

What Is Baptism? – No. 3

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The definition of the Greek word *baptidzo* which is translated *baptize* in the New Testament, is **dip, plunge, submerge, immerse**. Baptize never means pour or sprinkle since these are two distinct words and acts in the Greek language just as they are in English. The description of the act of baptism in the New Testament uses a burial to tell the reader what happened (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). It involved going down into water and coming up out of water (Acts 8:38–39). It was an act that required “much water” (John 3:23). Jesus uses the term *baptism* figuratively to refer to the measure of suffering He would undergo in His crucifixion (Mark 10:38–39). We would point out that our Lord did not merely have a sprinkling or pouring of suffering, but He was overwhelmed, completely submerged in that experience on the cross. To rob baptism of its meaning is to rob the cross of its cruelty and suffering. Moreover, the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit, another figurative use of the term (Acts 1:4–5; 2:1–4). It is clear from reading the record of the great powers imparted to the apostles, beginning in Acts 2:5, and continuing through the New Testament, that they were overwhelmed by the Spirit of God. It is acknowledged that the word *pour* is used to describe this figurative baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17), but clearly, the teaching is that a sufficient measure of the Spirit was **poured** upon the apostles to overwhelm them. The true meaning of the word *baptize* remains intact in this case, as in all others in the New Testament.

It is both interesting and informative to notice that religious leaders and scholars from every representative Protestant and Catholic communion have recognized the action that originally inhered in *baptidzo*. While there have been those in past centuries and even at present who would attempt to justify something less than immersion for baptism on the basis of Scripture teaching, their efforts have been unsuccessful. Most men admit that baptism was always by immersion in the New Testament, but they simply admit that they do not respect the authority of Christ in this matter.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for, and it was published in the “Bible Thoughts” Column for the *Hood County News*, Granbury, Texas, March 12, 1978.]

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