

SERMON: God's Plan for Rebirth Involves Baptism

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This study begins in Acts, eventually concludes in Romans.

Acts is about book about the Holy Spirit, and Acts connects the Holy Spirit with baptism. Two passages come to mind: Acts 2:36ff, 19:1ff

The Holy Spirit in Acts confirms, instructs or guides, and empowers.

In Acts 2:38, baptism results in the reception of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 19:1ff, the baptism of some was questioned because they were unaware of the Holy Spirit.

INTRODUCTION: General Observations

1. The necessity of baptism is quite clear in the Scriptures...

- a. Jesus commanded baptism, Mt 28:19; Mk 16:16
- b. His apostles and teachers commanded baptism, Ac 2:38; 10:47-48

2. Many religions practice some form of baptism, yet vary as to...

- a. The mode of baptism (immersion, pouring, sprinkling)
- b. The subject of baptism (infants, those old enough to repent and believe)
- c. The purpose of baptism (to be saved, to show that one is saved)

3. The Bible teaches that there is one baptism (Eph 4:5)...

- a. This text contains a series of "ones": one Lord, one faith....
- b. We can no more accept different baptisms than different faiths or different Lords.

4. Raises questions for all of us who have been baptized in some manner...

- a. Was my baptism scriptural?
- b. Was it the one baptism commanded by the Lord?
- c. Might I need to be re-baptized (scripturally baptized for the first time)?

IS MY BAPTISM SCRIPTURAL?

[To aid us in answering questions such as those above, let's first consider...]

I. AN EXAMPLE OF RE-BAPTISM

A. THE DISCIPLES AT EPHESUS...

1. Paul found some "disciples" at Ephesus, **Ac 19:1**
2. He inquired as to whether they received the Spirit when they believed, **Ac 19:2**
3. Their lack of knowledge regarding the Spirit made Paul question their baptism, **Ac 19:2-3a**
 - a. Christ commanded a baptism in the name of the Holy Spirit, cf. **Mt 28:19**
 - b. How could they have been scripturally baptized if they had not even heard of the Spirit?
4. They had been baptized into John's baptism, **Ac 19:3b**
5. Paul explains that John's baptism was to prepare people for Christ, **Ac 19:4**
6. Hearing the difference, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, **Ac 19:5**

Here we have an example of "re-baptism" in the New Testament

B. REGARDING THEIR RE-BAPTISM...

1. They had been previously "baptized"
2. Their baptism was lacking in some way
 - a. Even though it was immersion

- b. Even though it was "for the remission of sins", cf. **Mk 1:4**
3. Their baptism was not in the name of, by the authority of, Jesus (see below), **Ac 2:38; 10:48; 19:5**
Because their baptism lacked an essential element, "re-baptism" was necessary!

[If one's baptism lacks an essential element, "re-baptism" is necessary. To determine whether "re-baptism" is required of us, let's review the...]

II. ELEMENTS OF SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM

A. THE PROPER MODE...

1. Baptism in the New Testament was a burial, **Ro 6:3; Co 2:12**
2. The Greek word baptizo means "to immerse, to plunge, to dip"
3. "For thirteen hundred years was baptism an immersion of the person under water," cited from **Brenner** (a Catholic writer)
4. "Baptism means immersion; and it was immersion...Unless it had been so, Paul's analogical argument about our being buried with Christ in baptism would have had no meaning. Nothing could have been simpler than baptism in its first form. When a convert declared his faith in Christ, he was taken at once to the nearest pool or stream of water and plunged into it, and henceforward he was recognized as one of the Christian community," cited from **Cunningham** (Episcopalian)

The Biblical mode of baptism is immersion in water!

B. THE PROPER AUTHORITY...

1. Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, **Ac 2:38; 10:48; 19:5**
2. That is, baptism is by His authority, and not by the authority of someone else
3. Baptism in the name of the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son, as Jesus commanded, **Mt 28:19**

The Biblical authority of baptism is from Jesus Christ and no other!

C. THE PROPER PURPOSE...

1. Baptism is for the remission of sins, **Ac 2:38; 22:16**
2. Is possible because one is buried with Christ into His death when they are baptized, **Ro 6:3; Co 2:12**
3. **Augustine** refers to the "apostolic tradition, by which the Churches of Christ maintain it to be an inherent principle, that without baptism...it is impossible for any man to attain to salvation and everlasting life."
4. "Baptism has been instituted that it should lead us to the blessings (of this death) and through such death to eternal life. Therefore it is necessary that we should be baptized into Jesus Christ and His death." cited from **Martin Luther** (commentary on **Ro 6:3**)

The Biblical purpose of baptism is for the remission of sins, to be saved!

D. THE PROPER SUBJECT...

1. Baptism was commanded for those who repented, **Ac 2:38**
2. Baptism was permitted for those who possessed faith, **Ac 8:37; cf. Mk 16:16**
3. What about infant baptism?

a. "It cannot be proved by the sacred Scriptures that infant baptism was instituted by Christ, or begun by the first Christians after the apostles." - **Martin Luther**, On Rebaptism

b. "Infant baptism was established neither by Christ nor the apostles. In all places where we find the necessity of....

baptism notified, either in a dogmatic or historical point of view, it is evident that it was only meant for those who....

were capable of comprehending the word preached, and of being converted to Christ by an act of their own will."

- **Jacobi**, Article on Baptism in Kitto's Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature, Vol. I, p. 287

The Biblical subject for baptism is a penitent believer!

[Remember, when one element was lacking, "re-baptism" was commanded (**Ac 19:1-7**). In that case, it was despite having the proper **mode, purpose, and subject—only the understanding or authority was missing**. Having surveyed the essential elements of scriptural baptism, consider some cases...]

III. WHEN RE-BAPTISM IS NECESSARY

A. IF OUR BAPTISM INVOLVED THE WRONG MODE...

1. Such as pouring or sprinkling
2. As often practiced by Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists and others
3. Our baptism lacked the proper mode (immersion)

"Re-baptism" would be therefore necessary

B. IF OUR BAPTISM INVOLVED THE WRONG AUTHORITY...

1. If we were baptized by the authority of anyone other than Jesus
2. For example, Ellen G. White (Seventh Day Adventist), WatchTower Society (Jehovah's Witness), Joseph Smith (Mormon), et.al.
3. Our baptism was not by the only proper authority (Jesus Christ)

"Re-baptism" would be therefore necessary

C. IF OUR BAPTISM INVOLVED THE WRONG PURPOSE...

1. If we were baptized as a public confession of faith (thinking we were already saved)
2. As practiced by most Baptists, Assemblies of God and many others
3. Our baptism was not for the right purpose (remission of sins)

"Re-baptism" would be required to ensure we have been scripturally baptized

D. IF OUR BAPTISM INVOLVED THE WRONG SUBJECTS...

1. If when baptized we were not penitent believers
2. As is the case when people are baptized...
 - a. When all their friends are doing it
 - b. Because their spouse, fiancé, or parents are pressuring them to do it (and they do it to please them, not God)
 - c. As infants incapable of faith or repentance
3. Our baptism was lacking the right subjects (penitent believers)

Our need for "re-baptism" would be just as great!

CONCLUSION

1. Remember, there is only one baptism (**Eph 4:5**)...
 - a. Baptism commanded by the authority of Jesus Christ, **Mt 28:18-19; Mk 16:16**
 - b. Baptism for the remission of sins, **Ac 2:38; 22:16**
 - c. Baptism which is a burial, an immersion in water, **Ac 8:38; 10:47-48; Ro 6:3; Co 2:12**
 - d. Baptism which requires a penitent believer, **Ac 2:38; 8:37**

2. My purpose is not to unduly trouble one's assurance of salvation...
 - a. But to make one's calling and election sure, cf. **2 Pet 1:10**
 - b. To examine ourselves as to whether we are truly in the faith, cf. **2 Cor 13:5**

Because of the many baptisms taught and practiced in the religious world, we must never hesitate to ask "Is our baptism scriptural?" If it is not, we must consider the words of Ananias to Saul of Tarsus: **"...why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Ac 22:16**