

SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM

The word “baptize” comes from the Greek word “bapto” which means “to whelm, i.e. cover wholly with a fluid.” Baptism properly defined means to be completely submerged, as in being totally covered. In Christianity when we say that a person has been “baptized”, we are saying that, that person has been completely immersed in water. We call this a “believer’s baptism.” Such baptism may have taken place in a church baptistry, a lake, pond, river, or a swimming pool, but it was **ALWAYS** a complete immersion. A complete immersion is the **only** type taught in the Word of God, thus making invalid all other forms of so-called baptisms. To be “baptized” by sprinkling is of man and not of God; to claim otherwise is to claim an authority higher than God’s Word; such an authority has its origin in Satan himself for there is **NO AUTHORITY** higher than God’s Word.

A person may have been baptized in the scriptural manner, but that does not mean that he or she was a scriptural candidate for baptism. So then, let’s take a brief, closer look at scriptural baptism as taught by the Word of God.

First of all, baptism has **NOTHING** to do with saving a person (as in getting saved, born again) or keeping them saved (as in eternal security). You see, baptism is **ONLY** for those who have repented of their sins and by faith alone in Christ’s shed blood have received Him as personal Saviour. Every human has a sin nature (*“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* Romans 3:23) (*“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”* 1 John 1:8) from which all deeds of evil are imagined and/or done. (*“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”* Genesis 6:5) (*“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:”* Matthew 15:19) These evil deeds may be murder, theft, fornication, adultery, sodomy, drug abuse, alcohol consumption, lying, etc, etc, the penalty for which is eternal separation from God and damnation in the place the Bible calls hell. (*“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”* Ezekiel 18:4) (*“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”* Revelation 20:15) (*“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone:”* Revelation 21:8) **HOWEVER**, there is a way to escape this eternal punishment, thanks to the grace and mercy of a loving God. “And what might that be?” you may ask.

Payment for our sin debt **HAD** to be paid, either by the sinner or a qualified substitute for the sinner. Since **ALL** of us are sinners by birth and deed, it’s obvious that we do not qualify. Therefore, a perfect, sinless substitute was needed and the **ONLY** qualified substitute was the man Jesus Christ who, as God the Son, left heaven’s glory and took the form of a human in order (*“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”* Luke 2:11) that He may become our substitute and pay our sin debt with His shed blood and death on the Cross of Calvary. (*“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”* Hebrews 9:28) (*“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:”* 1 Peter 3:18) (*“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”* 1 Peter 2:24) Jesus Christ paid a debt He did not owe; we owed a debt we could not pay! Jesus Christ in every sense has paid the sin debt once and for all, for all of mankind for all eternity. Following His death on the Cross of Calvary He was buried and, three days later by the power of God, He bodily rose from the grave. (This is the true meaning of Easter.) As you read these lines, He is present in Heaven at the Father’s right hand. (*“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;”* Hebrews 10:12) Now, you may ask, “What does this have to do with baptism?” And that would be a valid question.

When a person comes to the place in life where he realizes that he is the one for whom Jesus Christ shed His blood and died as the substitute payment for his sin debt, and he repents (a change of mind that leads to a change of heart) and by faith alone in this Cross work of Jesus Christ receives Him as his personal Saviour, he

not only receives His forgiveness, but he is saved for all eternity. (*“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”* 1 John 5:11-13) This is what we mean by being “born again”, it’s a spiritual rebirth. Once a person has received Jesus Christ as personal Saviour he becomes a qualified candidate for believer’s baptism, then and only then and NOT before. If a person is baptized before receiving Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, (this includes infant baptism) then that baptism is not valid and has no merit (it’s worthless) before a holy God because baptism is the believer’s identification with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. (*“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:”* Romans 6:4-5)

Friend, what you have just read is a brief summation of what scriptural baptism is, but now I must ask you, have you repented of your sin and received Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour? If you have not, then I would encourage you to do it NOW, before it’s eternally too late. Do it for the sake of your eternal soul lest you die and go to a devil’s hell. Once a person receives Jesus Christ as Saviour, he then has the responsibility to live in such a manner as to bring honour and glory to the risen Saviour (I Corinthians. 6:19-20). That’s why it’s important for Christians to regularly attend an independent, fundamental, Bible-believing and Bible-preaching church that they may consistently sit under the ministry of God’s Word and grow spiritually.

-Richard A. Ciarrocca©2008

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