

DYERTHOUGHTS

== COMMON SENSE ==
APOLOGETICS

Baptism

What does the Bible say about Baptism?

The first thing we must look at is what does the word 'baptism' actually mean. In the original Greek the verb for baptism is 'baptizō'. This word means to dip, plunge or immerse. There are different Greek words used for sprinkling (RANTIZO) pouring (CHEO). But the New Testament never uses the words for sprinkling or pouring in reference to Christian baptism. The imagery in the New Testament even supports immersion as the proper mode for baptism. Romans 6:4-5 and Colossians 2:12 both say that when we were baptized we were buried with Christ and raised up with Him. It is kind of hard to think of being buried and raised through sprinkling or pouring. Also, the examples we have in Scripture of people actually being baptized confirm that it was done by immersion. In Acts 8:38-39 Philip the evangelist immersed the Ethiopian Eunuch. It says that they 'went down into the water' and 'came up out of the water'. Again, we would be hard pressed to imagine this language used for pouring or sprinkling. Therefore, we see that immersion is the only mode of baptism supported in the New Testament. Now we will discuss the purpose of baptism. In the book of Acts, Peter preached the first Gospel message in Acts 2. His sermon was directed at the Jewish nation. He told them that Jesus was the Messiah, they crucified him, but God raised him from the dead and made him both Lord and Christ. These men were convicted of their sins (Acts 2:37) and asked Peter to tell them what to do about it. Peter told them to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). In Peter's response we see that the purpose of baptism is FOR forgiveness of sins. Once God is able to forgive you then you will receive the promise of the Holy Spirit. If anyone should doubt that the language actually states the purpose of baptism is for forgiveness of sins, they should look at Matthew 26:28 where Jesus says his shed blood is FOR the forgiveness of sins (this is the exact same grammar in the original Greek).

Therefore, if one were to deny that Acts 2:38 says that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins they would have to deny that Jesus's shed blood is for the forgiveness of sins. A short perusal through the New Testament shows that baptism is connected to salvation (Mark 16:16), to the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38, 22:16), to the place where we are united with Christ in his death/burial / resurrection (Romans 6:3-5, Colossians 2:12), when we are clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27), and a request to God for a good conscious (1st Peter 3:21, most translations say 'pledge' but the word means to request). For one to say you do not have to be baptized to become a Christian they would have to say you can be a Christian without being connected to Christ death, without being clothed with Christ, without being raised to walk in newness of life, without requesting of God a good conscience, without the Holy Spirit and without the forgiveness of sins!!! Some may say, "What about the thief on the cross?" This question also encompasses the similar contention, "If baptism is necessary for salvation why didn't the Old Testament saints have to be baptized?" These questions fail to understand covenants. All of the Old Testament saints and the thief on the cross were all under the Old Covenant. The New Covenant was not started until Christ died and rose from the grave (Hebrews 9:16-17). God made a covenant agreement with the Israelites in the Law of Moses. God also made a New Covenant agreement in our day (Jeremiah 31:31, Luke 22:20) through the death of Jesus Christ. Baptism is when a person is united in the death/burial/resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:3-5). Therefore, an Old Testament person cannot be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38) when Jesus hadn't come. The thief on the cross also couldn't because Jesus hadn't died or rose from the dead yet.

Some may contend that Paul says we are saved by Faith apart from works (Romans 3:28) and baptism is a work therefore baptism can't be connected to salvation. But this is a false understanding of Paul's use of the terms 'work' and 'faith'. When Paul says 'work' he means what we do to try to make ourselves righteous before God. When Paul says 'faith' he means the acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus as sufficient for God to declare us righteous before Him. Most think works mean physical acts and faith means non-physical but this is simply not true. Therefore, baptism is not a work simply because it is a physical act. Baptism is an act of faith. We are saved by Grace, through Faith (Eph 2:8) but WHEN are we saved? Baptism is the time and place not the means (faith is the means) of salvation. When we come to the waters of baptism we must already have faith (Colossians 2:12, Mark 16:16). When we come to the waters of baptism we are appealing to God for a good conscious (1st Peter 3:21). Why would a Christian need to appeal to God for a good conscious? Therefore, the conclusion of the New Testament's teaching on baptism is immersion by the authority (in the name of) of Jesus which is for the forgiveness of sins. It is the time when we are transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light!!!