

What Baptism Does

Franklin Church of Christ
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Introduction:

About three years ago, I preached a sermon entitled “What Baptism Does Not Do.” We learned that it doesn’t replace faith, confession, or repentance. We learned that baptism doesn’t end temptation, prevent suffering, grant a license to sin, or equal spiritual maturity. However, what I noticed is I never actually came back to give you the other side. We never studied what baptism actually does do. I want to remedy that today. Baptism is one of the most hotly contested issues of the scripture. In fact, it seems the entire religious world teaches that baptism is a good thing, perhaps an important thing, but really it is just an extra thing. When so many teach this and then act like someone who says baptism is necessary is crazy, we might begin to waver. In fact, I know of churches even in our area that are backing off on the importance and necessity of baptism. What is surprising about this is that the Bible is pretty clear. I’m just not sure how anyone can read the Bible and get confused about what baptism is all about and the essential place it holds in our lives and salvation.

Before we look at what the Bible says Baptism does, please understand what I mean when I say baptism. The word itself simply means “immersion.” However, in the biblical context, it doesn’t just mean being dunked under the water. I’m not talking about taking a swim or a bath. I’m talking about a response to God’s gospel stemming from faith in God based on a desire to turn from sin and walk in God’s path. I’m talking about being immersed in order to accomplish what the Bible claims. Just because someone was immersed and even immersed for religious reasons doesn’t mean they experienced what the Bible describes when it speaks of baptism.

Discussion:

- I. Baptism brings us into Christ.
 - A. **Galatians 3:27-29** says we are baptized into Christ. Further, when we are baptized into Christ we put on Christ.
 - B. **Ephesians 1:3-14** explains why this is so important. Every spiritual blessing is found in Christ. Notice the blessings that come from being in Christ.
 1. Those in Christ are made holy and blameless-**Ephesians 1:4**.
 2. Those in Christ are adopted as sons-**Ephesians 1:5**.
 3. Those in Christ are redeemed by His blood-**Ephesians 1:7**.
 4. Those in Christ receive the forgiveness of sins-**Ephesians 1:7**.
 5. Those in Christ receive an inheritance-**Ephesians 1:11** (cf. **I Peter 1:4**).
 - C. However, these blessings are only found in Christ. They aren’t given to those who pray hard. They aren’t given to those who go to church a lot. They are given to those who are in Christ; the only way to get into Christ is through baptism.
- II. Baptism makes us disciples.
 - A. **Matthew 28:19** says we are made into disciples through baptism. A disciple is a student or follower. Because of our modern education system, we don’t think in terms of discipleship very much today. During the time of Jesus, however, discipleship was a common practice. It wasn’t simply a scriptural term. A teacher would set up shop and start teaching in the public areas. Those who became intrigued would listen more and more. Some would get to gain a very special place of disciple. They were the ones to whom the teacher devoted the majority of his attention. They received mentoring. In return, they followed the teacher wherever he went and devoted their lives to him.
 - B. Today, it is vogue to act like the term “Christian” is just a religious term. You’ll hear people say, “I’m not a Christian; I’m a Christ-follower.” The problem is many of these very people have not experienced a biblical baptism. Certainly, part of discipleship is listening to the teaching and applying it to our lives. We can’t truly claim to be disciples if we aren’t living what Jesus taught. However, at the same time, we can’t claim to be a Christ-follower or a disciple if we aren’t baptized in Christ’s baptism. Jesus said that is an integral part of being His disciple.

III. Baptism brings us into the one body.

- A. **I Corinthians 12:12-13** says even though we are many and we are all different, baptism brings us all into the one body of Jesus Christ. Please, do not be confused; even though this mentions being baptized “in one Spirit” it is not talking about the Holy Spirit baptism. Rather, it is talking about being baptized because we are obeying the Spirit.
- B. **Acts 2:41, 47** demonstrate this very point. Peter had told the people in **Acts 2:38** to be baptized and when they did, they were added to the number of the disciples or as some translations point out, they were added to the church.
- C. **Ephesians 5:25-27** explains why this is so important for us. While Jesus died for all people, His death is only effective in saving His church. If we want to be sanctified, presented without spot or blemish, presented holy, we have to be in the church. Interestingly, notice that this passage says the church has been cleansed “by the washing of water with the word.” Like being baptized “in one Spirit” this is not saying we are baptized in the word, but rather we are baptized by responding to the word, which, by the way, was delivered by the Spirit.

IV. Baptism brings us into Christ’s death.

- A. **Romans 6:3-4** says baptism brings us into Christ’s death. **Colossians 2:12** makes a similar point as it claims we are buried with Christ in baptism. Because we are dead in sin, we need to be buried with Christ so His death can impact us.
- B. According to **II Corinthians 5:14**, Jesus’ death is a sacrifice for us. He died and His death is imputed to us. Therefore, in a sense we all died. **I Peter 2:24** says he bore our sins on the cross. We are healed by His wounds. However, according to **II Timothy 2:11** we need to die with Jesus. According to **Galatians 2:20**, we must be crucified with Jesus.
- C. **Romans 6:3-8** says we do this in baptism. We may do all kinds of changing. We may stop a whole bunch of sins. However, if we haven’t been baptized, we haven’t died with Christ, our old self wasn’t crucified with Him, our body of sins is still on us, and we’ll be lost. We need to be baptized into Christ’s death for His death to help us.

V. Baptism grants forgiveness.

- A. **Acts 2:38** says baptism is for or unto the remission of sins. Some folks want to look at this passage and say “for” means because of. They’ll say it is like a “Wanted Poster” in the post office that says someone is “Wanted for Murder.” They are wanted because of murder not in order to murder. However, the Greek word translated “for” always means “unto.”
- B. I don’t like to simply rely on the Greek since I don’t really know it. So let’s look at another passage that helps us. **Acts 22:16** says, “Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins.” This verse is very clear. We are baptized in order to wash our sins away, not because our sins are already washed away.
- C. Baptism is how we get rid of our sins and our guilt. But let me point out again, this is not just baptism for any reason. This is baptism for the remission of sins. If we are baptized for some other reason, it is not this baptism.

VI. Baptism gives life.

- A. We noted earlier that baptism brings us into Christ’s death and through it we die with Christ. However, it doesn’t end there. Because it forgives us of our sin, baptism also gives us life. **Romans 6:4** and **Colossians 2:13** explains that when we are baptized we are raised to walk in newness of life.
- B. Just as Jesus died, was buried, then was raised to life, in baptism we die to sin, are buried with Christ, and are raised to a new life. The free gift of God is eternal life (**Romans 6:23**), however, we do not receive that gift until we are baptized into Christ and His death.

VII. Baptism saves us.

- A. I recall one time having a discussion about baptism with a co-worker while I was in college. She finally said, “You know, Edwin, it just seems to me that if baptism actually saved us, the Bible would have said that at least once.” I think she makes a good point. Perhaps you feel the same way. Perhaps seeing that baptism is the means by which we enter Christ and His death, receive forgiveness, and come into the one saved body is not enough to convince you baptism does

save us. Perhaps you are like my friend, surely if baptism actually saved, God would have said that at least once.

- B. He did. **I Peter 3:21** says, "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you..." The text goes on to say it is not a physical washing. It is not because the water is holy. Rather, it is because baptism, when performed in accordance to Scripture, is a response to God for a good conscience. It saves because God has said when we do this, He'll save us. Additionally, **Mark 16:16** says those who believe and are baptized will be saved. Baptism saves.

Conclusion:

Having said all of that, can you see how important baptism is? It is not just good advice. It is not just something nice to do. It is not something extra. It is necessary and essential. It is absolute. Without it, we are lost. We can never back off of this. We can never compromise this. If we do, we may be more appealing to more people, we may look nicer to people, we may feel better and others may feel better about us, but we won't be saved and we won't be saving anyone. We'll all feel good right into Hell. We want people to go to heaven, so we must teach this truth and call people to respond to it.

However, I have to say just one more time, this is not baptism for just any reason, this is an appeal to God through Christ's resurrection to be saved (**I Peter 3:21**). It is not a statement that you are already saved. It is not merely an act of obedience. It is an act of faith in the working of God (**Colossians 2:12**). Sadly, very few today are baptized with faith in the powerful working of God. Most think God doesn't work in our baptism. Most think baptism is just an outward sign that we perform of the inward grace God has already done. But that is not Bible baptism. Bible baptism is done in order to receive the remission of sins. Bible baptism is done with faith that God works to save us through it.

Have you been baptized into Christ, into His death, into His body, to become a disciple, for the remission of your sins, in order to be saved? Can we help you with that today?