

What Baptism Will, and Will Not Do

Introduction:

1. Few subjects are more controversial, or as controversial, than the subject of Baptism. It is a topic concerning which the religious world is greatly divided. Divided as to:
 - a. Its “mode,” whether sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.
 - b. The direction in which it looks – whether backward to sins already remitted, or forward to sins to be forgiven upon one being baptized.
 - c. Whether it is a “church ordinance” or a command of Christ.
 - d. Who should be baptized? Infants? Responsible people? Saved people? Unsaved people?
 - e. Results of baptism? Etc., etc.
2. Suffice it to say, Baptism is a Bible topic!
 - a. I’m told that “some form of ‘baptism’ is found over 100 times in the New Testament!
 - b. All the examples of people obeying the gospel in Acts, in which what they did is completely or partially mentioned reveal that they were baptized! Acts 2:41; 8:12, 38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15,33; 18:8.
3. In view of these facts, it should be evident that Baptism is a very, very important subject; however, as we have noted it has become a very controversial topic. In dealing with this subject, there are two sources to which we can look:
 - a. The creeds of men.
 - (1) Which are continually being re-written, altered, and changed.
 - b. The word of God. This is the only reliable source to which we can turn, for:
 - (1) God’s understanding is “infinite,” Psa. 147:5.
 - (2) God “cannot lie,” Titus 1:2.
 - (3) God’s word was given “by inspiration,” I Cor. 2:9-13.
 - (4) God’s word is complete, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
 - (5) God’s word will judge us in that last day, John 12:48.

Discussion:

I. What Baptism Will Do.

- A. It Unites a Person with Christ.
 1. Rom. 6:3-5. Note verse five: “*For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,*” NKJV.
- B. It Puts a Person “*Into Christ,*” Gal. 3:27. This gives us access to that which is obtained in Christ, such as:
 1. All “*spiritual blessings,*” Eph. 1:3.
 2. Acceptance “*in the beloved,*” Eph. 1:6.
 3. Redemption and forgiveness, Eph. 1:7; Acts 2:38.
 4. A New Creature, 2 Cor. 5:17.
 5. Salvation, 2 Tim. 2:10.
- C. It Puts a Person “*into one body,*” I Cor. 12:13.
 1. The one body is the church, Eph. 1:22-23. The church:
 - a. Jesus built, Matt. 16:18.
 - b. Jesus purchased with His blood, Acts 20:28.
 - c. Wherein is reconciliation, Eph. 2:16.
 - d. Of which Jesus is the Savior, Eph. 5:23.

II. What Baptism Will Not Do.

- A. Save a Person By Itself.
 1. Yes, baptism “*doth also not save us,*” I Peter 3:21, but it does not save us by itself.
 2. It does not take the place of Faith, John 3:16; it does not take the place of repentance, Acts 17:30; it does not take the place of confession, Rom. 10:9-10.
 - a. Men greatly err when they take any of the commands of God and then conclude that we are saved by that command “only!” cf. Rom. 5:1. We are justified by faith, but not by faith only, Jas. 2:24.
 3. Hence, baptism does not take the place of faith, repentance, or confession.
- B. Change the Heart.
 1. The Bible “*heart*” includes:
 - a. The emotions, Mat. 22:37.
 - b. The intellect, Rom. 6:17.
 - c. The will, 2 Cor. 9:6.
 2. The heart is purified by faith, Acts 15:9.

- C. Change a Person's Conduct.
 - 1. Certainly there should be a change of conduct following baptism, Rom. 6:4; Col. 3:1-2.
 - 2. But the conduct is changed by repentance!
 - a. Noun, *metanoia*, "after-thought, change of mind." It has "reference to repentance from sin, and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God," Vine.
 - 3. It preceded by "*godly sorrow*," 2 Cor.7:10; and it is evidenced by the "*fruits*" of repentance, Matt. 3:8.
- D. Remove Temptation.
 - 1. Jesus was baptized, Matt. 3:13-17, and He was tempted immediately afterwards, Matt. 4:1-11.
 - 2. Satan is our adversary, I Peter 5:8; even as He tempted Jesus he will tempt us.
 - 3. However, Satan can be resisted! James4:7-8.
- E. Give us a License to Sin!
 - 1. Note Romans 6:1-4,13.
 - 2. Freedom in Christ, Gal. 5:1, is not a license to commit to sin! Gal. 5:19-21.
 - a. False teacher in the first century promised "*liberty*," whereas they themselves were "*the servants of corruption*," 2 Peter 2:19; cf. Rev. 2:6.
- F. Remove the scar which the guilt of sin has caused.
 - 1. Yes, those who are scripturally baptized are forgiven of past sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16.
 - 2. When one is has faith that his sins have been forgiven, and his soul is right before God, he rejoices, Acts 8:39. But for the truly penitent, the scar caused by sin will remain. Cf. Saul of Tarsus, Acts 22:16; I Tim. 1:15; Eph. 3:8.
 - 3. Indeed, the forgiven sinner can say "*by the grace of God I am what I am*," I Cor. 15:9-10.
 - a. Contrast those words with that of the Pharisee in Luke 18:11,12.
 - b. Cf. John Newton, age 82, author of **Amazing Grace**, said "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Savior."
- G. Prevent Suffering.
 - 1. In some instances, it may increase suffering! 2 Tim. 3:12.
 - 2. In this world there are two classes of people who suffer:
 - a. Evil doers, I Peter 4:15.
 - b. Christians, I Peter 4:16.
- H. Remove the this-world consequences of past sins.
 - 1. Gal. 6:7.
 - 2. If a person with AIDS is baptized, he will still have AIDS after he is baptized; if a person has cirrhosis of the liver before he is baptized, he will have cirrhosis of the liver after he is baptized.
 - 3. Baptism does not involve the putting away "*of the filth of the flesh*;" rather it is "*the answer of a good conscience toward God*," I Peter 3:21.
 - a. It removes the sins which stain **the soul**, Acts 22:16; it does not remove the diseases of the Body.
- I. Cure all of life's problems.
 - 1. Money problems, family problems, employment problems, people problems do not automatically vanish when a person is baptized into Christ.
 - a. In fact, some of these problems might even intensify! Matt. 10:34-37.
 - 2. But baptism can put us into a relationship which better equips us to deal with the problems of life. Cf. Phil. 4:13.
- J. Produce immediate spiritual maturity.
 - 1. A person recently baptized is a "*new creature*," 2 Cor. 5:17; he is a "*babe*," who needs to "*grow*" in the word, I Peter 2:1-2.
 - 2. Over the years I have often been amazed at how rapidly some "babes" have grown in their knowledge of the scriptures, and in their spiritual maturity. But being baptized today does not mean that one will be spiritually mature tomorrow.
- K. Run the Race.
 - 1. But it does put us in the race! Heb. 12:1-2.
 - 2. And when we run it successfully and faithfully, we receive the crown of life! 2 Tim. 4:6-8; Rev. 2:10.

Conclusion:

- 1. More could be said regarding what baptism does do, and what it does not do.
 - 2. Hopefully, what has been said will provide motivation for those who have been baptized to press forward for the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and motivate those who have not been baptized to obey Christ.
- Bobby Witheington