

The Gospel Truth

BIBLICAL INSTRUCTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT
FOR THE MISSION FIELD WORLDWIDE.

A BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...." —Acts 2:38

In the early 1500s, the flames of reformation were kindled and spread rapidly through Europe as God began to restore the knowledge of Biblical truths. The world had been in relative spiritual night from the dark, papal reign of the Roman Catholic church who had apostatized the truth of the early morning church. The Protestant Reformation, beginning in Germany with Martin Luther in 1517, grew as people began to see the fallacy of Catholicism. Many of the reformers, while not seeing all the light, were getting pockets and rays of truth on various doctrines and practices.

Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz were young men who studied under the reformer, Ulrich Zwingli, in Zurich, Switzerland. They severed ties with him over the long-standing Catholic practice of infant baptism, which was contrary to the practice of the New Testament church. Grebel and Manz, amongst

others, received light and understanding that water baptism was for those who had repented of their sins and been born again. They advocated a "believer's baptism" and taught that



candidates for baptism should make their own confessions of faith. They rejected infant baptism because infants can neither repent nor believe, so they should not be baptized.

There is no scriptural support for infant baptism nor are there examples of it in the Bible. It appears that infant baptism probably began in the late second century and gained widespread

acceptance by the middle of the third century. The practice gained popularity as it was falsely taught that infants would be lost to hell and that baptism itself saves from sin. Water baptism does not save the soul. Infants are innocent before God because there has been no willful transgression and they will go to heaven if they die.

Infant baptism has done a great disservice to many. Children grow up thinking that they will go to Heaven because they were baptized as infants, and yet as adults they live very sinful lives. People need to be washed in the blood of Jesus and should not lean on the crutch of infant baptism.

Those who took a stand against infant baptism and advocated a believer's baptism became known as Anabaptists (one who baptizes over again). The first baptism was the infant baptism which was unscriptural. The second baptism, or "re-baptism," was the believer's baptism.

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WHAT THE BIBLE *Teaches About...*

Word of God

2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matt. 24:35

Relationship of Love

Matt. 22:37-40; John 14:21-23; 1 John 4:7-11

Repentance

Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10

New Birth

John 3:3-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:1-4;

Eph. 2:1, 5-6

Freedom From Sin

1 John 5:18; Matt. 1:21; John 8:11

Infilling of the Holy Spirit

Acts 19:2; Acts 15:8-9; Acts 1:8

Holiness

Luke 1:73-75; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16;

Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:22

Kingdom of God

Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17; John 18:36

The Church

Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col 1:18

Unity

John 17:20-23; Gal 3:28; Rev. 18:2-4

Ordinances

Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 26:26-30;

1 Cor. 11:23-27; John 13:14-17

Divine Healing

Luke 4:18; Isaiah 53:4-5; James 5:13-16

Sanctity of Marriage

Matt. 19:5-6; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3;

1 Cor. 7:10-11

Outward Appearance

1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 11:14-15; Deut. 22:5

End of Time

2 Peter 3:7-12; John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:10;

Matt 25:31-46

Pacifism

Luke 6:27-29; Luke 18:20

Worship

John 4:23-24; Eph. 5:19; 2 Cor. 3:17

Great Commission

Mark 16:15

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The Anabaptists were persecuted by both the Roman Catholics and the Protestants for baptizing adults. Felix Manz suffered much persecution and was imprisoned numerous times for preaching about baptism. On March 7, 1526, the Zurich council in Switzerland passed an edict that made adult re-baptism punishable by drowning. Manz was once again placed in prison. Upon being released, he continued to baptize and preach. Manz was faithful and obedient to not compromise this truth in the face of great opposition.

On December 3, 1526, Manz was arrested again and placed in the Wellenberg prison. On January 5, 1527, he was sentenced to death by drowning. Death by drowning became known as the "third baptism." As Manz was led to the Limmat River, with a loud voice he praised God and testified to the people. A minister walked beside Manz encouraging him to recant his beliefs. In the distance, his mother and brothers encouraged him to stand firm and suffer for Jesus' sake. Manz's hands were bound and pulled between his knees and a stick placed between them to immobilize him. He was then tipped into the water and drowned as the first Anabaptist martyr. His alleged last words were, "Into thy hands, O God, I commend my spirit."

The truth of a believer's baptism did not come cheaply. God be thanked for restoring this beautiful truth to His people and for those who were willing to lay down their lives for its preservation. May the ordinance of baptism continue to be valued and respected among God's people.

-mws

THE GOSPEL TRUTH

The Gospel Truth periodical is published in the name of the Lord for all people of all lands in the interest of establishing and encouraging them in the truth of God's Word. This publication teaches and promotes the truths of the Bible that have been established since the time of Christ and the apostles.

The Word of God is the singular, acceptable rule of faith. It teaches salvation and deliverance from sin through the atonement of Jesus Christ; a subsequent infilling of the Holy Spirit to lead, direct and empower; practical holiness in every area of life; and the unity and oneness of God's people. Acceptable service to God is through a personal relationship of love founded in truth.

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Editorial



Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. —Acts 2:41

It would have been wonderful to have beheld these three thousand souls being baptized on the Day of Pentecost so many years ago. Imagine the long lines of new converts waiting in anticipation for their turn to enter the water. See the smiles and hear the rejoicing and singing. Hear the shouts of praise and watch the hands in the air raised in adoration to Jesus Christ. What a profound impact that sight must have had on the people looking on who had rejected Christ.

I am so thankful to have had a life-changing experience of salvation as a child and to have been buried with Christ in baptism. I have been privileged to baptize others: in an African stream where a crocodile lived, in tape worm-infested waters, in muddy stagnate water, in clean flowing rivers, in a canal in Pakistan, in a freezing lake in Canada and in baptisteries within chapel walls. While there is no more spirituality in baptizing in one place over the other, I personally appreciate being in a natural environment as a testimony to the world.

I was burdened this quarter to share some of the Bible truths on the subject of baptism. My heart is grateful for the heritage of truth and for the light that we still have today. Baptism is important and I have seen amongst some of God's people a lessening of zeal and fervor for baptism. Baptism should not be an afterthought when someone is newly converted. It should be one of the first acts of obedience after salvation. May the Spirit rekindle amongst God's people the value and beauty of this teaching and practice.

The words of the songwriter, Bro. Ulysses Phillips, come to mind: "A resurrection I confess, has taken place within my breast; I've been awakened from the dead, and now I live with Christ instead....O praise the Lord for victory, from death to life He lifted me; By His great love and power divine, Eternal life is truly mine." That song encapsulates the testimony of what baptism represents.

May each reader be edified and inspired as you meditate upon the beauty and symbolism of baptism.

Michael W. Smith

October 2014



My baptism in the Santiam river in Oregon.

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online

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A Place of Remembrance

In the Old Testament, the people often made an altar to God after a victory or after a visitation from the Lord. The altar was a place to remember what God had done.

Baptism should be a special place of remembrance for every child of God. When the devil tempts, tests, and combats your spiritual identity, it is a great blessing to point back to the act of obedience where you openly shared in the watery burial and resurrection of baptism and identified yourself with the Lord Jesus. That place of remembrance is a source of strength and victory over the enemy.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

SUBJECT: WATER BAPTISM

Scripture Reading: *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* —Matthew 28:19

Summary: Believers in Jesus Christ are commanded to be baptized by water. This obedient act of immersion under water symbolizes death, resurrection and the changed spiritual life that occurs through the actual cleansing of the blood of Jesus.

Definition of Baptism: From the Greek word *baptizo* which means to dip, to immerse, to submerge, to overwhelm.

I. A Divine Command

- A. Mark 16:15-16 Baptize all believers.
- B. Acts 2:38 Instructed by Peter.

C. Acts 8:37 Belief.

(see also: Mark 16:16; Acts 8:12; Acts 18:8)

II. Taught by John / Exemplified By Christ

- A. Mark 1:4-5 John preaches the baptism of repentance.
- B. Matthew 3:16-17 Jesus baptized by John the Baptist.

VI. Symbolism of Baptism

- A. Romans 6:3-4 Death, burial, and resurrection.
- B. Colossians 2:12 Buried and risen with Christ.

III. Practiced By the Early Church

- A. Acts 2:41 Day of Pentecost.
- B. Acts 8:12 Samaritan converts.
- C. Acts 8:35-39 The Ethiopian.
- D. Acts 9:17-18 The apostle Paul.
- E. Acts 10:44-48 Household of Cornelius.
- F. Acts 16:14-15 Lydia of Thyatira.
- G. Acts 16:30-33 Keeper of the prison.
- H. Acts 18:8 The Corinthians.
- I. Acts 19:1-7 Disciples at Ephesus.

VII. Full Immersion

- A. By definition of *baptizo*.
- B. Mark 1:5 Baptized in the river.
- C. John 3:22-23 John baptized where there was much water.
- D. Acts 8:38 Philip and the Eunuch went down into the water.

VIII. Purpose of Baptism

- A. 1 Peter 3:21 Testimony of a good conscience.
- B. Acts 2:41-42 Identify with the church.

Conclusion:

And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water...the eunuch...went on his way rejoicing.

—Acts 8:38-39

WATER BAPTISM

Companion article for Bible Study

JESUS SET AN EXAMPLE

John the Baptist plunged Jesus under the water in baptism. As Jesus broke the surface of the water coming up, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ like a dove. A voice spoke from Heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:15-17). Some of the last words Jesus spoke to His disciples were instructions to go and teach all nations and to baptize the believers (Matthew 28:19-20).

BAPTISM IS AN ORDINANCE

There are very few outward rituals or ceremonies to be observed in the New Testament. Baptism is symbolic in nature and was commanded and exemplified by Christ. It is therefore one of three ordinances that Christians are instructed to observe in this dispensation.

Baptism is closely tied to the divine work of salvation. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). God desires every repentant person to be baptized. On the day of Pentecost, the people asked Peter what they should do when they were convicted of their sins. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." he replied (Acts 2:37-38). Baptism is not to be taken casually but is to be respected as a divine ordinance from the Lord.

BIBLE EXAMPLES OF BAPTISM

The early morning church taught and practiced baptism. On the day of Pentecost, about three thousand souls were saved and baptized (Acts 2:41). Philip preached to the Samaritans and the men and women who were converted were baptized (Acts 8:12). The apostle Paul was baptized shortly after his conversion experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:17-18). The gentiles of the

House of Cornelius followed the Lord Jesus' example in baptism (Acts 10:44-48). The Corinthians who repented were baptized, as were the disciples at Ephesus. The keeper of the prison, who had watch over Paul and Silas, yielded his life to Jesus and was saved and baptized that very night (Acts 16:30-33). Almost 2000 years later, this same practice of baptism is still being observed by true followers of Jesus Christ.

ONE IMMERSION

Jesus instructed his disciples to baptize "...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). One immersion in the name of the three parts of God follows the instructions of Christ in the actual observance of baptism.



*"He that believeth
and is baptized
shall be saved."*

Mark 16:16

PRACTICED ONLY BY BELIEVERS

Baptism is not for infants nor for the unsaved seeking membership in a church. The scripture teaches a "believer's baptism." An individual is to repent of sin and be saved before being baptized. Those who were baptized on the Day of Pentecost were those who had received the Word. Baptism is inexorably linked with belief. When Philip shared the gospel with the Ethiopian, the eunuch asked: "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest" (Acts 8:36-37). Repentance and belief in the saving power of the Lord Jesus are prerequisites or

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qualifications for baptism. If someone does not believe and repent first, baptism will be of no value. It is damaging to the true meaning and purpose of baptism when infants and unbelievers are baptized with the hope of attaining salvation.

BAPTISM DOES NOT SAVE THE SINNER

Water baptism does not wash away sin from a life. There is no spiritual cleansing accomplished by baptism. Only "...the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). An unsaved person who is baptized will come up out of the water just as sinful as when he went under. Salvation and heart cleansing only come from the divine grace of salvation through the blood of Christ. A man could be baptized 20 times and be just as sinful unless there was a spiritual birth. If there is not death to sin, baptism becomes a dead ceremony without validity.

A SYMBOL OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Baptism is a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord. It is a ceremonial representation of the change that has taken place in the life of the person who 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). As someone goes under the water, it symbolizes the spiritual burial of the old life of sin. When he comes out of the water, it represents the resurrected life of freedom from sin in Christ Jesus. There is no actual cleansing in the water but it is a symbol and testimony of the

previous cleansing of the blood. There is a sealing experience that happens through obedience to the Word.

BAPTISM IS FULL IMMERSION

The Biblical word "baptism" comes from the Greek word *baptizo*. By definition it means to dip, immerse, or to submerge. The definition itself bears witness that baptism, as taught in the scripture, is full immersion under water. Many religious movements practice sprinkling or the pouring of water over an individual for baptism. This is contrary to the teaching and plan of Jesus. Pouring and

sprinkling fall short of the beautiful symbolic nature of baptism. Full immersion represents clearly the total life change that comes from being buried and resurrected with Christ.

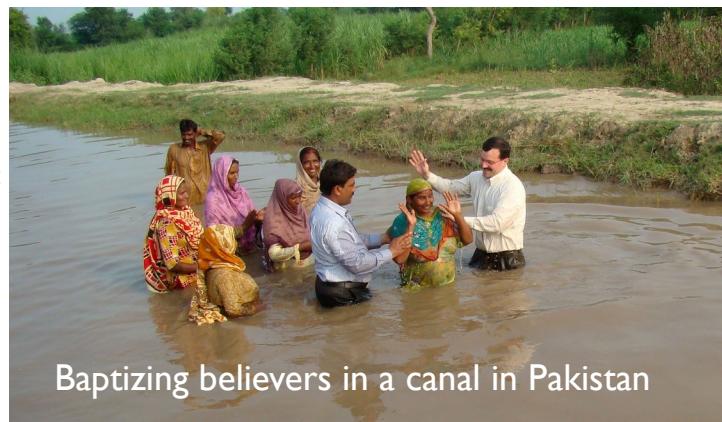
Full immersion baptism was practiced in Bible times. John the Baptist baptized in the river Jordon (Mark 1:5).

The passage in John 3:22-23 states that John baptized where there was much water. This would be needless if one were baptizing by sprinkling or pouring. Philip and the eunuch "went down into the water" (Acts 8:38). Most importantly, Christ himself left an example of being fully immersed under the water in baptism (Matthew 3:16-17).

OUTWARD TESTIMONY OF AN INWARD WORK

Baptism is an outward testimony of an inward work of God. It is "the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism does not bestow a good conscience but is an act of obedience and a statement of clearness before God. People who follow the Lord in baptism are declaring before all that they are new creatures in Christ and that they are now a part of the family of God. Baptism, as a public confession of faith, is a wonderful, outward act that demonstrates a new identity in Christ—no longer a servant of the world but a child of God.

-mws



Baptizing believers in a canal in Pakistan



1. Can people go to Heaven if they have not been baptized?

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). People will go to Heaven who have been born again and saved by the grace of God. We are not saved by works or by outward observances but by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). Therefore, we are not saved by the physical act of baptism. There will be people in Heaven who have not been baptized by water, but they will have been forgiven of their sins by the blood of Jesus.

This is exemplified by the thief on the cross. "And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42-43). The thief had a conversion experience on the cross and never had opportunity to be baptized. Jesus accepted him and stated that he would be in paradise. There are people who have time to pray for salvation, but may not have time in life or be in a physical condition to be baptized. They will not be hindered from entering Heaven.

However, it is disobedience if someone chooses not to be baptized when there is opportunity. This would constitute sin and would result in a loss of salvation.

2. Why did Peter tell people on multiple occasions to be baptized in the name of Jesus? Does this contradict Christ's teaching to be baptized in the Trinitarian formula?

Jesus clearly taught the ministry in Matthew 28:19 to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."



Malawi, Africa

Peter told the people on the Day of Pentecost "to be baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). Speaking to the house of Cornelius, Peter "commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48). He was not contradicting the teaching of Jesus but was distinguishing the Christian baptism from other baptisms of the time. Further, and possibly even more noteworthy, is the fact that many people believed in God but rejected Jesus as His son; hence, the specificity of being baptized in the name of Jesus who is the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9). Those who once rejected Christ were instructed to make a public profession of their belief in Jesus as

their Savior and to profess that they were now disciples of Christ.

Peter's instructions did not negate the Trinitarian formula but placed emphasis on that which had been neglected. It is right and scriptural to baptize in the Trinitarian formula.

3. Should someone be re-baptized if they leave a false church to be in fellowship with God's true people?

A baptism that is not a "believer's baptism" is not in accordance with the scripture. Infant baptism or being baptized when there is still sin in the life undermines the very purpose and testimony of baptism. An individual would need to be re-baptized once he was truly saved from sin and had a born-again experience.

Salvation is what brings someone into the Church of God and into fellowship with God's people. While a believer's baptism may have occurred in a false denomination, God honors the obedience of that baptism as He does the work of salvation. When people leave a false church to be in fellowship with God's true people, there is often a desire to renounce the system of religion where they used to be members. Part of that testimony may be in being re-baptized. While it is not specifically required in the Bible, it is understandable why someone would want to make that clear declaration of freedom from false religion to the world through baptism again. To be re-baptized after leaving a false church is a decision that is left for individuals to make as they are led by the Holy Spirit.

-mws



DID YOU KNOW?

The practice of water baptism was not foreign to the Jews when John the Baptist began to preach the baptism of repentance. In the Old Testament period of time, baptism was a ritual of conversion to Judaism. Pagans would become proselytes through the ceremonial practice of baptism in order to become part of and to be identified with the Jewish people.



Give Them Warning

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HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. —Ezekiel 3:17

If you are a true minister of the gospel, God has set you as a watchman to His people. You are a sentinel to stand guard over the ministry to which you have been entrusted. Your ministry is not a profession but a calling from God and a commitment to the people. Listen to the Spirit of God and let the Word of God have preeminence in everything you teach and preach.

When the enemy is at work and souls are at stake, give warning from the Lord. Do not be afraid to sound the alarm and expose the enemy. People like to hear those things which comfort and encourage them. Those are necessary and important but not to the neglect of godly warnings. Many families and congregations have compromised truth because ministers neglected their duty to sound the alarm.



You are an ambassador for Christ, a representative of God. You are to feed, teach, admonish, and warn the flock. Love the people and sacrifice for them. Set an example of holiness and purity. When the trial is hot and things are difficult, remember that you are a minister of the Lord. He will stand by His own and help and strengthen you as you stay faithful.

-mws