

53. Baptism

“THE ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper are two monumental pillars, one without and one within the church. Upon these ordinances Christ has inscribed the name of the true God.” - 6T 91.

“As faith in Christ before the cross was shown by typical ordinances, so faith in Christ since His crucifixion is shown by the memorial ordinances of baptism, the Lord’s supper, and the ordinance of humility.” - O. A. Johnson, in “Bible Text Book,” pocket edition, page 83.

“The law and history of the Jews abound with illustrations and baptisms of different sorts. Moses enjoined the people to wash their garments, and to purify themselves, by way of preparation for the reception of the law. (Exodus 19:10.) . . . All legal pollutions were cleansed by baptism, or by plunging into water. . . . But these purifications were not uniform: generally, people dipped themselves entirely under the water, and this is the most simple notion of the word ‘baptize.’ “Calmet, in “Dictionary of the Holy Bible” (revised by Edward Robinson), page 142. (See also 1 Corinthians 10:2.)

SELECTED REFERENCES

DA 109-113; SC 53-60; 6T 91-99; [8] Article, “Baptism.” [9] Pages 369-376; [10] Pages 199-203.

Memorize: Romans 6:4.

A. THE COMMAND.

Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15, 16; John 3:5; Romans 10:9.

“The vows which we take upon ourselves in baptism embrace much. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we are buried in the likeness of Christ’s death, and raised in the likeness of His resurrection, and we are to live a new life. Our life is to be bound up with the life of Christ. Henceforth the believer is to bear in mind that he is dedicated to God, to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit.” -6T 98.

Souter, an eminent authority on New Testament Greek, declares that “the papyri [manuscripts] have shown that where the phrase ‘baptized into’ occurs, the person baptized becomes the property of the divine person indicated.”-Camden M. Cobern, in “The New Archeological Discoveries,” page 229, note.

“So the Christian, being baptized ‘into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,’ becomes thereby their property. He is quick to do the will of His Father who is in heaven. He ever recognizes himself as the ‘bondservant of Jesus Christ’ (Romans 1:1, A. R. V., margin), and he diligently endeavors to obey every impulse and prompting of the Holy Spirit.”-F. D. Nichol, in “Baptism” (Bible Truth Series, No. 40), page 5.

“The fact that you have been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is an assurance that if you will claim their help, these powers will help you in every emergency. The Lord will hear and answer the prayers of His sincere followers who wear Christ’s yoke and learn in His school His meekness and lowliness.” - 6T 99.

B. THE MEANING OF BAPTISM.

1. A cleansing; a separation from sin. Acts 22:16; 3:19; Ephesians 5:26; 1 Peter 3:21.

The derivation and definition of the word “baptism:”

“ ‘Baptism.’ (Greek, baptisma; the Greek baptisimos occurs only four times, Mark 7:4, 8; Hebrews 6:2; 9:10.) The Greek verb baptizein (from baptein, to dip) is the rendering by the LXX, in 2 Kings 5:14, of the Hebrew tabal, dip, in AV.” - W. M. Crothers, in “Scriptural Evidences,” pages 187, 188.

“By the Greek fathers the word baptizein is often used frequently figuratively, for to immerse or overwhelm with sleep, sorrow, sin, etc. Hence baptisma properly and literally equals immersion.”-Smith’s Bible Dictionary, art. “Baptism.”

“It is plain that the apostle had in mind only immersion of the whole body in water. Indeed, that is just what the Greek word baptizo means. That is the reason the King James Version does not translate the word at all, but simply gives it an English form. Homer, writing eight hundred years before Christ, tells how the smiths would bapto red-hot steel in water to temper it. Herodotus, nearly five centuries before Christ, tells us that the dyer would bapto fabrics in the dye to color them, and that the potters were wont to bapto earthen vessels in a liquid preparation for the purpose of glazing them. If the word had ever meant to sprinkle or pour, would not the translators of the Authorized, or common, Version of our English

Scriptures, have so rendered it, instead of bringing the original word over into the English untranslated? They certainly would.” - “The Bible Made Plain,” page 19.

2. A witness to faith in Christ’s life within. Colossians 2:12,13; 3:1,2; Romans 6:3-12; Galatians 3:26,27; 1 Corinthians 12:13.

“Christ has made baptism the sign of entrance to His spiritual kingdom. He has made this a positive condition with which all must comply who wish to be acknowledged as under the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Before man can find a home in the church, before passing the threshold of God’s spiritual kingdom, he is to receive the impress of the divine name, ‘The Lord our Righteousness.’ Jeremiah 23:6.

“Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Those who are baptized in the threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have forsaken the service of Satan, and have become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King.” - 6T 91.

“He must believe in this sacrifice made on the cross, not only as a historical fact, but also as a saving truth. He must see in the death of Christ his own death. He must believe that by the blood of Christ his sins may be washed away. In other words, he must grasp by faith the assurance that thus he may end his life of sin, and begin a new and sinless life. . . . (Ephesians 4:22, 24.)” - F. D. Nichol, in “Baptism” (Bible Truth Series, No. 40), page 1.

“God did not arbitrarily give us this specific rite. While serving as the portal to the church, it is intended of Heaven to keep vividly before us the great truths of Christianity. . . . How significant the rite! It is at once symbolic of the first great truth of Christianity, and of the twofold effect of the reception of that truth upon the believer. First, the convert sees that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, which he symbolically reenacts, are the means by which he is enabled to change from a life of sin to one of righteousness. But the cleansing nature of this act of immersion calls at once to his mind the spiritual washing away of soul defilement by the lifeblood of Christ. And then, [second] that he may fully realize that he is no more the man he once was, but is indeed ‘a new creature in Christ Jesus.’ He is caused to see in the act his own death, and his rising to ‘walk in newness of life,’ by virtue of the same power that raised up Christ from the dead.

“Baptism truly is the symbol of the mightiest change that can ever take place in the human life; for ‘as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.’ Galatians 3:27. The robe of His righteousness is thrown about us ‘that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.’ 2 Corinthians 5:21.

“The baptized soul lives and moves in a new world. He has no more fellowship with his former evil habits and customs than if he were dead; for the Bible affirms that he has died to sin and sinful associations, and has been raised again to live a new life in communion with Heaven. A grave lies between him and his past life.” pages 4, 5. Happy the soul that has experienced this great change.

“Seeing that baptism is the outward symbol, witnessed by all men, of such a mighty change of life, it is vitally important that the step be not taken hastily. It is not a step to be taken today and retracted tomorrow. The complete change of heart must already have taken place, and Christ must first have been confessed before God in the inner life, before one is prepared to confess Christ publicly in baptism.” - Id., page 6.

“There is no virtue residing in any Christian symbol or rite. Baptism of itself no more imparts to us salvation than the eating of the tangible wafer at the Lord’s supper imparts to us the attributes of Christ. The physical act is but a figure of a spiritual act or change which has already taken place. . . . In either case, the person is still in a lost condition, having gained no blessing in the carrying out of the rite. Nay, worse, he has made mockery of the solemn figure ordained by God, and has brought upon himself the condemnation of Heaven.” - Id., pages 7, 8.

“It is the grace of Christ that gives life to the soul. Apart from Christ, baptism, like any other service, is a worthless form.” - DA 181.

“On the other hand we find those who feel that because baptism has no virtue in itself, therefore there is no need to carry it out. Many attempt to spiritualize away the rite entirely.” To such we cite the example of the Lord, our example. “The genius of Christianity demands that its converts follow exactly in the path of its founder, Christ. Only as they do so are they Christians.” - F. D. Nichol, in “Baptism” (Bible Truth Series, No. 40), page 8.

C. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST AND OF CHRISTIANS.

1. Jesus Christ. Matthew 3:13-17.

“Jesus did not receive baptism as a confession of guilt on His own account. He identified Himself with sinners, taking the steps that we are to take, and doing the work that we must do. His life of suffering and patient endurance after His baptism was also an example to us. . . .

“Alone He must tread the path; alone He must bear the burden. Upon Him who had laid off His glory, and accepted the weakness of humanity, the redemption of the world must rest. He saw and felt it all, but His purpose remained steadfast. Upon His arm depended the salvation of the fallen race, and He reached out His hand to grasp the hand, of Omnipotent Love.” - DA 111.

2. Paul. Acts 9:17, 18.

“Immediately Saul received sight, and arose, and was baptized. He then taught in the synagogues that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. All who heard him were amazed.” - EW 201.

3. Lydia. Acts 16:14, 15.

“Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened.’ Lydia received the truth gladly. She and her household were converted and baptized, and she entreated the apostles to make her house their home.” - AA 212.

4. Cornelius. Acts 10:47, 48.

“Today God is seeking for souls among the high as well as the lowly. There are many like Cornelius, men whom the Lord desires to connect with His work in the world. Their sympathies are with the Lord’s people, but the ties that bind them to the world hold them firmly. It requires moral courage for them to take their position for Christ.” - AA 139.

5. The eunuch. Acts 8:35-39.

“In the experience of Philip and the Ethiopian is presented the work to which the Lord calls His people. The Ethiopian represents a large class who need missionaries like Philip, missionaries who will hear ‘he voice of God, and go where He sends them. There are those in the world who are reading the Scriptures, but who cannot understand their import. The men and women who have a knowledge of God are needed to explain the word to these souls.” - 8T 58, 59.

6. The jailer. Acts 16:30,34.

“The power of God there convicted the jailer. He called for a light, and springing in, came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ “ - EW 205.

7. Ellen G. Harmon, at twelve years of age.

“My mind was very much exercised on the subject of baptism. Young as I was, I could see but one mode of baptism authorized by the Scriptures. . . . Finally the time was appointed for us to receive this solemn ordinance. It was a windy day when we, twelve in number, went down into the sea to be baptized. The waves ran high and dashed upon the shore, but as I took up this heavy cross, my peace was like a river. When I arose from the water, my strength was nearly gone, for the power of the Lord rested upon me. I felt that henceforth I was not of this world, but had risen from the watery grave into a newness of life.” - LS 25.

KEY TEXTS

Matthew 28:19

Romans 6:3,4

Matthew 3:13-17

Acts 22:16

Colossians 2:12

Acts 8:35-39

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Was the meaning of baptism fully understood before John the Baptist?
2. Why is not infant baptism or sprinkling Scriptural?
3. How was the word “baptism” understood in Bible times?
4. What are the reasons for the institution of the rite of baptism?
5. Of what importance to the individual are baptism and entry into the church?

TEST QUESTIONS

Answer With Ample Bible Proof

1. What must precede and accompany baptism?
2. What is the dual meaning of the rite of baptism?
3. Does Bible baptism always mean immersion? Cite illustrative examples.
4. Of what consequence is the form of administering the rite of baptism?
5. What changed life and relationships follow sincere, carefully considered baptism?