

Biblical Baptism—No. 2

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Mere men did not invent the Bible doctrine of baptism. Jesus, in the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16) is its author, and He alone has the right to specify its element, purpose, antecedents, action, candidates, and every other facet of it. The New Testament is the exclusive source of this information.

Is baptism for everyone (i.e., all who are capable of responding to the Gospel)? One correct answer is, “Yes.” The Great Commission indicates that the Lord wants everyone to hear, believe, and obey the Gospel. However, another correct answer is, “No.” Millions should not be baptized, not because God arbitrarily wills it, but because they are unprepared and unqualified. Scriptural statements abound indicating various ones who should not be baptized:

1. **Those who do not believe in Jesus as the Christ:** “For except ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:24). Baptism will not benefit the unbeliever.
2. **Those who will not confess their faith, even though they may believe.** Before Philip would baptize the Ethiopian, the evangelist required him to confess his faith (Acts 8:36–37; cf. Rom. 10:9–10).
3. **Those who will not repent of their sins:** To repent means to determine to stop sinning and then to stop sinning. Those brought to believe in Christ by the preaching on Pentecost were told, “Repent ye and be baptized...” (Acts 2:38). Baptism is a hollow act if not preceded by repentance.
4. **Those who seek to please others rather than to obey Jesus:** It is right for parents, a spouse, or a friend to strongly desire one to be baptized into Christ. However, if one goes through the act merely to please others, rather than to submit to the will of Christ, the act is vain. Those on Pentecost “gladly received the word” (Acts 2:41). One’s obedience must be “from the heart” (Rom 6:17–18).
5. **Those who do not know, or who deny, the purpose of baptism:** The Bible states this purpose variously. It is in order to: be saved (Mark 16: 16), receive remission of sins (Acts 2:38), wash away sins (22:16), put on Christ (Gal. 3:27), and like expressions. Baptism is the line between those not forgiven and those forgiven, those not His children and those who are, the world and the church. If one does not comprehend the purpose of the Lord’s supper, he takes it in vain (1 Cor. 11:26, 29). So it is with baptism.

Baptism is for believers who will confess Christ and repent of their sins. Those lacking these Scriptural antecedents are not Scriptural candidates for baptism.

[Note: I wrote this article for and it appeared in the Denton Record-Chronicle, Denton, TX October 5, 2007].

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