

## The Church VS the Churches: Baptism

### INTRODUCTION:

1. I want to continue our study of the church that Christ has established and revealed in the NT and how the churches of our day compare to it.
  - A. I want to do this because knowing the truth concerning the church's doctrine and practice is vital, seeing that without the truth, we lose our sanctification, our separation or distinctiveness, from the world (Jn. 17:17 – "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.").
  - B. And, just as soon as it is assumed that we know the truth on a subject and we stop preaching on it is the time that we will begin leaving the truth and this church will stop being the Lord's church.
2. One issue that has been a sore spot, one that pits most of the religious world that claims to follow Christ against this church, is the subject of *baptism*.
  - A. Although the Scriptures present the truth on the subject with great clarity, Satan has had his hand in confusing and dividing the world concerning this subject.
  - B. And, because faulty views of baptism are so common, it is important that we consider what the Bible says about it that we might be assured of the truth that God would have us teach.
3. So, let's look at biblical baptism and see how the churches of today compare.

### BODY:

#### **I. The Form of Baptism:**

##### A. The churches:

1. Catholic – "Secondly, through faith in Jesus Christ and the Sacrament of Baptism, the believer receives his new heart and human spirit in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This happens at the moment when the Priest baptizes the new convert by saying the baptismal words and **sprinkling the water.**" (*Catholic Encyclopedia – newadvent.org*).
2. Presbyterian – "Concerning Form: There are two forms or modes of baptism, **immersion** and **sprinkling** or **pouring**. Each of these forms seems to have good spiritual backing; each of these forms is deeply meaningful to millions. Sprinkling is the form of baptism which has been practiced by the vast majority of Christians down through the centuries. The Presbyterian form, **sprinkling** or **pouring**, symbolizes our cleansing from sin." (*Baptism in the Presbyterian Church, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky*).
3. Methodist – "Our church has always offered to people being baptized and to the parents of infants the **choice of sprinkling, pouring, or immersion**. Sprinkling is a common practice, but the person being baptized (or their sponsors) can choose the method most meaningful to them. We believe that "the power of the Spirit in baptism does not depend upon the mode by which water is administered..." (**By Water and the Spirit**) ([www.umc.org/what-we-believe/](http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/))
4. From these quotes we learn:
  - a. Many churches believe various forms of baptism are acceptable to practice.
  - b. The mode of baptism has nothing to do with its purpose or power
  - c. Whatever form is meaningful to the individual or church is to be used.

##### B. The Biblical form of baptism: Immersion

1. The word baptize means to dip, immerse, or submerge.
  - a. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* – "to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk) 2) to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe 3) to overwhelm"
  - b. *BDAG: A Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T* – "dip, immerse, dip oneself, wash"
  - c. *Vine's Expository Dictionary* – "baptism, consisting of the processes of immersion, submersion and emergence (from *bapto*, "to dip")"
2. From these definitions of baptize we learn:
  - a. Baptism is a (spiritual) washing (Acts 22:16 – "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.")).
  - b. This washing takes the form of an immersion where one is sunk, overwhelmed, or submerged in water, and then emerges from that water (Col. 2:12 – "buried with Him in

- baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”).
3. Why the confusion and contradictions?
    - a. First, *baptize* and *baptism* in our modern translations are transliterations rather than a translation of the Greek word “Βαπτισο”.
      - i. Beginning with the KJV Βαπτισο was not translated but instead given English letters to create “baptize,” (“e” replaced “o”) which in the English had no meaning.
      - ii. This was done because the Church of England that sponsored the translation didn’t want it translated as immerse, seeing they sprinkled!
    - b. But, the major problem lies in men’s teaching as above and as that of John Calvin: “But whether the person who is baptized be wholly immersed, and whether thrice or once, or whether water be only poured or sprinkled upon him, **is of no importance**. Churches ought to be left at liberty in this respect to act according to the difference of climates. The very word **baptize, however, signifies immerse**, and it is **certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church**” (*Institutes*, Vol. 3, p. 343).
      - i. People believe men like Calvin respect the scriptures; but not necessarily!
      - ii. How can what is specifically commanded by God, which is immersion, be “of no importance.” People’s view of the authority of the scriptures is what causes division!
  4. The church Christ established will teach and practice that baptism is *immersion* in water with Christ where one receives a spiritual washing.

## II. The Subjects of Baptism:

- A. Many churches of today practice infant baptism.
  1. Presbyterian – “In company with most of the major denominations of the world, Presbyterians **baptize the infants** of believing members. Our reason is theological. **We baptize infants because the covenant of God with his people**, made first to Abraham, renewed at various times, and brought to fruition in Jesus Christ, also includes the New Israel, the new people of God, the church...When we present our babies for baptism, we do so **because we believe they already belong to God** by virtue of his covenanted mercies. We believe that the **visible church is composed of believers and their children...they are Christians, and federally holy before baptism, and therefore they are baptized.**” (*Baptism in the Presbyterian Church*)
  2. Methodist – “We believe **children are under the atonement of Christ and** as heirs of the Kingdom of God **are acceptable subjects for Christian baptism**. Children of believing parents **through baptism become the special responsibility of the Church**. They should be nurtured and led to personal acceptance of Christ, and **by profession of faith confirm their baptism.**” (*Methodist Discipline*, p.70)
  3. Catholic: “Because of the greatness of the **eternal gift that is received during the Sacrament of Baptism**, the Church does not desire to see anyone die without receiving this Sacrament. (C.C.C. #1250) The Church also realizes that the Sacrament of Baptism **requires a Profession of faith**, something that infants and younger children cannot profess...the Catholic Church **determined in its spiritual wisdom to baptize infants** as soon as they were born. This would ensure that infants would also receive their new heart and new human spirit to guide them in life... Because of this decision, the **Church also realized that infants must be educated later on after their Baptism**, this being a parental role.”
    - a. St. Augustine (III De Anima) says “If you wish to be a Catholic, do not believe, nor say, nor teach, that infants who die before baptism can obtain the remission of original sin.” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*)
  4. What we learn:
    - a. Protestants baptize infants because they believe they are *already saved by the atoning blood of Jesus* from original sin, or total hereditary depravity.
      - i. As these infants grow they are to profess their faith, confirming their baptism.

- ii. Baptism puts them into the visible church, or local church, and makes them the *special charge* of the church.
  - b. The Catholic Church baptizes infants because they also believe in original sin, but do so believing baptism forgives babies of that sin, who must later profess faith in Christ.
- B. What does the N.T. church teach concerning infant baptism?
1. There are no accounts of infant baptism given in the N.T. because Bible baptism requires one must first *believe* in Christ.
    - a. This is seen in the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-16 – “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.<sup>16</sup> He who **believes and is baptized** will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”).
    - b. Only those who met the condition of belief were baptized.
      - i. Pentecost (Acts 2:36, 38 – “Therefore let all the house of Israel **know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ...**<sup>38</sup> Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”).
      - ii. Eunuch (Acts 8:36-37 – “Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”<sup>37</sup> Then Philip said, “**If you believe** with all your heart, **you may.**”) And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”
      - iii. Philippian Jailor (Acts 16:30-33 – “And he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”<sup>31</sup> So they said, “**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and you will be saved, you and your household.”<sup>32</sup> Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.<sup>33</sup> And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.”).
    - c. In each case *ability to understand* the words/commands that were preached was implied, which eliminates the possibility of infants being baptized!
  2. Infant baptism changes/perverts God’s order of salvation.
    - a. Man’s order of salvation taught in the churches:
      - i. Protestant Denominationalism: Saved (unconditionally) → Parents choose to Baptize (enter church/symbolize that salvation) → Later Believes (confirms baptism)
      - ii. Catholics: Church/Parents choose to Baptize = Saved → Later believes
    - b. **Bible: Hear** (Gospel) + **Believe** + **Baptized** = **Saved/Forgiven of sin**
      - i. Never are parents/sponsors told to baptize infants or little children and then later, when they grow up, to teach them what their baptism was for.
      - ii. All are to hear the gospel, believe, and based on their faith be baptized into Christ to be saved.

### III. The Purpose of Baptism:

- A. The churches:
1. Presbyterian: “Presbyterians do not believe that baptism is essential to salvation, nor do we believe that we are saved by baptism. We believe that the **normal mode of entrance into the church is by baptism**, but we recognize that not all genuine believers have been baptized.” (*Baptism in the Presbyterian Church*)
  2. Methodist: “Wherefore, that we are justified by faith, **only**, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort...Baptism is not only a **sign** of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a **sign of regeneration or the new birth.** (*Methodist Discipline*).
  3. Baptist:
    - a. “It has already been pointed out that **baptism follows salvation**. Since baptism is a picture of the “new birth” experience of becoming “dead to sin and alive unto God,” only the person having that experience can tell the story. The Ethiopian eunuch asked, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” To this, Philip responded, “If thou

believest . . . , thou mayest” (Acts 8:36-37). This means that the form of baptism experienced without salvation is not baptism. It is so that infant baptism is repudiated.

**Baptism is true baptism only if the person baptized has already been saved.”**

*(Baptizing Them In The Name...;* by Robert E. Naylor):

- b. “Peter tell us in his epistle that baptism was a “figure” and was the answer of a good conscience toward God. **Baptism**, then, is the **outward expression** of an inward salvation. Baptism **follows** salvation. **Baptism is essential to obedience but not to salvation.”** (*The Truth About the Church Of Christ*, by Hugh F. Pyle, D.D.)

4. What we learn:

- a. Protestant churches today consistently teach that baptism is unnecessary for salvation based on the doctrine that we are saved *by faith only*.
- b. Only those who are already saved are believed to be proper candidates for baptism, seeing baptism is believed to be only an **outward expression** of an **inward salvation already received**.
- c. Most also believe that baptism adds one to the local, visible church, while having nothing to do with one’s entrance into the church, or body, of Christ.

B. What is the N.T. church to teach concerning the purpose of of baptism for salvation?

1. The Bible puts baptism *before* salvation, not after.

- a. Great Commission: Mark 16:16 – “He who believes **and is baptized** will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”
- b. Pentecost: Acts 2:36-38 – “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”<sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”<sup>38</sup> Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and **let every one of you be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

c. Epistles to the churches:

- i. We are baptized into Jesus Christ and His death...and raised to newness of life in the same baptism.
  - 1) Rom. 6:3-4 – “Or do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ Jesus** were **baptized into His death**?<sup>4</sup> Therefore we were **buried with Him through baptism into death**, that **just as Christ was raised** from the dead by the glory of the Father, **even so we also should walk in newness of life.**”
  - 2) Col. 2:12 – “**buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God**, who raised Him from the dead.”
- ii. Thus, contrary to popular belief and practice among the churches of today, **baptism is for the lost, those seeking salvation from sin**, not the saved!
  - 1) 1 Peter 3:21 – “Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (NASB, also ESV)
  - 2) Acts 22:16 – “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and **wash away your sins**, calling on the name of the Lord.”

d. The churches of today pervert the order of salvation:

- i. The Churches: Hear + Believe/Repent → Saved/Sins Forgiven → Baptized
- ii. Bible/the Church: Hear + Believe + Repent + Baptized = Saved/Sins Forgiven

2. Baptism is an **antitype** of Noah salvation *through* water, not a “figure,” or “sign,” of salvation already received by faith only (1 Pet. 3:21).

- a. I am amazed that Mr. Pyle, a supposed “Doctor of Divinity,” would misuse the KJV’s “like figure” to mean **something less than real**, a **shadow**, an **expression** of what is real, but not the real thing itself.
- b. *Like figure* in the archaic language of the KJV means just the opposite, being the real thing as opposed to the shadow given in the O.T., which was Noah’s salvation by water.

- i. We see this in the various translations of 1 Peter 3:21:
    - 1) “There is also an **antitype** which **now saves us**—baptism...” (NKJV)
    - 2) “**Corresponding to that**, baptism **now saves you**...” (NASB)
    - 3) “Baptism, which **corresponds to this**, now **saves you**...” (ESV)
  - ii. We see it in the definition of the word (Gk. Antitupon – *antitype*).
    - 1) *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon*: (Antitupon) “a thing resembling another, its counterpart; something in the Messianic times which answers to the type... prefiguring it in the O.T..., as baptism corresponds to the deluge 1 Pet. iii 21”
    - 2) **BDAG** – “adj. corresponding to something that has gone before...means baptism, **which is a fulfillment** (of the type), now saves you, i.e., the saving of Noah from the flood is a *tupos*, or ‘foreshadowing’..., and baptism corresponds to it”
    - 3) Thus, baptism *corresponds to* what was *foreshadowed* by Noah being “saved through water” (3:20), seeing that baptism “now saves us” in the fullest since, being saved from *sin* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (3:21).
3. The problem is not what the bible teaches, but what people will accept!

CONCLUSION:

1. The N.T. church must teach the truth of Christ revealed no matter what subject it may be or how it may feel about it. And, this must apply to the subject of baptism in God’s plan of salvation.
2. This means that despite the churches of today teaching that baptism...
  - A. Form can be sprinkling or pouring, we must teach that it is immersion
  - B. Is for infants, we must teach that it is for those who believe in Christ
  - C. Is only an outward expression of salvation that one has previous received by faith only, we must teach that baptism is necessary, for the forgiveness of sin, for entering Christ and salvation.
3. We see that the church is quite distinct from the churches and that even on the most basic of topics the churches of today err and do not speak the truth about how to be saved!
4. So, we need to appreciate the truth and stand for it, refusing to cave to the pressure of Satan and the world and compromise the truth and lose our distinctiveness and salvation.