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Biblical Baptism

Matthew 28:18-20

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

There is much that is taught about baptism.

Many churches have different teachings of the method and meaning of baptism.

With all these differences, how can we figure out what is right?

There are many things that are **taught**, but the only things that are **right** are those that we find in Scripture.

If our teaching disagrees with Scripture, then our teaching is wrong.

Let's first look at the example of Jesus being baptized.

Matthew 3:16 "And Jesus, **when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water**: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him."

The description is clear that John and Jesus were in the River Jordan and when as John lifted Jesus up from being immersed, the Holy Spirit descended on Him.

Prior to Jesus' ascension back into heaven He gave the command to His disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This instituted believer's or Christian baptism.

The disciples were commanded to preach the Gospel and then to baptize those who were saved.

That command is then passed to us, as we are to follow the same things that they were taught.

Baptism is simply the first step of obedience after believing.

Jesus commanded baptism, and the believer submits to it as a step of obedience.

There are several truths about baptism that we need to know:

I. Baptism is a "Picture" of the Gospel – Picturing the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."(1 Corinthians 15:1 4)

Believer's baptism is taught in the New Testament as being a symbol or a picture of what has happened in the life of the person who by faith has believed in Jesus Christ and been saved by His grace.

It is an illustration of what that has taken place in the new believer's heart.

Being immersed in water pictures the death of Jesus Christ dying for our sins.

Being raised from the water is portrayal of Jesus' resurrection in which He conquered sin and death.

Thus, being baptized by immersion the believer visually shows the spiritual death, burial, and resurrection of the believer's life.

Baptism is a public testimony that the new believer has believed in Jesus Christ and has been born again.

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3-4)

Baptism by immersion beautifully pictures the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Putting a person under the water strikingly emphasizes the burial of Christ, being raised out of the water symbolizes Christ's resurrection and the believer's new life in Christ.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

In Romans 6:4, God accentuates the burial when it says, "therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death."

Baptism is a visual testimonial that our sins are forgiven by symbolizing they are buried with the Lord after he suffered and died for our sins on the Cross.

II. Who Should Be Baptized?

Only a saved person should be baptized.

That means one who has believed on Jesus Christ and by faith.

Acts 8:26-39, the Eunuch asked to be baptized. When the Eunuch desired to be baptized Philip said to him, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest."

The eunuch confessed that he did believe and was then baptized.

Note that in V38, they left the chariot and went down into the water and after the Eunuch was baptized by immersion they came up out of the water. Clearly this is baptism by immersion.

Remember that baptism is a picture that we are acting out of what has happened in our heart.

If a lost man who has not believed in Jesus Christ is baptized the symbolism would be incorrect – he hasn't believed in the death, burial and resurrection.

No one should be baptized who does not have a clear testimony of believing in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation.

III. Baptism Does Not Save and is Not Necessary For Salvation

We must be clear that baptism is not necessary for a person to be saved and born again.

Every instance of baptism in the Bible always follows belief in Jesus Christ as one's Saviour.

It is not an act that one does to obtain salvation and no one in the New Testament was baptized who did not first believe and put their faith in Jesus Christ.

We must have the order right. After a person is saved, as the New Testament plainly shows, they then were baptized.

God says plainly that works, rituals, and ceremonies do not save.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8 9)

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus 3:5)

The Bible teaches that salvation is given by God's grace when a person by faith believes and receives the payment that Jesus made on the cross. Grace means unmerited favour – we don't deserve it. Salvation is not merited by any work - which would include baptism.

The work that Jesus did on the cross is the only thing that will save.
No church or religion can add to the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Some believe that baptism imparts some special status with God.
That too is not found in the Bible and is a false belief.

IV. What is the Proper Mode of Baptism?

It is sad that we even have to discuss the mode of baptism, because the Bible is so clear about it, but we must discuss it because most professing Christians practice sprinkling and pouring.

Scriptural baptism is immersion or burial in water.

Following are four evidences for this:

1. This is the meaning of the word.
The Greek word "baptizo" means one thing and that is to immerse or dip.
Every baptism that we see in the Bible is done by full immersion.
2. This was the manner in which Jesus was baptized. He came "up out of the water" (Mark 1:10).
3. This is the example of the early Christians.

In Acts 8:38-39 the preacher and the candidate "went down both into the water" and "came up out of the water."

The only reason for this would be to practice immersion.

Otherwise, the preacher would merely have dipped up some water and applied it without getting wet.

4. This is the only mode that fits the biblical meaning of the practice. Baptism is a picture of burial and resurrection with Christ, and only immersion fits this symbolism. Sprinkling or pouring does not. Romans 6:4.

Some churches practice infant baptism.

Usually they do it with the idea that it in some way imparts grace – or even salvation – to the baby.

Yet in the Bible there is no record or mention of anyone being baptized who had not already professed Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

No infants were ever baptized according to God's word.

There are many serious problems with pedo or infant baptism.

1. An infant cannot understand the Gospel nor can they believe in Jesus Christ. Their minds are not mature enough to comprehend sin or salvation.
 2. Infant baptism is by sprinkling or pouring, and this is not the biblical mode of true baptism.
 3. One is saved by faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone and no church is given the authority to impart God's blessing on anyone or to convey any special status with God.
- Salvation is a personal matter between a person and God.

A church is to proclaim the Gospel and God's truth, but it is up to the individual as to whether they believe it or not.

4. Their baptism gives a false concept that baptism conveys salvation and that sprinkling an infant initiates it into salvation.

5. Most of all....infant baptism is not found in God's Word.

The verses such as Acts 16:30-32 specifically state that those who were baptized believed. (Philippian jailer)

In every incidence in the Bible the person exercised saving faith in Jesus Christ and afterwards was baptized.

The New Testament examples of baptism:

The 3000 at Pentecost (Acts 2:41)

The Eunuch. (Acts 8:36-38)

Cornelius and his household who believed and were saved. After they were saved they were baptized. (Acts 10:47-48)

The Philippians Jailer. (Acts 16:31)

John the Baptist's disciples when they heard that Jesus Christ was the Messiah believed and were baptized (Acts 19:3-5).

Although baptism is not required for salvation, I believe that it is something that every Christian should do.

Baptism is the first act of submission or obedience to Christ after one is saved (Matt. 28:19-20) and is a public declaration of being saved and identifying oneself with their Savior.

A believer should never be ashamed of being a child of God.

We should love the Lord and want to do as He says and thus willingly and eagerly submit to believer's baptism by immersion.