

The Requirements of Scriptural Baptism

Dub McClish

For baptism to be what the Lord authorized and what the Scriptures teach, four requirements must be met.

- **The right action is required.** The consistent description of baptism in Scripture requires immersion in water. Philip took the eunuch down into and brought him up out of the water (Acts 8:38-39). Paul twice described baptism as a “burial” (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). The Greek word for “baptism” means immersion, submersion. Men have grossly violated the will of Christ in pouring or/sprinkling water on sinners and calling it “baptism” and will surely answer for it.
- **The right element is required.** The baptism of the great commission, pertaining to salvation and entrance into the kingdom, is baptism in water. Jesus named being born of water as an element of the new birth and necessary to entering the kingdom (John 3:5). At Cornelius’ house, Peter asked if anyone could forbid water that those being addressed should not be baptized (Acts 10:47; cf. Eph. 5:26; 1 Pet. 3:20). A young denominational ministerial student once told me he would baptize one in milk if the person requested it! If any other element is substituted for water the act cannot be Scriptural baptism.
- **The right subject is required.** If one has not heard and believed the Gospel, he is not capable of being Scripturally baptized (Mark 16:15-16). Even if one believes, he is not ready for baptism without confessing his faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10). Further, even if one has believed and confessed Christ, unless he is willing to repent, he cannot be Scripturally baptized (Acts 2:38). This rules out all children who are yet in their innocence and all adults who are unwilling to comply with the prerequisites noted.
- **The right purpose is required.** Scriptural baptism is necessary to salvation (Mark 16:16), brings forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), is necessary for one to enter the kingdom of God (the church) (John 3:5), is the means of “putting on Christ” (Gal. 3:27) and entering into the power of the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3). Just as surely as a saint must understand the purpose of partaking of the Lord’s supper for it to be acceptable to Christ (1 Cor. 11:28-29), so must the sinner understand the inspired purpose of baptism for it to be acceptable. Strangely, many religious groups that teach men to be baptized deny the very purpose assigned it by the Lord!

One cannot be taught incorrectly about baptism and baptized correctly! For baptism to be Scriptural and to do what the Lord designed it to do, all four of these requirements must be met.

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