

WHERE GOD PUT BAPTISM

Pursuant to last week's essay on "God's Gracious Plan Of Salvation" I am writing this week about the place of baptism in that wonderful plan. It is the step in the process of being saved from sin that is the most controversial, even to the point of being denied as necessary.

Many diverse views exist in the religious world about baptism: 1) Its action/"mode" (whether sprinkling, pouring, or immersion), 2) Who it is for (babies, little children, or penitent believers), 3) Its purpose (to "join" a church, because one is already saved from sin, or in order to be saved from sin). Please consider very thoughtfully the following biblical points about the divine purpose of baptism in God's gracious plan of salvation. Read and study each verse very carefully and prayerfully. (Note: I have used the New King James Version of the Scriptures, but any good English version will show where God put baptism in His plan of salvation, and you will need a lot of "expert help" and jumping through many hoops and loops to misunderstand what the Bible says on this subject).

1. Baptism stands between the sinner and salvation. Jesus said to His apostles, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). If it is argued that one is condemned only for a lack of belief rather than for a lack of baptism, let it be observed that a lack of belief is all that is necessary to be condemned and without belief baptism would be of no value. But if one wishes to be saved, then one must comply with both conditions stated by Christ: belief AND baptism.

2. Baptism stands between the sinner and the remission of sins. The apostle Peter declared, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). "For" in this text is the same word used in Matthew 26:28 where Christ said that His blood was shed "for the remission of sins." Christ did not shed His blood *because* mankind's sins were already remitted, but *in order to* make such remission possible. The same is true with reference to baptism "for the remission of sins"—not because of, but in order to! No reliable version of the Scriptures renders Acts 2:38 as "be baptized because of the remission of sins," but rather "be baptized for (in order to) the remission of sins." Note also that repentance and baptism both are "for the remission of sins," and clearly one does not repent "because" one's sins have already been remitted but in order to their remission!

3. Baptism stands between the sinner and having sins washed away. Ananias instructed Saul of Tarsus (who became the apostle Paul): "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). To teach that baptism is not essential to salvation from sin is to provide a way of salvation not available to Saul.

4. Baptism stands between the sinner and the benefits of the death of Christ. Paul affirmed, “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death” (Romans 6:3)? Until one is baptized one does not receive any of the benefits provided by the atoning death of Christ for mankind’s sin.

5. Baptism stands between the sinner and the new life in Christ. Paul further declared, “Therefore we were buried with Him by 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” (Romans 6:4). The new life in Christ follows one’s burial with Christ in the waters of baptism and being raised up to that new life.

6. Baptism stands between the sinner and being in Christ. Paul wrote, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27). All spiritual blessings (including salvation—II Timothy 2:10) are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), and until one is baptized into Christ that person is not in Christ!

7. Baptism stands between the sinner and being saved and having a good conscience toward God. Peter wrote, “There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 3:21).

The observant reader of the New Testament will discover many other passages that speak of baptism, its God-appointed place in His wonderful plan of salvation, and the blessings that accompany scriptural baptism. Far from being in opposition to the grace of God or being a work of human merit, baptism is a divine prerequisite for accepting God’s saving grace and entering into a saved state with the Lord. It is a beautiful re-enactment of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins (Romans 6:1-6).

Rather than being guided by the opinions and teachings of men or what you have always believed, thought, or been taught, you are urged to read and study the Bible for yourself to see what it says—ALL that it says, not just a single verse or two—about what one must do to comply with God’s conditions for being saved! Do not write off baptism as being non-essential to your salvation from sin!

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