with reference to ...” A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT. P. 291
  - c. See Acts 2:25 as an example: “For David says of (*eis*) Him ...”
  - d. Other examples: Acts 2:25; Romans 10:4; 15:2; 16:19

#### D. Acts

- 1. 8:12, 16
- 2. 8:36, 38
- 3. 9:18
- 4. 10:47
- 5. 11:16
- 6. 16:15
- 7. 16:33
- 8. 18:8
- 9. 19:3

10. 22:16

E. The Apostle Paul

1. Romans 6:3
2. I Corinthians 1:13-17
3. I Corinthians 10:2
4. I Corinthians 12:13
5. Galatians 3:27
6. Ephesians 4:5
7. Colossians 2:12

F. The Apostle Peter – I Peter 3:21

G. Where Baptism was not mentioned

1. In the Gospel According to John (1:12-13; 3:14-16, 18, 36; 20:31)
2. No mention of baptism in Jesus' commission – Luke 24:47
3. People who were not baptized: Zacchaeus, the thief on the cross, all the resurrected saints, Moses and Elijah; all the saints of Hebrews 11

IV. Use of *Baptizo* in the LXX and Classical Greek

A. II Kings 5:10-14

1. Naaman the Syrian healed of leprosy
2. Synonymous with “wash: GK. lousai – v. 10
3. v. 14 – *ebaptisato* without any particular mode but emphasis on effect: “his flesh was restored”

B. Isaiah 21:4

1. “lawlessness baptizes (*baptizei*) me” or lawlessness overwhelms me
2. Emphasizes effect or influence

C. Daniel 4:33

1. “wet (*ebaphe*) with the dew of heaven”

2. Excludes a particular mode but only effect

D. Judith 12:7 (Apocrypha)

1. “She baptized (*ebaptizeto*) herself in the camp at the fountain of water”
2. Context reveals that this was for purification and probably a natural spring

E. Sirach 34:27

1. “baptized (*baptizomenos*) from a dead body”
2. Purification from touching a dead body (see also Numbers 19:11-13)

F. Classical Greek

1. “Baptized the soul of the poor man as with successive waves” (Chrysostom)
2. “Being baptized with wine” (Basil)
3. “To be baptized with such a multitude of evils” (Achilles Tat.)
4. “Baptized in sleep, neighbor of death” (Evenus)
5. “Being a king and baptized with 10,000 cares” (Chrysostom)
6. “The congregation baptized in ignorance” (Libanius)
7. “Baptized with most grievous sins” (Justin Martyr)
8. “Baptized with debts amounting to 50 millions” (Plutarch)
9. “Flooded with vehement words and baptized with undiluted wine” (Athenaeus)
10. Other uses in pagan mystery cults
  - a. Immerse or submerge as in ships being sunk or buried at sea
  - b. To cover with water as an increasing tide covers the beach
  - c. To moisten or dampen
  - d. To pour upon or soak

- e. to be overwhelmed or overpowered such as being intoxication with wine, opium, debts, enthusiasms, secular or religious philosophy

(In other words, to have an effect or influence without a particular mode involved.)

V. Five Tests of Eternal Life (I John)

VI. Should Infants Be Baptized?

## **What We Believe About Baptism**

We believe that the baptism by the Holy Spirit is the only baptism that redeems and saves as one confesses with their mouth Jesus as Lord and believes in his/her heart that God raised Him from the dead. (Romans 10:8-9) This baptism results in a fundamental spiritual renewal and regeneration by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) by which one is also born from above. (John 3:3-8)

Although traditionally, water baptism was practiced in the apostolic period and throughout church history, it has been an unnecessary subject of confusion and division in respect to its meaning and mode. It is our belief that the most important and sole emphasis in new covenant theology is the spiritual baptism by the Holy Spirit and the consistent testimony of an individual's life as demonstrated by his or her new life in Christ Jesus. This is evidenced by the five tests of eternal life as taught in I John: moral likeness, confession of sin, obedience to His commandments, love for fellow believers and confession of Jesus as the Christ incarnate.

This baptism by the Holy Spirit declares one's ascent to the gospel's objective truth and subjective reception of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It expresses one's deep desire to love God with one's whole being and testifies of the transfer one's loyalty from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of light. It testifies publicly of one's commitment to the local church assembly.