

Baptism – part 1

Reading: 1 Peter 3:21 “....an antitype which now saves us – baptism.....”

Introduction:

Baptism¹ is a word that you sometimes hear mentioned within the context of “Christendom”, particularly in relation to what the New Testament teaches about salvation. However, there are various understandings and doctrines taught by religious people regarding baptism in the context of the New Covenant. Some of these understandings and teachings include;

- when performed, it is merely an outward sign that the believer has already been saved.
- it can be administered to adults, children, and even infants.
- sometimes it is used as part of a dedication ceremony, where parents vow to raise a new infant in the ways of the Lord,
- some suggest that it is a Holy Spirit baptism only.
- some feel that sprinkling is sufficient; *i.e.* that full immersion is not required.
- some teach that baptism is optional.
- others consider it a “work”, and use **Ephesians 2:8-9** to defend their claim that it is not necessary for salvation, because “*..we are saved by grace.....not of works....*”
- and some see it as being necessary for the forgiveness of sins for believing, penitent sinners who have chosen to turn away from a life of sin and to now follow a life that is pleasing to the Lord.

But what do the scriptures say? Given that there are conflicting accounts in the world as to the nature of baptism; what baptism is for; and whether it is necessary or not, *etc.*, what does God’s Word actually teach on the subject?

This topic will be covered over two lessons, with this lesson covering;

- The types of baptism mentioned in the New Testament, and,
- The one baptism applicable to the New Covenant plan of salvation.

The second lesson will cover;

- The Biblical principal of doing the right actions, from the right motives, for the right reasons, and,
- Some of the objections raised by those who claim that baptism is not necessary

LESSON

1) Types of Baptism mentioned in the New Testament

There are about six types of baptism mentioned within the New Testament, and I will briefly discuss each one of them below.

a) Baptism into Moses (**1 Corinthians 10:2**)

¹ Strong’s Concordance, Greek words 907, 908, 911, “*to fully wet*”, “*to cover wholly with a liquid*”, “*to dip*”

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The context is Paul teaching the Corinthians about the need to remain faithful so that they do not lose their “crown”. He used the example of the Hebrews during the exodus to show that God’s children can “fall away” and be displeasing to God. He makes reference to the Red Sea crossing² and the cloud³ that led the Hebrews, describing these things as a “*baptism into Moses*” (1 Corinthians 9:24 – 10:12).

b) Baptism of suffering (Luke 12:50; Mark 10:38)

In Luke 12:35-48, Jesus had been teaching His disciples (vs.22) about the need to be prepared for the Lord’s return. He then talked about the division that would result in the world because some will choose to follow Him, while others won’t (vs.51-53). During this discussion, He referred to the suffering that lay ahead of Him, *i.e.* the suffering of the cross, and He described it as a baptism.

c) Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5, 8)

Just before His ascension, Jesus told His disciples that they would be “*..baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now...*”. He had promised this earlier when He spoke with them during the Passover meal⁴ (John 14:26; 16:12-15). This would be a baptism administered by God, not by man, *i.e.* “*..but the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name.....*” (John 14:26 emphasis mine – SK). One of the purposes of this baptism was to “*...teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you...*”. We can read about this happening in Acts 2:1-4, 33.

d) Baptism of fire (Matthew 3:11-12)

Shortly before Jesus came to John to be baptised, John spoke of one who was coming after him who would “*...baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire...*”. The “*fire*” is explained in verse 12 as referring to the all-consuming “*unquenchable fire*” – the punishment of the wicked. See also Matthew 25:31-46 and Revelation 20:14-15.

e) Baptism of John the baptiser (Matthew 3:1-6; Acts 19:3)

John’s mission was to bear witness to the One who was coming after him, and to prepare the way for Him (Malachi 3:1; Matthew 3:1-3; John 1:6-8). He was to prepare the children of Israel for the coming of the Lord (Luke 1:16-17), and his baptism was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4; Acts 19:4).

But John’s baptism took place under the Old Covenant⁵. The New Covenant did not come into effect until after Jesus had died (Hebrews 9:15-17). And

² Exodus 14

³ Exodus 13:21; Deuteronomy 1:32-33

⁴ John chapters 13 – 17 took place where Jesus and the disciples had the Passover meal;

- John 13:2 “*And supper being ended.....*”

- John 13:28 They are still at the table.

- John 18:1 Jesus and the disciples then go out over the Brook Kidron.

⁵ Consider Matthew 5:17-19 The Old Law remained in place until “*...all is fulfilled...*”

- John 19:30 “*...It is finished...*”

The Old Law was taken away at the cross - Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:13-14.

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so, while there are similarities between the baptism of John and the baptism of the Great Commission, the account in **Acts 19:1-7** shows us that the baptism of John is no longer valid for salvation.

f) Baptism of the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16**⁶)

This is the baptism commanded by Jesus, who now has all authority (**Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:22**).

Ephesians 4:5 teaches us that there is only one baptism now applicable to the plan of salvation, and this is it. In the next part of this lesson, we will examine in more detail what the scriptures say about this baptism – what type of baptism it is, what it is meant to achieve, and who are to be its recipients.

2) The one Baptism applicable to the plan of salvation

We can come to an understanding of the type of baptism that Jesus commanded by looking at the historical events recorded in the book of **Acts**, plus the teachings contained within the New Testament epistles.

a) Firstly, many of the Jews were familiar with the concept of baptism

In **Acts 2**, we see Peter preaching the first gospel sermon to the crowd assembled in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost⁷. One of the things that Peter told them was that they needed to be baptised for the forgiveness of sins (**Acts 2:38**). For (at least) many of those present, baptism would not have been a new concept. Although it was done in a different context prior to the book of **Acts**, both Jesus and John (the baptiser) had baptised many people from Jerusalem and the land of Judea⁸ (**Matthew 3:4-6; John 3:22, 26; 4:1**). They had either seen, and/or had been recipients of that baptism.

Therefore, when Peter said that they needed to be baptised, they understood the mechanics of what was required.

b) Baptism involves a burial

The baptism that is applicable to us today is a type of “burial”. The epistles to the Romans and to the Colossians both refer to baptism, and both describe it as a “burial” - the process involves a “dying”, a burial, and a rising up again to a new life (**Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12**). When we bury something or someone, we place them in the ground and cover them over completely, so that nothing is left showing – they are completely submerged. When we baptise a person, we don’t bury them in the dirt, we momentarily bury (*i.e.* submerge) them in water (**John 3:5; Acts 8:36; 10:47-48**).

In **John 3:23** we read that John the baptiser was baptising people at a place called Aenon – and the reason that he chose this place was “.....*because*

⁶ These two passages were probably spoken by Jesus at different times and locations;

- **Matthew 28:18-20** was spoken on a mountain in Galilee – see verses **16 f.f.**
- **Mark 16:15-16** was spoken to the disciples as they sat around a table, possibly at or near Jerusalem – consider **Mark 16:19** and **Acts 1:4**.

⁷ All Jewish men were to go to Jerusalem for three particular feasts every year.

- Pentecost, *i.e.* the Feast of Weeks, was one of them (**Deuteronomy 16:16**)

The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Volume 4, M-P, page 692, “Pentecost”.

⁸ In **Acts 2:9**, there were people present on that day from Judea.

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there was much water there..” (emphasis mine – SK). If it was sufficient just to pour or sprinkle water over somebody to baptise them, then it would not have been necessary to go to a place of “*much water*”.

- instead of people having to come out to John, he could have simply gone to them.

The conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch further illustrates the point that baptism involves a burial. When he was ready to obey the gospel, both he and Philip “...*went down into the water, and he baptised him...*” This was followed by their “...*coming up out of the water...*” (**Acts 8:38-39**).

c) Baptism is for the remission⁹ of sins

In **Acts 2:38**, Peter quite clearly shows why baptism (and repentance) is necessary. His audience believed what he had been saying to them up to this point, so much so that they were “...*cut to the heart...*” (**Acts 2:37**). They had been complicit in crucifying Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah (vs.**36**). And now they stood there with a godly sorrow for the sins that they had committed, desperate to know what they should do.

Then Peter said to them, “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for* (emphasis mine – SK) *the remission of sins,.....*”. In other words, in order to obtain remission (*i.e.* forgiveness) of their sins, there were two (more¹⁰) things that they were required to do: repent, and be baptised. And that is what about 3000 of those present went and did (**Acts 2:41**).

d) Baptism is universal in scope

When Jesus gave His command in the Great Commission to baptise people (**Matthew 28:19-20**), He told His disciples to “...*make disciples of all the nations...*”. The gospel is for everybody, no matter what race; no matter what creed; no matter what colour, because Jesus died for all mankind (**2 Corinthians 5:15**). And it is only through Jesus that we have salvation (**John 14:6; Acts 4:12**). Therefore, while the disciples were to start in Jerusalem, they were to also spread the word throughout “...*all Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth*” (**Acts 1:8**).

So then, when Peter gave his instructions in **Acts 2:38**, he said “...*let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ...*”. Even those present who may have been previously baptised by either John or Jesus¹¹ during their earthly ministries, were required to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

I will discuss this more in part 2 of this lesson, but everybody, no matter who they are, if they want salvation, then they need to hear the gospel (**Romans 10:17**), believe that Jesus is the Son of God (**Mark 16:16; John 3:16**), confess that belief (**Acts 8:37**), repent of their sins (**Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38**), and be baptised.

⁹ Strong's Concordance, Greek word 859, means “*freedom*”, “*pardon*”, “*deliverance*”, “*forgiveness*”.

¹⁰ By “*more*”, I mean in addition to their belief now that Jesus really is the Son of God (**Acts 8:37; Romans 10:8-10**)

¹¹ **Matthew 3:4-6; John 3:22, 26; 4:1**

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e) The result of baptism

Once a person is baptised, God no longer takes into account the sins they previously committed¹² - the person no longer stands condemned before God (**Romans 8:1**). Their sins have been “*washed away*.” (**Acts 22:16**), and God remembers them no more (**Hebrews 8:12**). As a result, the person is now presented before God as “*...holy, blameless, and beyond reproach*”¹³ “*...*” (**Colossians 1:21-22**). They have been “*..born again..*” (**John 3:5, 7**), raised so that they “*....should walk in newness of life..*” (**Romans 6:4b**).

They have also “*...put on Christ...*” (**Galatians 3:27**) – *i.e.* they are now “in Christ”; they have clothed, or covered, themselves with Christ, to live as Christ would have them live (**Galatians 2:20**). And being “in Christ”, they now have all the spiritual blessings that are available from God (**Ephesians 1:3-14**). No matter who they are; no matter what their background, they are all now “*....one in Christ...*” (**1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Galatians 3:26-27; Colossians 3:10-11**), having been added to His body, the church, by God Himself (**Acts 2:47b; Colossians 1:18a**)

Conclusion:

The baptism that is applicable to sinners today is the baptism of the great commission (**Matthew 28:18-20**). It involves a burial in water, it is for the forgiveness of sins (**Acts 2:38**), and is applicable to all.

Is baptism important? Absolutely. In the process of becoming a Christian, it is just as important as the need to believe and repent – see Annex A.

- The Lord commanded it (**Matthew 28:19**) and He had said earlier in His ministry, “*If you love me, keep My commandments.*” (**John 14:15**)
– see also **John 12:48**.
- Peter, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, commanded it (**John 16:13; Acts 2:33-38**).
- Paul, the inspired apostle (**Galatians 1:11-12**), taught it (**Acts 19:1-5**).
- The early New Testament church practised it – see Annex A.

Baptism is the point where the sinner “dies” to their past life, and is transferred “*into the kingdom of the Son of His love...*” (**Colossians 1:13**) to live a new life in the Lord. It is the point where the person goes from being lost to being saved.

In the next lesson, we will cover;

- The Biblical principal of doing the right actions, from the right motives, for the right reasons, and,
- Some of the objections raised by those who claim that baptism is not necessary for salvation.

Acknowledgements:

- Spiritual Sword, “Baptism in the New Testament”, January 1994, Vol. 25, No.2
- Truth for Today, “Baptism” by Owen Olbricht, 1994

¹² Sins committed after baptism still require repentance and confession (**Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9**).

¹³ “*Beyond reproach*” = no-one can accuse you of being guilty of any wrong-doing.

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ANNEX A Examples of New Covenant conversions

In the book of Acts, we have an historical record of people becoming Christians in the first century. In the following table, we see examples of people being converted, *i.e.* people hearing and obeying the gospel in order to be saved. Read each of the scriptures, and note what action is *specifically* mentioned in the verses. You will notice that baptism consistently occurs.

NB: Some of the actions (not ticked) are implied from what the verses say, but this exercise is to note what actions are explicitly mentioned.

Scripture	Hear	Believe	Repent	Confession	Baptised
Acts 2:36-41, 42 Jews on Pentecost	✓ 37		✓ 38		✓ 38, 41
Acts 8:5-13 People in Samaria	✓ 5	✓ 12-13			✓ 12-13
Acts 8:26-39 Ethiopian Eunuch	✓ 35	✓ 37		✓ 37	✓ 38
Acts 9:10-18 Acts 22:10-17 Saul / Paul	✓ 16				✓ 18 ✓ 16
Acts 10:24-48 Cornelius & friends	✓ 34-44				✓ 48
Acts 16:13-15 Lydia	✓ 13				✓ 15
Acts 16:25-34 Jailer	✓ 31-32	✓ 34			✓ 33
Acts 19:1-5 The Ephesians	✓ 4-5				✓ 5
Acts 18:5-8 The Corinthians	✓ 8	✓ 8			✓ 8