

THE BASICS OF BAPTISM

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Baptism is a touchy subject for many people. There are so many differing view points on it that most people refuse to talk about it with friends for fear of causing a riff in their relationship. However, it is a biblical subject of great importance for the salvations of men's souls so it must be addressed. The best way to approach it is to ask basic questions and then find the answers in God's word.

One basic question is "What is baptism?" There are various acts considered to be baptisms and people have developed their own definitions for it, but what does the Bible say? Is it immersion, sprinkling or pouring? The word "baptize" is from a Greek word that means "to dip, plunge, immerse." That makes it very clear as to what the word means. When we look in the Bible, the various accounts of baptism show it to be immersion in water. Jesus "went up out of the water" (Mt. 3:16). Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water and both came up out of the water (Ac. 8:38-39). Paul describes baptism as a burial (Ro. 6:3-4). From all of this, the Bible shows baptism to be immersion.

Another basic question is "Why be baptized?" Again, there are various ideas as to why people should be baptized. Some say to show you have been saved, some to be place in a local church, others in order to be saved. Jesus tells us that one needs to be baptized in order to be saved (Mk. 16:16). Peter said to be baptized in order to receive the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Ananias told Saul to be baptized in order to wash away his sins (Ac. 22:16). From all of this, the Bible shows baptism is for the remission of sins.

"Who should be baptized?" is another basic question. Baptism is for the remission of sins. Therefore, one who has committed sin needs to be baptized. Paul informs us that all have sinned (Ro. 3:23). Mark records the words of Jesus saying that one must believe and be baptized (Mk 16:16). This shows that one must be capable of belief and have sinned in order to be baptized. From all of this, the Bible shows that one who is capable of belief and has sinned is the one who should be baptized.

Another question is "When should one be baptized?" Every account of baptism in the book of Acts has people doing it immediately. On the Day of Pentecost 3,000 people were baptized immediately following Peter's command to repent and be baptized. The Samaritans of Acts 8 all were baptized immediately after hearing Philip preach. The eunuch of Acts 8 was baptized immediately after hearing Philip teach him the gospel. From all of this, the Bible shows that one needs to be baptized immediately after hearing God's word, believing it and repenting of their sins.

The last simple question is "Where must I be baptized?" Every biblical example is that of baptizing a responsible individual in water. That is the only medium in which someone is to be baptized.

Baptism is a simple part of obeying God's commands that man has cluttered with his doctrines. When the light of God's word is shown upon the subject of baptism it becomes simple to understand.