

Baptism-Who, How, Why? **Matthew 28:18-20**

Of all the topics people can discuss about the Christian faith, the subject of baptism is one that has so many different voices speaking so many different opinions. The text makes it plain that Christ has commanded baptism, so we will use our regular custom and let the scriptures answer the Who, How, and Why for us.

Who is baptism for?

In our text, Jesus says it is for disciples. A disciple is someone who is determined to follow a particular teacher. In Mark 16:16, Jesus says baptism is to be accompanied by faith. We can see this expressed particularly in the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch. His story is found in Acts 8. The particular part we are need for this study is in verses 36 and 37. Here it is: ***“Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’ Then Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’”-- NKJV*** From these scriptures it is evident that a person must be able to make a personal decision to be baptized into Christ. No one can make it for you. Parents cannot make the decision for their children. The fact that you must make a personal decision means you must be old enough to understand the choice and what you doing. This means we are not to baptize babies or young children. When they are old enough, they will have to make the decision themselves. Can you see how important it is to help your children learn about God and His Son Jesus?

There are those who presume to baptize infants on the argument that “households” were baptized. The suggestion is that a household probably had young children. Thus when the household was baptized, this would have included the babies or young children. Two examples of “households” are found in Acts: The household of Cornelius—Acts 10 and the household of Lydia—Acts 16:11-15. The simple answer to this argument is obvious. The word “household” does not of itself imply young children are in the family. A household may consist of the owner and servants or any number of other combinations that can exist without any young children being present. We have no suggestion that any babies were in the households of Cornelius and Lydia. Since all who received baptism had to believe, we are confident no infants were baptized.

How is baptism to be performed?

There are three manners of baptism recognized in the world today. These three forms are total immersion, sprinkling of water, and pouring of water. Of these, only immersion is recognized by all groups as acceptable for baptism. You would think that if all groups accept immersion as acceptable for baptism that the argument would be over. However, the problem is that many groups want to include sprinkling of water and pouring of water as also acceptable.

Can we tell from the scriptures what the form of baptism was that was used by Christ and the apostles? If we can, we should do that. If we cannot, then we may do what we want. So, let’s answer the question by looking at what the scriptures say about baptism.

- John 3:23—***“Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there.”***
- Acts 8:38—***“So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.”***
- Romans 6:3-6—***“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”***

From these passages it is obvious that baptism requires much water, going down into the water, and represents our sharing in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We should now ask ourselves a question. Which of the suggested forms, immersion, sprinkling or pouring, matches the requirements of Scripture? Obviously, it is immersion. Listen to these comments about Romans 6:3-6 found in Bibles from the largest denomination that practices sprinkling or pouring for baptism.

R. A. Knox: "Baptism (which then suggested the idea of total immersion) mystically identifies us with our Lord's passage through the tomb."

St. Joseph's Textbook Version of the Holy Bible: "St. Paul alludes to the manner in which baptism was ordinarily conferred in the primitive church, by immersion. The descent into the water is suggestive of the descent of the body into the grave, and the ascent is suggestive of the resurrection to a new life."

It is also in the Greek language used for the New Testament. Here are a few examples of the Greek word with the corresponding English word we now use.

- *bapto* (bap'-to); a primary verb; to overwhelm, i.e. cover wholly with a fluid
- *baptizo* (bap-tid'-zo); from a derivative of *bapto*; to immerse, submerge; to make overwhelmed (i.e. fully wet); used only (in the N. T.) of ceremonial ablution, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian baptism
- *baptisma* (bap'-tis-mah); from *baptizo*; immersion, baptism (technically or figuratively)
- *baptismos* (bap-tis-mos'); from *baptizo*; ablution (ceremonial or Christian)

Notice that all the words for baptism are derived from the Greek word *bapto* which means to "cover wholly with a fluid." The word *bapto* is translated as *dip* in the scriptures, but translators almost always use "baptism" for *baptizo*, *baptisma*, and *baptismos* when the words apply to the command of Jesus, and they will use the word "wash" in other cases. What is it they don't want you to know?

Here is the word used for *sprinkling* in the Bible: *rhantizo*, "to sprinkle." This word is never used for Christian baptism in the scripture. Here is the word for *pour* in the Bible: *epicheo*, "to pour upon." Likewise, this word is never used for baptism in the scripture. Let's look at the verse of our text in the Greek: *Poreuthéntes oún matheeteúsate pánta tá éthnee baptízontes*
Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, **baptizing**

Who will you obey? Please obey the Christ who commanded the baptism and not religious leaders who have substituted their own authority for the will of Christ.

Why should I be baptized?

1. Matthew 28:18-20—To obey the command of Christ
2. Mark 16:16—To be saved
3. Acts 2:38—For the remission of sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit
4. Acts 22:16—To have your sins washed away
5. Romans 6:3-6—To be crucified with Christ; to be buried with Christ; to be raised to a new life in Christ.
6. Colossians 2:11—To put off the body of sins of the flesh
7. Galatians 3:27—To be clothed with Christ

Have you personally decided to be immersed into Christ so that you can receive the grace of Christ? No? Then what are you waiting for? Satisfy the Christ who commanded baptism and don't worry about pleasing anybody else.