

The Basics of Baptism

1. **Growing up in Alabama meant** being raised in a religion saturated environment. On the short drive from our home to the church building we would pass 4 different churches, all with people shuffling in for morning services:

(a) In fact, in my small home town of roughly 3,000 people and 4 traffic lights, there are 26 different churches; This is a picture that is reflected by numerous other small towns across the state;

i. Now the point of this information is this: When you've got so much religion crammed into such a tiny space-- **different churches gain reputations:**

A. Almost without fail, wherever I went, when I answered the question of where I attended church services, the same handful of statements that would be made:

- You think you're the only ones going to heaven
- Y'all are those folks who don't use instruments
- Oh- You're one of those Campbellites!
- And finally-- Oh, you people think you have to be baptized to be saved

B. And while all of these and other points would have some discussion, most often it would be the subject of baptism that would hold the number one spot in conversation.

(b) **And while this is speaking very broadly**, discussions about baptism don't seem to be quite as prevalent: There could be many reasons for this:

i. Some might feel as though they've been emphasizing that point of conversation with a certain friend for so long that they need to try discussing a different portion of the gospel

ii. Some may have been discouraged by others from talking too much about Baptism under the notion that "If all we have talk about is Baptism, then people will just think you are being argumentative"

A. (*Insisting on the truth is not being "argumentative"*)

iii. And still others have shied away from an emphasis on baptism favoring discussion of other aspects of the gospel to lay a foundation & introduce it later; (*some merit*)

A. There isn't necessarily a set point in time that baptism **must** be introduced in a study or discussion; but our point is this-- ***whether the intentions are good, or in some cases not so good, we should not put Baptism on the back burner!***

(c) **A good friend of mine** illustrated this point to me in a very powerful way a couple of years

ago while we were doing some home studies together: conversations with people that we had just met would go something like this:

i. Are you already a Christian?

A. Oh yes, I'm a Christian.

ii. Oh that's great! How long have you been a Christian?

A. I've always been a Christian! Or my family has always been Christian.

iii. Oh really? Well can you tell me what happened when you became a Christian?

A. I accepted Jesus into my heart. Or, my parents had me sprinkled as a baby. Or, I went up and they poured water on my head.

iv. I am very, very sad to tell you this; But what you have been taught is not the same thing that the Bible teaches about becoming a Christian: or sometimes even, *Someone has lied to you!*

A. What do you mean!!!

(d) What this friend helped to remind me of, is that in our conversations with those we wish to reach, there is no reason to be hesitant to discuss Baptism early and often. Many times, it can be much more effective in showing the areas that we need to discuss than methods we are sometimes told we should favor.

i. This study will most likely not contain much if anything you haven't heard before, but hopefully it will be outlined in a helpful way that will assist in discussing the basics of baptism with others:

2. What is Baptism?

(a) Most times when translating words from one language to another, there may be some very slight similarities between spelling, but for the most part they are drastically different:

i. For example: English = Keyboard; German = Klaviatur

ii. Sometimes however, the word is simply transliterated; In other words, and instead of using a different word of another language with the same meaning, they took a word and changed only the letters into a different language:

A. For example, even though we use the word Book in English, we still call this a Bible. There are many other words that have stayed the same in Greek into English usage, and Baptism is one of those:

iii. Baptism defined is “the process of immersion, submersion, and emergence:¹

¹ Vine's expository dictionary of Bible Words.

iv. Another says that in: Secular and classical use...it is largely used to express to dip and to immerse”²

(b) Was this a new concept, or was it relatively common?

i. The idea of baptism, whether that be of blood or of water, as a general ceremonial washing would have already been very familiar to God's people by the time Jesus issued it as a specific command with a specific purpose:

A. Before spreading the of the blood before the veil and on the altar, the priest is told in

Leviticus 4:17 to “dip or plunge” the tips of his fingers into the blood of the animal

B. In **II Kings 5:12**, Naaman is there told to dip himself into the river 7 times in order to become clean

C. When John is introduced in the Gospel of Mark, it is said in **1:3-4** that John came preaching a baptism of repentance, and that he was baptizing the people.

- *Strong's Dictionary of Greek and Hebrew Words* defines it here as to “whelm” (to engulf or submerge) with water. To make something completely and thoroughly wet.

- The people didn't have to have John's message explained to them: They knew what he meant when he came to baptize them; they were to wash and be clean.

(c) The definition and symbolism of baptism did not suddenly overwhelmingly change when Christ commanded His disciples to go out and baptize:

i. When Jesus said in **Mark 16:16** that “he who believes and is baptized shall be saved” it meant what it always meant: A ceremonial immersion in water for the purpose of becoming clean.

3. Who is it For?

(a) For those who believe: (Mk 16:16)

i. Believe in what? **Acts 8:36-38, Acts 16:31-33**

ii. This means they have heard: (**Romans 10:14-15**)

(b) It is for those who have sin: **Acts 2:36-38**

(c) It is for those who are ready to repent

4. What is it for?

(a) Forgiveness of Sins:

i. 1 Peter 3:18-21

ii. Acts 20:21

iii. Col. 2:10-12

(b) Entrance into Christ:

i. Matt. 28:19: *to* or *into* (indicating the point reached or entered), of place

5. How is it done?

(a) Immersion:

i. John 3:22-23

ii. Acts 8:38-39