

The Blessings of Baptism

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Introduction

Baptism is a frequent subject of the New Testament. When its function and purpose are understood, it is not surprising that it receives so much emphasis. God has made it the very hinge of forgiveness through the blood of Christ. Despite the clarity and frequency of New Testament teaching on the subject, there are few Biblical subjects about which men are more confused. It must be added God's word is not the source of confusion on this or any other subject. The interpretations and conclusions of men have bred the confusion.

While more than one baptism is discussed in Scripture, Paul makes it clear that there is only one baptism that is a permanent matter of teaching and practice (Eph. 4:5). I believe it is a study of vast importance to see what effects result to the believer from the "one baptism."

Discussion

Sins Are Remitted

"And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38). We are not saying, nor did Peter, that baptism alone brings remission. But this scripture obviously says that baptism is the **last act** between the sinner and forgiveness; baptism is action leading to, "unto", remission. This is further supported by Acts 2:41, 47. The former says: "They then that received his word were baptized; and there were added unto them in that day about 3,000 souls."

The letter says: "...and the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved." Note: those in v. 47 were added as they were saved, but those in v. 41 were added after they were baptized, not before. Why? Obviously, because they still had their sins upon them before they were baptized therefore unsaved, unadded.

Sins Are Washed Away

"...arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." (Acts 22:16). This is another way of teaching the same truth as Acts 2:38 above. This scripture simply tells us when a person's sins are washed away: the act of baptism is the point. This verse does not tell us what the cleansing agent is, but when it is applied to our sins. Many scriptures tell us that the

cleansing agent is Christ's atoning blood (cf. Mat. 26:28; 1 Pet. 1-18, 19; Rev. 1:5, et al.). Also, many scriptures (such as Acts 22:16 which says, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name.") teach us that baptism is the act in which the sinner receives the cleansing merit of this blood.

Share in Jesus' Death, Burial and Resurrection

Or are ye ignorant that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:3-4).

Since it is Christ's blood, shed in His death, that cleanses one of sin, there must be a means of access to His death and the blood He shed therein, Paul says we are, "baptized into his death. As Christ was buried in a tomb and arose a new person, so are we to be buried (demanding immersion) in baptism, from which we come forth a new person." Why new? Because in baptism, the blood of Christ cleanses us of sin and we arise, innocent of sin, fit for God's service.

Born Again

"...Except one be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5). Scriptural baptism not only involves water, but a coming forth from, or birth of, water (cf. Acts. 8:38-39; Rom. 6:4). When one has been taught of the Spirit through the New Testament (cf. Eph. 6:17; 1 Pet. 1:22-23) to be baptized for remission of sins and is baptized, he is thereby born again. At this point he is raised to walk "in newness of life," is added to the church or enters the kingdom of God.

Put on Christ

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). To put on Christ is to enter into His fellowship, to become the recipient of the blessings He has to offer and to serve Him. When does this occur? When one is baptized into Christ.

Saved

"Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism..." (1 Pet. 3:21). How does it save? Not independently, for faith and repentance are prerequisites (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). There is no efficacy in water. God has simply made baptism the act in which Christ's blood is applied to forgive our sins. It is said to save us because it is the final act of obedience that stands between us and forgiveness of our sins.

Conclusion

If in baptism all of these things are accomplished, then where is one spiritually who has not been scripturally baptized?

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