

Biblical Baptism – No. 5

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Controversy over the Scriptural action involved in baptism has raged for centuries. However, all such controversy would end if all men respected the authority of the Bible. It explicitly tells us the action of baptism.

To Christians Paul wrote: “We were **buried** therefore with him through baptism...” (Rom. 6:4a, *emph. added*). Again, he wrote to Christians: “Having been **buried** with him in baptism...” (Col. 2:12a, *emph. added*).

Acts 8:38–39 gives the fullest New Testament description of a baptism:

And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And... they came up out of the water....

What did Philip do to this man when he baptized him? Did he pour some water on him? Did he sprinkle some water on him? He did neither. If we let the Bible answer this question, it tells us he **buried** him in the water (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

One does not have to know the first letter of the Greek alphabet (the original language of the New Testament) to know beyond doubt or question that **Bible baptism is immersion and never any other action**. However, it might be helpful to know that there are three separate words in the Greek language for sprinkling, pouring, and immersion, just as there are in the English language. The Greek word meaning “immersion” is always the word that appears behind our English word, *baptism* (actually *baptism* is simply that Greek word spelled in English letters, a transliterated word). The Greek lexicons invariably define this word as an overwhelming, a dipping, a plunging, an immersion, a submersion – a burial.

There is no historical record of any other action related to baptism besides immersion until well into the third century. In A.D. 251, a very sick man by the name of Novation was near death and requested baptism. His brethren reasoned that immersion would kill him, so they poured some water on his head instead of immersing him. Centuries later sprinkling was added as another substitute for baptism. Both of these practices are unauthorized innovations of men.

The baptism pertaining to those who have lived since the Pentecost of Acts 2 (and that is to be preached and administered until “the end of the world” [Mat. 28:19–20]) is immersion in water to save the soul. If the **action** of baptism is unimportant (as millions have been taught),

one may as well discard any semblance of the act itself as important or necessary (which millions have done). However, the New Testament teaches that the act of baptism is necessary and that only one action – immersion – constitutes baptism.

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