

## What about Baptism?

Among the doctrines that have much controversy in churches is the doctrine of baptism. Today I want to look at what the Scripture says about baptism so that we can hopefully have a better perspective of what the significance and purpose of baptism really is.

Let's begin by looking at the word baptize. There seems to be confusion with regard to how this word should be defined. Some say that this word means "to dip," but let's look more closely at its usage. In Mark 7:4 Jesus said, "And *when they come* from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, *as* the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables." In this verse there is twice that the Greek word baptize (the same Greek word that is used when talking about Christian baptism) is used, but most people don't even know this because it has been translated to its proper context. You see, when the Pharisee's are taking a bath they are baptizing. When they wash pots and pans and tables they are baptizing. Now each of these things are washed differently. Pots and pans can certainly be dipped, but I've never dipped a table in water to wash it. So we see then that baptism is not as much about how it's done as what is done.

This brings us to the next point that I want to look at. In 1 Peter 3:21 it says that "baptism doth now save us." There are those who leave this verse at this and say that we must be baptized with water in order to be saved. I'll look at the rest of this verse later, but first let's look at what John the Baptist said about baptism. In Mark 1:8 John said, "I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." It appears here that John is talking about two baptisms, the one he administered and the one Jesus would administer. But how can this be? In Ephesians 4:5 the Bible clearly says that there is one baptism.

I think this is cleared up when we understand that there is one baptism which is required for salvation, and that is the baptism that Christ administers. Water baptism does not save. If we look at 1 Peter 3:21 more closely we'll see that Peter says this as well. That whole verse says, "The like figure whereunto *even* 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." You see, it's not the outward cleaning with water that is important, it is the inward cleaning by the Holy Ghost. This is the answer of a good conscience toward God. This can only come by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If water baptism is not for salvation then why do we do it? Let's look to the Scriptures to find out. In what is often called the Great Commission we find these words (Matthew 28:18-20):

- (18) And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.
- (19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
- (20) 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.

Here we see that we baptize because Jesus said to baptize. But what is the purpose? And what about Acts 2:38? If we look closely enough we'll find that Acts 2:38 is talking about the Holy Ghost. When Paul talks to Ananias in Acts 22:16 it is this same baptism which is received "calling on the name of the Lord."

In the time of Jesus it was common for followers of a particular religious sect to be baptized by that sect. This was an indication to the world that the people were followers of that sect. The same is true with water baptism in the Church today. It is an outward sign of an inward change. It is a way to identify ourselves with the Church. It does not put us into the Church as Christ has done that at the point of salvation. It does not save us. It is, though, important that we be obedient to God, and believers should be baptized. Indeed if we look at the examples of salvation that we're given in the book of Acts we find that in every case water baptism was administered after salvation.

If you have questions about salvation or baptism today I want to encourage you to contact me at [john@intotheword.org](mailto:john@intotheword.org).

Yours in Christ,

Bro. John Rich