

One Action: a Burial

People often talk about the “modes” of baptism. By this they mean different ways to be baptized. The modes of baptism are usually listed as sprinkling, pouring, and immersion. What does the will of Christ require for the action of baptism? The New Testament teaches that in baptism there is “water” (Acts 10:47). In fact there is “much water” (John 3:23). It teaches that before one is baptized he must go “to” the water and then “into the water” (Acts 8:36, 38). The doctrine of Christ requires that the one being baptized be “buried” (Romans 6:3-4). The Gospel further states that baptism includes a being raised from the water (Colossians 2:12) and a coming “up out of the water” (Acts 8:39). Can we honestly say that either sprinkling or pouring meet all these requirements? Have you been baptized or did you receive some humanly devised substitute for the divinely required action?

One Subject: a Penitent Believer

Are infants proper subjects of New Testament baptism? Who should be baptized? Jesus revealed that all believers are to be baptized (Mark 16:16). Peter put both the reception of the word and repentance before baptism in the first sermon preached under that Great Commission (Acts 2:38,41). The evangelist Philip baptized the Samaritans after they had believed (Acts 8:12-13). The Philippian jailor and his entire family believed before they were baptized (Acts 16:29-34). The inspired writer records, “many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized.” (Acts 18:8) There is no authority for infant baptism in the New Testament. Thus, the proper subjects of New Testament baptism are people who have believed Jesus Christ is the Son of God, have repented of their sins, and have confessed their faith in Jesus Christ.

One Purpose: the Remission of Sins

In Mark 16:16 Jesus promised, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” The Lord divided people into two categories, the saved and the lost. Those who do not believe will be lost. Those who believe and are baptized will be saved. Christ made baptism as much a condition of salvation as He did belief. There are only two categories, not three. Jesus knew nothing of unbaptized, saved people. To be saved, one must have enough faith in Jesus Christ to obey Him in baptism.

The inspired apostle Peter commanded, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” (Acts 2:38) The conjunction “and” joins “Repent” and “be baptized” just

like a coupling pin joins two box cars of a train. Just like those box cars, as long as the coupling pin “and” is there, “Repent” and “be baptized” must be going in the same direction. Furthermore, the word “for” in Acts 2:38 is the same word Jesus used in Matthew 26:28, when he revealed, “... this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Did Jesus shed His blood unto the remission of sins? Then you need to be baptized unto the remission of sins.

Ananias commanded Saul of Tarsus, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). According to the inspired record, the order is “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

According to Romans 6:3-4, Baptism brings the sinner into Christ, where he receives “every spiritual blessing” (Ephesians 1:3), including salvation (2 Timothy 2:10). It also brings the sinner into the death of Christ, where he receives the benefits of His blood, justification from sin (Romans 5:9-10). By going through a likeness of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we demonstrate our faith that we are saved by His sacrifice for us. Thus we receive the benefits of His death in our behalf. Baptism stands between the sinner and being in Christ (verse 3), being in the death of Christ (verse 4), the new life in Christ (verse 5), being united with Christ (verse 5), being united with the Lord's crucifixion (verse 6), and freedom from sin (verse 7).

Why Delay?

There is only one baptism today by Jesus' authority (Ephesians 4:5). That baptism has five great characteristics whereby you can tell it apart from all others. It has one authority - Jesus Christ, one element - water, one action - a burial, one subject - a penitent believer, and one purpose - the remission of sins. “Those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.... shall be punished with everlasting destruction.” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) Surely you will not allow refusal to obey this simple command to keep you out of heaven. If you have not received the one baptism, this act of faithful obedience stands between you and all the wondrous blessings in Christ. “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

Questions for Review

True/False

1. _____ There have been several baptisms in the Bible.

2. ____ The New Testament now authorizes two baptisms.
3. ____ Proper baptism is by the authority of the church.
4. ____ We must be baptized in water.
5. ____ We should also receive baptism with the Holy Spirit.
6. ____ Sprinkling is an acceptable mode of baptism.
7. ____ Acceptable baptism is only by immersion.
8. ____ It is proper to baptize babies.
9. ____ The only proper person to be baptized is a penitent believer.
10. ____ Baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace.
11. ____ Baptism is to demonstrate you are already saved.
12. ____ The purpose of baptism is to receive forgiveness of sins.
13. ____ If you have been sprinkled as an infant you do not need to be baptized as an adult.
14. ____ The only acceptable baptism is by the authority of Christ.
15. ____ Pouring water over one's head is a proper mode of baptism.
16. ____ Infants should be baptized at eight days of age.
17. ____ Baptism includes going under and coming up out of the water.
18. ____ Baptism is a likeness of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
19. ____ You can refuse to be baptized and still go to heaven.
20. ____ You must be baptized to receive the blessings in Christ.

Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson Nine

The One Baptism

There have been several baptisms in past ages: Moses' baptism "in the cloud and in the sea," John's baptism, Jesus' baptism of suffering, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. At the end of time the ignorant and disobedient shall be baptized with fire. But there is only one baptism authorized by the Lord in the New Testament at the present time (Ephesians 4:4-6). What are the characteristics which identify this one New Testament baptism?

One Authority: Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, commanded baptism (Mark 16:16), and His chosen apostles, who have the authority of Jesus behind them (John 13:20; 20:21), repeated the command (Acts 2:38). How could anyone, therefore, claim that the one baptism, baptism by the authority of Jesus Christ, is non-essential? Furthermore, since no other baptism is by the authority of the Lord Jesus, all other baptisms are spiritually worthless. When Paul encountered twelve men at Ephesus who had received John's baptism, he baptized them "in the name of Jesus" (Acts 19:1-5). If those who had received John's baptism had to receive baptism by the authority of Christ, certainly no denominational baptism will suffice.

One Element: Water

What is the element of New Testament baptism? In other words, in what should you be baptized? When the Ethiopian eunuch desired to be baptized, he first asked Philip, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36) Then they "went down into the water," where Philip baptized the eunuch. Afterward "they came up out of the water." (Acts 8:38-39) After Cornelius' household had already received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-48), the apostle Peter asked, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized...?" (verse 47). Since this water baptism was "in the name of the Lord" (verse 48), it was New Testament baptism.