

Why we Baptize in Jesus Name

The subject of “Water Baptism” has long been called a great issue, and no doubt has been made such by many church leaders of the past and present. In our study of it, let us first consider its importance, or the necessity of being baptized.

Water baptism is an ordinance instituted by Jesus Christ. If it is not important in the plan of God, why did Jesus command it in Matthew 28:19? And why did Peter follow up by saying, “every one of you,” in Acts 2:38, and by commanding them to be baptized in Acts 10:48? There are two things that we should remember: First, Whatever Christ definitely established or ordained cannot be unimportant, whether we understand its importance or not. Second, Christ and the Apostles showed the importance of this ordinance by observing it. Jesus walked seventy miles to be baptized, though He was without sin, saying, “For thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” Read Matthew 3:13-16.

One may say that water does not contain any virtue, but remember that it is included in God’s plan of salvation. Peter explains it by saying, “. . . 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.” 1 Peter 3:21. In Luke 7:30 we find that the Pharisees and lawyers “rejected the counsel of God against themselves being not baptized.”

What then is the mode of baptism?

Baptism is by immersion, according to the Scriptures. “And Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water.” Matthew 3:16. “. . . And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.” Acts 8:38. “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death. . . .” Romans 6:4. A burial is not placing a corpse on top of the ground and sprinkling a little soil on it, but it is placing it in the ground.

From the World Book Encyclopedia, Volume One, Page 651, we quote, “At first all baptism was by complete immersion.” And in the Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume Two, Page 263, we find,

“In the early centuries, all were baptized by Immersion in streams, pools, and baptisteries.” Immersion was not convenient after the Roman Catholic Church instituted infant baptism; the mode was changed to sprinkling. (See Britannica Encyclopedia, Eleventh Edition, Volume Three, Pages 365-366.)

Repentance is typical of the death of Christ. Baptism is typical of His burial. Coming forth from the watery grave of baptism is typical of His resurrection.

What then is the formula to be used in baptizing?

Jesus gave the command in Matthew 28:19, “Baptizing them in the name” (singular) “of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” He did not command them to use that as a formula, but commanded them to baptize in “the name.” Name is used here in the singular, and is the object of this commission. It is not the titles, “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” which show relationship. Why did he command to baptize in the name?” “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:12.

The angel of the Lord, in speaking to Joseph, said, “And thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21. And in John 5:43 we find, “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name” (the Antichrist), “him ye will receive.” John 14:26 says, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name. . . .” So in baptizing in the name of Jesus Christ, we honor the Godhead. Jesus said to the Jews, ye do dishonor me.” John 8:49. “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Colossians 2:9.

It is stated in the verses found in Luke 24:45-47 that Jesus opened the disciples’ understanding. It was necessary that their understanding be opened, and many today need this same operation, that they may understand the Scriptures. Then said Jesus unto them, “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.” The disciples had their understanding opened so that they could grasp the vast importance of the facts concerning the death of Christ. Then, in verse 47, we find the commission given in the words of the apostles

telling what Jesus said, “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations (Jew and Gentile), beginning at Jerusalem.”

Peter was one of that number to whom Jesus had spoken, and whose understanding had also been opened. After having listened to these instructions, he, a few days later, inspired by the Holy Ghost, began to preach, and continued until hearts were pierced, and the hearers, feeling condemned, said unto Peter and the other Apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter did not hesitate but boldly gave the prescription, “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.” Acts 2:38. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41).

Some say that Peter told them to be so baptized because they were Jews, and that baptism was to make them acknowledge Jesus Christ. Let us go to the house of Cornelius with Peter eight years later. Cornelius and his household were Gentiles, and here again we find Peter commanding them to be baptized in the name of the Lord (revised version says Jesus Christ) Acts 10:47, 48. If Peter was wrong on the day of Pentecost, he surely had ample time to be corrected before he went to the house of Cornelius.

Was Peter wrong on the day of Pentecost?

Let us notice that when they were pricked in their hearts, they spoke unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles. Acts 2:37. This included Matthew, who wrote Matthew 28:19. Also, in Acts 2:14 we find Peter standing up with the eleven. Matthew was there, yet we find no words of correction from him. Why? Jesus said, in John 17:6, “I have manifested thy name unto the men (Apostles) which thou gavest me out of the world, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.” Matthew surely would have spoken up, if Peter had disobeyed the Lord.” Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria (these people were not Jews, but Samaritans), and preached Christ unto them.” “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. How? “In the name of the Lord Jesus.” Read Acts 8:5-16.

Let us see what happened to Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, when he went to Ephesus twenty-one years after Pentecost. There he found some of John's disciples, and said unto them, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Acts 19:1-5.

We do not believe that Paul changed the formula or mode of baptism when he baptized Lydia and her household (Acts 16:14, 15). We have the account of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:30, where he came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas, saying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house. And he took them the same hour of the night (shortly after midnight), and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." How can we doubt that Paul baptized these using the same mode and formula that he had used before, that is, by immersion in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Paul was not with the apostles when Jesus gave his final instructions to them in Matthew 28:19 and in Luke 24:47; yet we find Paul baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. From whom did he receive this revelation? Let us note that Paul's gospel is not a tradition from the other apostles, but it is a revelation. "For I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it' but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Galatians 1:11, 12. Paul was chosen to bear Jesus' name to the Gentiles, and he wrote fourteen Epistles to the church. To this Apostle, God revealed the mystery of the church "Which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." Ephesians 3:5. Paul claimed to have divine authority: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." 1 Corinthians 14:37. Why did Paul write, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him"? Colossians 3:17. Water baptism is done both in word and in deed. We cannot afford to overlook this command to the church.

"We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Ephesians 2:20. The Apostles not only preached baptism in Jesus' name, but

they practiced it. Nowhere can we find that they baptized using the words “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” We find them baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In baptizing in the name of Jesus Christ, they fulfilled the command of the Lord in Matthew 28:19.

Paul said, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:8, 9. Let this be a solemn warning.

Some say that they will accept the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19, but not those of Peter in Acts 2:38. Was that Peter speaking on the day of Pentecost or was it the Holy Ghost? Peter said that it was the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (1 Peter 1:12). Peter was one of the apostles, and to him had been given the keys of the kingdom, so we have no right to discredit his words.

In Mark 7:7 Jesus said, “Laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men.” History tells us that it was not until the year 325 A.D. that both method and formula of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ was changed. (Read History of Christian Baptism in Hastings’ Dictionary of the Bible, Volume One, Chapter Four, Page 241.) Which means the most to you, the command of the Lord, or the tradition of men?

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