

# CHAPTER IX

## Water Baptism

The Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Christ, even some Lutheran churches, and a few Baptist churches teach that a person must be water baptized (as well as have faith in Christ) or he cannot be saved. As a soulwinner, you should know what the Bible says on the matter and how to answer this “objection” to trusting Christ alone for salvation.

In order to understand the Scriptural teaching regarding baptism, you must know what the word means. The Greek words translated “baptize” and “baptism” are “baptizo,” “baptisma,” and “baptismos.” Even if you are not a linguist, you can see from the above that the word “baptize” is not really a TRANSLATION of “baptizo” at all. The translators simply replaced the “o” with an “e.” This is called a TRANSLITERATION not a translation, because in true translation work the meaning of the word is carried over from one language into another. In the case of the word “baptize” or “baptism” this was not done.

The result of this is that every time someone reads or hears about baptism, he automatically thinks it must mean WATER baptism. So, when such a person reads in Acts 2:38, for instance, “Repent and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins,” he erroneously concludes that one must be dipped in water to be saved . . . because the verse does say you have to be baptized to receive God’s forgiveness. Much harm and confusion has resulted from not understanding the real meaning of baptism. It means “to whelm (engulf or cover) and to cleanse.” When Scripture refers to WATER baptism the context ALWAYS makes this clear. When water is not mentioned in connection with baptism, we need to use utmost care in our study of the passage so that we will recognize what kind of “baptism” (cleansing or whelming) is being spoken of.

### KINDS OF BAPTISMS IN SCRIPTURE

There are at least *six* different kinds of baptisms spoken of in the Bible:

- (1) The baptism of John (Matthew 21:25),
- (2) The baptism of repentance (Mark 1:4),
- (3) Baptism or cleansing into death (Romans 6:4),
- (4) Baptism in water (Matthew 3:11),
- (5) Baptism in the Spirit (Matthew 3 :11; I Corinthians 12:13 ), and
- (6) Baptism unto Moses (I Corinthians 10:2).

The above is sufficient to cause us to think twice before assuming that baptism must always refer to water.

### THE BAPTISM NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

Mark 16:16 says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Obviously, therefore, there is a baptism that is necessary for salvation. We cannot assume, however, that this refers to WATER baptism. Scripture clearly tells us what kind of baptism it is that is necessary for salvation.

John the Baptist, differentiating between his baptism and Christ’s baptism, said, “I indeed have baptized you with WATER: but He (Christ) shall baptize you with the HOLY GHOST” (Mark 1:8).

After Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, Paul came upon some of John's disciples who were not saved, even though they had been baptized by John in water. They had not as yet received the baptism (cleansing) of the Holy Spirit. When they did, they were saved (Acts 19:1-7; compare with Romans 8:9). It is the SPIRIT'S baptism that is essential for salvation . . . not WATER baptism.

The Lord Jesus Christ never baptized anyone with water the whole time He was on earth. If water baptism were necessary for salvation, then Christ would have been withholding salvation from everyone He dealt with.

Ephesians 4:5 says that there is "one baptism" which God recognizes today. And I Corinthians 12: 13 describes it clearly: "For by one SPIRIT are we all (no believers excluded) baptized into one body . . . and have been all made to drink into one SPIRIT." Notice that the "one Spirit" and "one baptism" of Ephesians 4: 4, 5 parallel perfectly with the "one Spirit" and "one body" of I Corinthians 12:13. THIS is the baptism (or cleansing) necessary for salvation. This baptism is performed by God, not by man.

## **HOW AND WHEN THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT IS RECEIVED**

For you to be a child of God you must have the Holy Spirit for God says, ". . . Now if any man have NOT the Spirit of Christ, HE IS NONE OF HIS" (Romans 8:9). John 1:12, 13 tells us we become children of God, born of Him, WHEN we receive Christ by faith. And WHEN we receive Christ, we also receive the Spirit.

"And in Him you Gentiles also, after listening to the message of the truth, the good news of your salvation—having believed in Him—were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit . . ." (Eph. 1:13, Weymouth trans., 3rd ed.).

Jesus said in John 7:39, "But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive...." The Holy Spirit is given to believers at the moment of salvation, and He indwells them forever.

"What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (I Cor. 6:19) The letter of I Corinthians was written to ALL believers (1:2), so then, ALL BELIEVERS are indwelt by the Spirit and have received His baptism or cleansing.

## **PASSAGES SOME PEOPLE THINK TEACH WATER BAPTISM FOR SALVATION**

Acts 2:38, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." You will discover what this verse means if you keep these important things clear in your mind:

- (1) To be "baptized" means to be "cleansed."
- (2) These unbelieving Jews were pricked in their hearts when Peter reminded them that they had a part in crucifying Jesus. And Peter tells them to be CLEANSED of this sin "IN the NAME of Jesus Christ"—the very One they helped crucify.
- (3) Peter said to be "baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ." Some assume that Peter meant for these people to be baptized in water, and as they were being baptized, Peter would say over them, "I baptize you in the Name of Jesus Christ." However, this is not what God has recorded. It is what men have added. GOD says these people were cleansed in CHRIST'S NAME. Remember, His Name means "God who saves, keeps, satisfies," etc. There is cleansing power in His Name!
- (4) Notice, when these people were cleansed in Christ, they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, this is another verse showing that the baptism or cleansing that accompanies salvation is of the Spirit—not of water.
- (5) Notice, it says the GIFT of the Holy Spirit. If you needed water baptism for salvation or

to receive the Holy Spirit, neither salvation nor the Holy Spirit would be a GIFT of God, but of the works of man.

- (6) When “baptism” refers to water, it means to be made fully wet; when it refers to salvation, it means to be fully or completely cleansed by the Spirit. Acts 2:41 records that 3,000 trusted Christ as the result of Peter’s message. If the baptism here were referring to WATER baptism, where could Peter baptize 3,000 people? He and all the people were in the Temple area, and there was NO WATER THERE except for a small laver in which the priests washed their hands and feet before entering into the Holy Place. But verse 41 says that these 3,000 souls were added to the disciples that “same day.” In the entire passage water is not mentioned even once.

Literally translated, Acts 2: 3 8 could read, “Then Peter said unto them, Change your mind, and be CLEANSED every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Mark 16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

Please notice four things about this verse:

- (1) Only unbelief condemns. Being water baptized or not being water baptized has nothing to do with it.
- (2) The baptism here is Spirit baptism, not water baptism.
- (3) He that believeth and is cleansed shall be saved. We do the believing, and God does the cleansing. “And such were some of you: but ye are washed; but ye are sanctified; but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (I Cor. 6:11 ).
- (4) The passage in Mark 16, “from verse 9 to the end (of the chapter) is not found in the two most ancient manuscripts, the Sinaitic and Vatican, and others have it with partial omissions and variations. But it is quoted by Irenaeus and Hippolytus in the second or third century” (Scofield’s note 1, by Mark 16:9) .

John 3:5, “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Some people think this verse is referring to water baptism because it says you must be “born of water.” But let me ask you a question. Are BIRTH and BAPTISM the same thing? Of course not! If Christ wanted to say, “You must be baptized of water,” He would have said so. But He said, “born of water,” and Jesus knew the difference between the two.

Consider the context. The first time Jesus told Nicodemus of the new birth, He said, “Except a man be BORN again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (verse 3). Nicodemus thought Christ’s statement was referring to another physical birth. In fact, he asked, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” (verse 4)

We KNOW that the BIRTH OF WATER in John 3:5 cannot mean water baptism. There are at least three things this could mean within the context and without contradicting other parts of the Word of God:

(1) Some Bible scholars believe that being “born of water” refers to physical birth. Notice Christ’s reply to Nicodemus that a man has to be BORN (the subject throughout is BIRTH, not baptism) of water and the Spirit. Christ was saying, “Nicodemus, you must be born of water (physical birth) and the Spirit (new birth).” Why is it said that being “born of water” refers to physical birth? Because of Christ’s clear explanation in the very next verse, “That which is born of the FLESH is flesh; and that which is born of the SPIRIT is Spirit” ( v.6). Jesus then said, “Marvel not ( don’t be surprised ) that I said unto thee, “Ye must be BORN again.”

(2) Other Bible scholars believe that being “born of water” refers to the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Gospel of John water is used as an illustration to point to Christ as the giver of “living water,” as in John 4:6-14. Christ asked the woman at Jacob’s well for a drink of water and also told the woman that He could give her water as well.... But the water He gives is not “H<sub>2</sub>O”.... The water that He gives is a

“well of water springing up into everlasting life” (v. 14). In John 7:39 Christ gave this explanation of “living water”: “But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive....”

The Greek word for “and” in John 3:5 is “kai.” Quoting from Strong’s Concordance, #2532, we find that this word is a “primitive participle, having a copulative ( joining together) and sometimes also a cumulative force.” Besides being translated “and” it is also translated “indeed, likewise, moreover,” etc.

To paraphrase John 3:5, then, it could read, “. . . except a man be born of water (the living water Christ gives), indeed, by the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

(3) Still other Bible scholars believe the birth of water in John 3:5 is speaking of the “washing of the Word” as is mentioned in Ephesians 5:26 and Titus 3:5.

The important thing for us to know is that salvation is always and only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and this passage in John 3:5 in no way suggests water baptism for salvation.

For someone to conclude that John 3:5 is referring to WATER BAPTISM, he would have to ignore completely the entire context of the third chapter.

I Peter 3:21, “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

This verse isn’t even speaking of salvation of a person’s soul, but of being saved or delivered from a guilty conscience of not obeying God. (In this case, obeying God by being water baptized AFTER salvation!)

However, those who believe water baptism is essential for salvation often use this verse, so we will go into some detail on its explanation. (But in all the times this verse has been used, I have never yet had a single person quote more than the first part of the verse—”The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us....”)

It is as if Satan has put blinders on these people, for they fail to see that the verse goes on to state clearly that this salvation is not a salvation which in any way puts “away the sins of the flesh.” Notice how emphatic the Lord is: “NOT the putting away of the filth of the flesh....” Yet time and time again when I have pointed this out to those who think this verse teaches baptismal regeneration, they act as if they had never seen the last part of the verse before. But the Lord put it there to keep us from being confused.

But someone will say, “The verse does say ‘baptism doth also now save us.’ “ Yes, it does, and the Word of God tells us what it saves us from.

The verse itself, with the context, answers the question, “what does baptism save us from?” Verse 20 says that “eight souls (Noah and his family) were saved by water.” The word “by” literally should read “through” the water. You can check this yourself in any number of other good translations—American Standard Version, Williams, Weymouth, New English Bible, etc.

It is certainly clear when you read of the flood in Genesis, chapter seven, that people were not saved BY the water. They were condemned and killed BY the water. But the eight believers who were in the ARK (a type of being in CHRIST) were saved THROUGH the water, by the ark. Literally, verse 20 reads “eight souls were saved through the water.”

When verse 21 says, “baptism doth also now save us,” we need to understand that there are different kinds of “salvation” just as there are different kinds of “baptisms.”

### **Some examples of different kinds of salvation in Scripture are:**

James 5:15, “the prayer of faith shall save (protect, deliver) the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up...” Here it is not speaking of salvation of the soul, but deliverance from physical illness.

Acts 27:31, “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.” Saved from what? Saved from drowning. Suppose I began a new cult. I might call it the “Shipites,” and I could use this verse as my divinely given authority that people had to live in ships to be saved. But how many people do you think would be saved if you had to live in ships for salvation?

Hebrews 5:7 mentions that the Father was able to save (or deliver) Jesus from physical death. But Jesus gave His life voluntarily (John 10:18), and even though He knew He would suffer in the flesh, He endured the cross for the joy of seeing souls saved through His payment for their sin.

The Greek word in I Peter 3:21, and elsewhere in the Bible, translated “save” is “sozo” and means “to be saved, protected, or delivered.” You must always read the context to see what kind of protection, or deliverance, or salvation is being spoken of.

I Peter 3:21 is clear as to what kind of salvation and deliverance is meant here. Notice the words carefully: “baptism doth also now save (protect, deliver) us (NOT the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)....” As children of God by faith, we should follow Christ’s command to be water baptized after we are saved, and when we obey this command we have a clear conscience. We are delivered from a conscience which condemns us (Matt. 28:19; Acts 8:36-38; Acts 10: 47, 48).

In I Cor. 1:17 Paul said, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel....” If water baptism were necessary for salvation, then Paul, in effect, would be saying, “For Christ sent me not to see that people were saved, but to preach the gospel....” Anyone can see how ludicrous this would be. In I Cor. 1:14 Paul would have been saying, “I thank God that none of you were saved, but Crispus and Gaius.” This would completely nullify the entire purpose of Paul’s whole ministry.

Water baptism NEVER cleanses or washes away sin. ONLY CHRIST’S BLOOD can do that (Ephesians 1:7). Salvation comes through our faith.

The ordinance of communion is a type of our salvation by the death of Christ. The ordinance of baptism is a type of our service by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Service comes through our obedience, and as believers we should obey God’s Word, following His commands to the best of our ability. In this obedience, water baptism should certainly be included. It is a testimony to others that we are now walking in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

## **HOW TO WITNESS TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN WATER BAPTISM FOR SALVATION**

(1) As is true in most witnessing situations, the issue is “grace versus works” (water baptism). Use Ephesians 2: 8, 9 or Romans 4:5.

(2) Instead of arguing over “baptism” passages, give the plan of salvation, emphasizing clear salvation verses like John 6:47. It is necessary to interpret unclear verses by clear verses, and never the other way around.

(3) Ask questions about the salvation verses so the meaning will become crystal clear to the person. For instance: “Who has everlasting life, according to John 6:47?” Answer: “He who BELIEVES on Christ.” Question: “Well, if you HAVE everlasting life by trusting in Christ as your Saviour, what more do you need?” Answer: “Nothing!”

Water baptism doesn’t help you to get saved. It has nothing to do with your salvation.

(4) Often people who believe in water baptism for salvation also think other “works” are necessary for salvation as well. They say there are other conditions for salvation besides belief, and you have to read the entire Bible to find out what they are. To answer this type of objection, simply turn to Bible examples where unbelievers were told exactly what to do to be saved: Christ told Nicodemus just to believe and receive everlasting life (John 3:16-18). Paul told the Philippian jailor just to believe and be saved (Acts 16:30, 31). Paul told the Jews just to believe and receive forgiveness of all sin (Acts 13:26, 38, 39).

None of these people mentioned above had the whole Bible to go through. They wanted to be saved then and there (especially the Philippian jailor who was about to commit suicide). Do you think Paul or Jesus told them only PART of what they had to do to be saved? Half a truth, in this case especially, would certainly be a lie! Would you, yourself, be that careless and heartless? What could be more clear than “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou SHALT BE SAVED!”

The thief on the cross didn't come down and get water baptized, but he went to heaven. (Heaven and paradise are the same place according to II Cor. 12:1-4). Paul thanked God that he didn't baptize very many people (I Cor. 1:11-21). If water baptism were necessary for salvation, then Paul would be thanking God he didn't see that many were saved! Unthinkable!

Not only that, but Christ never baptized anyone with water. If water baptism were necessary for salvation, then Christ withheld from those He dealt with, salvation. But He came to "seek and to SAVE!"

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