

Objections to Baptism

1. In the lesson prior to this one, we began a discussion on the “Basics of Baptism”. As we began, one of the points that we wished to make involved having discussions about baptism with our friends and neighbors:
 - a. The basic idea was that there is no real reason to be afraid to use Baptism as a topic of early conversation: It can be very helpful in bringing to light several different areas of Bible teaching that someone may be in need of: (*For more discussion on this point see previous lesson: <http://airport-church-of-christ.com/Outlines/TheBasicsOfBaptism-SethMauldin.pdf>)*
 - b. To aid ourselves in our attempts to engage those around us in this and other conversations, we sought to give ourselves a brief refresher on some of the fundamental teachings in scripture about Baptism:
 - c. Since the goal then was to simply lay out the basics, we have saved many of the points of discussion surrounding them for this lesson:
 - d. This will most definitely not be a comprehensive study of all objections, but hopefully will cover many that come up in the average conversation:

2. **Objections to the Basic Definition:**
 - a. In our fundamentals on what Baptism is, we really made two points:
 - i. First was that even before the time of John the Baptist and Jesus, baptism was a long existing religious practice that sometimes had different settings and practices, but its essence was a ceremonial washing for spiritual purity: **There isn't really any objection of this that I'm aware of.**
 - ii. The second point was that the word Baptism means to immerse, or to overwhelm, and that when used in the context of New Testament baptism, it always means immerse: **There are many objections to this:**
 - b. **Objection of Variant Definitions:**
 - i. Immersion is not the only usage of Baptism in the New Testament: *Baptizo* can also mean to dip, or to wash: Consider the examples of **Luke 11:38**, and the parallel text in **Mark 7:3-4:**

- ii. In the context of these passages; the Pharisees are confronting Jesus because His disciples are about to eat, and have not washed their hands prior to doing so: To help us understand why this would have been a point of confrontation the authors have given us as readers these parenthetical statements: **(read)**
 - 1. In Luke’s account, the word that is literally in the text is the Greek word *Baptizo*;
 - 2. In Mark’s account, the first use of “wash” in verse 3 is the word *nip̄tō*, but in verse 4 the word for cleanse and then wash are *baptizo* and *baptismos* respectively:
- iii. The objection might at this point state that one would hardly go and submerge themselves in water before they took in food, which is true;
 - 1. Therefore there are a variety of definitions and usages of Baptism:

c. **Answers:**

- i. First, we are not claiming that *there aren’t* other usages of *Baptizo* for that is clearly not the case; what we have stated is that whenever the word is used in the context of the ceremonial baptism of a person, the usage that applies is immersion.
- ii. But how do you know it isn’t just talking about dipping the hands like in the example above?
 - 1. This should not be a difficult concept to understand. All languages have words with multiple usages depending on context.
 - a. If I tell someone to “wash up for supper”, I am clearly implying to wash their hands, maybe their face:
 - b. Whereas if I tell my children they need to go take a bath and wash up, I’m not going to be pleased if they come out only having washed their hands.
- iii. It is true that there are variant usages of New Testament words; but as with any language context determines the usage; The passages looked at in our previous lesson discussing Baptism all give the context of immersion.

3. Objections to the “Who” it is for:

a. Although we won’t read through them all again this morning, on this point in our last lesson we referenced several passages in the Books of Acts, Romans, and the Gospel of Mark, all of which related to instructions or teaching about Baptism:

- i. They painted a picture of someone who had heard the Gospel, and having heard it made the decision on whether or not to believe it and confess Jesus. These were also people who had been convicted of their sins, and were ready to repent of them and live a new life: (*Again, scriptures in previous outline; <http://airport-church-of-christ.com/Outlines/TheBasicsOfBaptism-SethMauldin.pdf>*)
- ii. Although we did not state as much in our last discussion, these passages would imply that Baptism is for people who have reached a certain age where a level of knowledge about right and wrong has been reached, and powers of reasoning have been developed.

b. **Objection: Baptism is for everyone, including infants:**

i. There are no scriptures that specifically say only adults were baptized: In fact, what about passages like **Matthew 19:14 (and the parallel of Luke 18)** where Jesus says, let the little children come unto me?

1. In addition, while you may seek to set a date far into the 1300’s before infant baptism appeared; infant baptism was a practice of the early church: Consider this written by early church leader **Irenaeus in AD 185**

a. He came to save all through means of Himself—all ... who through Him are born again to God—infants, and children, and boys, and youths, and old men. He therefore passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants; a child for children, thus sanctifying those who are of this age, being at the same time made to them an example of piety, righteousness, and submission ...
(Against Heresies II:22:4)

ii. Who would deny the kingdom of heaven to little children?

c. **Answers:**

i. As far as passages like Matthew 19 and Luke 18, again we must determine context; Neither of these passages has anything to do with Baptism, and neither of these chapters as a whole has a broader context of baptism, or a need for children to receive it:

1. Both of these texts are in discussion of attitudes that will prevent salvation. You have the example of the Pharisee and the Publican with two very different attitudes about prayer, teachings on divorce that His followers found very difficult to accept, and the account of the rich, young, ruler whose attitude kept him from the kingdom of God;
2. As opposed to prideful, selfish, and obstinate attitudes, one must have the attitude of a child to receive the kingdom of God;

ii. **First and foremost**, non-inspired writings of early church fathers can be educational, but they are not the Word of God and they certainly do not lay down conclusive teachings; Having said that, it is insincere to act as though infant baptism was a commonly accepted practice by the early church: Consider this quote from **Justin Martyr** in **AD 155**, 30 years prior to what Irenaeus wrote:

1. *And for [water baptism] we have learned from the apostles this reason. Since at our birth we were born without our own knowledge or choice, by our parents coming together, and were brought up in bad habits and wicked training; in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become the children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed. (Justin, First Apology 61)*

iii. Finally, infants are simply not capable of what scripture outlines must go along with baptism:

1. They are not capable of hearing and believing
2. They cannot confess or repent

3. They cannot have sins forgiven that they have not yet committed:
 - a. *Ex. 32:32-33 But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!* The LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.
 - b. *Deut 24:16; Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin.*
 - c. *Exekiel 18:20; The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.*
4. There is certainly no old man who needs to be put to death so that a new man can be born.

- iv. There is much more that could be said about this issue; While it is true that there is no verse that says word for word “only those of a certain age will be baptized”, the teachings surrounding baptism all require someone who has matured in their knowledge of good and evil and is capable of choosing a response:
 - v. There is no word for word passage commanding children, and no passage in context which would indicate children:
 - vi. It would be a great while before it began to be practiced, and was certainly not done so in unity.

4. Objections to Purpose: (see link below for much more discussion on this point)

- a. Again, with reference to our previous lesson, passages like 1 Peter 3, Acts 2:38, Acts 20:21, all make mention of Baptism as the method God has chosen to offer forgiveness of sins:
 - i. Baptism is the means by which we take advantage of God’s Grace and the gift of His son:

b. Objection to Baptism for Remission of Sins:

- i.* To say that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins is to put a requirement on the free gift of God:
- ii.* Baptism is a work; and scripture clearly says that we cannot earn our salvation through works;

c. Answer:

- i.* Amen! We cannot do anything that would earn our salvation: But to say that Baptism is a work, or that one could consider it an effort to earn anything is a gross over estimation:
- ii.* There is nothing in the act of Baptism that could remotely be defined as a work; it is an act of submission: The only way that we could possibly classify Baptism as a work is by saying that it requires an act on your part:
 - 1.* If any action on our part must be defined as a work, then it doesn't matter what you do, sinner's prayer, altar calls, whatever it is—it would be just as much a work as baptism is, except baptism has been commanded for sins and those have not:
- iii.* For more discussion of this point see: <http://airport-church-of-christ.com/Outlines/Where'sTheWorkInTheWater-SethMauldin.pdf>

5. How is it done? Are Pouring and Sprinkling Viable options?

- a.* As previously mentioned, scripture does not always use *Baptizo* as immersion. In addition to this early church leaders practiced it:
 - i.* The Didache, an early collection of Apostolic teaching lists immersion as a viable option for baptism.

b. Answer:

- i.* As mentioned earlier, quoting historical, non inspired sources is not a source of biblical teaching, but rather a record of practices that some Christians may have done—often in error: but aside from the earlier discussion of the use of immersion in baptism earlier in this lesson as well as our prior study, let's look at the historical record.

- ii.* The first verifiable record of pouring took place as an exception in AD 253. A very sick man by the name of Novation was granted this as it was decided that he was too sick to get out of bed to be immersed: Pouring was an *exception* to immersion which was still understood to be what scripture taught.
- iii.* It was not until AD 753 that “Pope” Stephen decided that it was “scriptural” for these exceptions to be allowed.
- iv.* Finally at the Council of Ravenna in AD 1311, it was in essence decided that these practices had been around for so long, that now pouring and immersion and sprinkling were all acceptable:

 - I.* For all of the attempts to try and make it appear as though these have always been viable options; the text doesn’t say so, and neither does history: