

February, 1985

"WATER BAPTISM: YOUR CHRISTIAN I.D. TAG"

Being baptized in water proclaims, through a physical symbol, the spiritual reality that you have become identified with Christ through saving faith in Him.

Look up the following verses that refer to baptism. Please take careful attention to note that some passages may be referring to the Spirit baptism and not water baptism.

Matt.28:18-20

Gal.3:27

Rom.6:3-4

Eph.4:5

1 Cor.1:12-17

Col.2:12

1 Cor.12:12-13

Acts 2:41

I. WHAT IS CHRISTIAN BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

BAPTIZO (Greek word) can mean any of the following, depending on the context in which it is used.

"to overwhelm", "to emmerge, immerse, submerge or sink"

"to dip into a dye or stain"

"to place into", spiritual "identification" (note 1 Cor.10.2)

"washings" (note Heb.9:10)

SPECIAL NOTE: John the Baptist's method of baptizing was not the immersion which we use in Christian baptism in the church age today! Therefore, Jesus was not immersed like we are today!

- (1) You'll read in John 3:22-36 that the baptism John and the other disciples were doing was observed by the Jews at that time, the same as the purification rites which in the Old Testament were always sprinkling (Num.19:17-18; Ex.24:6,8; Lev.8:19; 16:14; cp Heb.9:10-21)! Incidentally, that is why some hold this view today, because this was probably the only type of public baptizing ceremony observed. (Further note how "sprinkling" is significantly used in Scripture in relation to purification and cleansing from sin (Ezek.36:25-28; 1 Pet.1:2).
- (2) Also John's baptism was for the repentance of sin (Matt.3:11). Jesus did not need that kind of baptism. But He went through the ceremony anyway, because as He said, "Let it be so for now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Gal.4:4 says Jesus was "made under the law" which meant He was submitting to baptism in order to obey the Old Testament law. (Note other ways He submitted to Old Testament law: Lev.12:3 and Luke 2:21; Luke 2:22-23; Ex.34:23 and Lk.2:42; Mk.14:12; Lk.22:3; Jn.17:10). But what law was He obeying at this baptism? Numbers 8:6-7: "Take the Levites (priests)... and cleanse them. Thus shalt thou do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water upon them." Jesus was a priest (Heb.3:1; 4:14; 5:5; 9:11) and His baptism was not for repentance of sin obviously, but the ceremonial act of His ordination into the priesthood! It set Him apart for service for God. (Still a beautiful meaning and application to us!)
- (3) While it is not stated anywhere how Jesus was actually baptized, the most obvious reason Jesus was not immersed like those in the New Testament church is obviously chronological and logical. Since believer's baptism is identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (as we shall see further), how would that picture be one that John would be portraying? Christ had not yet been crucified, buried, and resurrected. John, nor any of the other disciples, had any idea that that would happen! So logically and chronologically, since the crucifixion took place 3 years later, His baptism was different than ours. Believer's baptism came about at the beginning of the church age in Acts 2, when the Body of Christ began.

11. CHRISTIAN BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- (1) SPIRIT BAPTISM (Acts 1:5-6; 11:15-16; 1 Cor.12:12-13; Gal.3:27-29; Eph.4:4-5)
This is the work of the Holy Spirit "placing us into" the Body of Christ at the moment of saving faith, and thereby creating the unified, spiritual body of people who are identified with Christ (His church).
- (2) SYMBOLIC BAPTISM This is the physical act of immersion into water that identifies a person with another - John's baptism (Mk.1:4-5), Moses' baptism (1 Cor.10:1-2) (however, a humorous note which must be considered in making conclusions is that in this baptism of Moses, the only people "immersed" were the Egyptian army! Therefore the point which the consistent usage of the term baptism conveys is one of identification) Jesus' baptism (Mk.1:9), Christian baptism (Acts 2:41...) Christian baptism identifies a person with the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt.28:19), and specifically with the person of Christ (Rom.6:3-4).

CONCLUSION: Christian Baptism

- it is an immersing into water that symbolizes or pictures identification with Christ.
- it is an outward sign to the church and to the world of inward conversion.
- it is a vivid symbol of a changed life.
- it is a public testimony of your spiritual union with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection, and walk in newness of life (Rom.6:4; Col.2:12).
- it proclaims our putting on of Christ (Gal.3:26,27).
- water baptism symbolizes what we have already experienced inwardly when we trusted Christ. When you became a Christian you were placed into Christ by the Spirit (1 Cor.12:13), you were identified with Christ (Rom.6:1-10), and you were made one with Him.

*SPECIAL NOTE: A further insight that is of instructive value to baptism is that water is used symbolically throughout Scripture for purification or cleansing from sin. Observe:

Acts 22:16

Heb.10:22

Eph.5:26

Ezek.36:25-28

Titus 3:5

III. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

Acts 2:41

Acts 10:47

Acts 8:12

Acts 16:14-15

Acts 8:35-37

Act 16:31-33

Acts 9:6,18

Acts 18:8

Water baptism does not precede faith in Christ, but follows it as a confirming symbol. So only those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their Saviour should be baptized.

IV. WHY SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

A. When a person trusts Jesus Christ as Saviour they become a new person, they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit which places them into a spiritual union with Jesus Christ and other members of the universal body of Christ. It is all an invisible, spiritual reality that takes place, which those people around you don't see.

B. Water baptism is important because it is a "visible" physical event that proclaims to the world the reality of your baptism in the Holy Spirit." The method of immersion portrays your identification with Christ (Rom.6:3-4), and therefore is an outward, public testimony to the world of what took place inwardly.

C. Conclusive Reasons: A Christian should be baptized because it is:

- obedience to the New Testament commands (Mt.28:18-19; Acts 2:38-41; 10:48)
- obedience to the New Testament examples (Mt.3: Acts 8:12-13, 36-38; 9:18; 10:46-48; 16:14-15, 33; 18:8; 19:4-5)
- your spiritual responsibility to publically confess and give testimony of your personal trust in Christ (see Rom.10:9-10)
- a significant mark of commitment and dedication of one's life to Christ, no longer living for self, but now set apart to live henceforth for Christ
- a significant mark of confirmation of one's meaning business "with God"
- a significant mark of assurance that you are a child of God

*SPECIAL NOTE: Baptism does not save a person or guarantee salvation. Only Jesus Christ, through His Word can do that. It is consistently taught throughout Scripture that we are not saved by our performance, good deeds, or works (Eph.2:8-9; Titus 3:5; Rom.4:2-6; Gal.2:16). Since baptism is something we do, if it had any effect on our eternal salvation, then salvation wouldn't be a free gift (Rom.6:23) because baptism would become a work we would do to earn it.

In any case, water baptism gives you an occasion to proclaim to the world your public identification with Jesus Christ and His people.

V. WHEN SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BE BAPTIZED?

- A. The answer regarding the timing of baptism is seen in the Acts passage previously referred to.
- B. The Scriptural examples show that as soon as a person trusted Christ as Saviour they are baptized in water. There doesn't seem to be any long waiting period.
- C. However, today, because of so many different and confusing views of baptism, and what it means to a person, it is a perfect opportunity for churches to provide the necessary Biblical understanding and instruction.

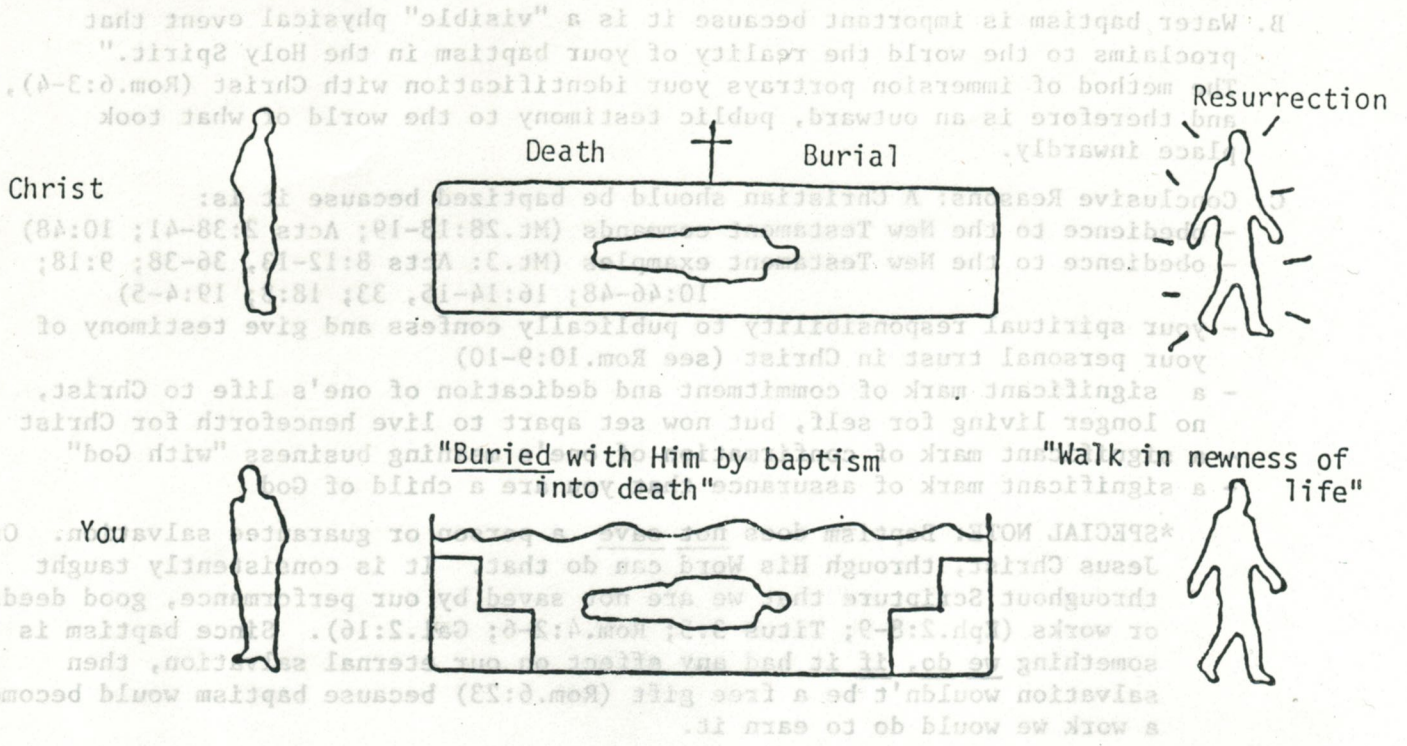
VI. WHERE SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BE BAPTIZED?

By means of proper Scriptural observation, baptism should be done:

- (1) in water (it makes no difference whether it's in a pool, baptismal, lake, river, ocean...) since water is symbolically used in Scripture for cleansing
- (2) in public (Baptism is not necessarily for God to see. He already sees the reality of what is happening in the inner life. But baptism is for others to see - it is the personal testimony of one who's put their trust in Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. It's a proclamation to everyone that the Gospel is a reality and that God changes lives today)

VII. HOW SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BE BAPTIZED?

- A. Since the word Baptizo means "to place into, to immerse", to dip as well as to identify with - a combination of these concepts would beautifully portray the method as immersion in water.
- B. Also the New Testament picture of Spirit baptism revealed in Rom.6:3-4 is the identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, which is dramatized in immersion. Observe the following illustration:



C. The instruction of "how" a Christian should be baptized not only covers the visible procedure, but also the verbal pronouncement where in Matt. 28:19 it says to baptize "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Therefore, the best way to identify a believer with Jesus Christ would be through publically immersing them in water, symbolizing one's faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, and one's union with Him in death to sin, and resurrection to a new life (Rom.6:1-14). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42), in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy spirit. Matt.28:19.

Reference materials used in this study:

- "Dictionary of New Testament Theology"
- "The Meaning and Mode of Baptism" - Dr. Jay E. Adams
- "The Church In God's Program" - Robert L. Saucy
- "The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia"
- " I Corinthians" Commentary - Dr. John MacArthur
- "Hebrews" Commentray - Dr. John MacArthur
- "Ecclesiology Syllabus" (WBC) - Dr. Fowler
- "Grace Fellowship Church Statement"
- "Matthew" Commentary - Hendrikson
- "Vine's Expository Dictionary"

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