

## 7. Teaching of Jesus on the Baptism of Believers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Jesus and the apostles clearly taught an easily understood and consistent view of baptism. In brief, they taught that men and women should believe, repent, confess, and then be baptism by immersion in water unto (for) the forgiveness (remission) of sins. The 1<sup>st</sup> century meaning of the word *baptism* has changed though the centuries to a 21<sup>st</sup> century meaning which includes practices not found in the New Testament. For example, W. E. Vine wrote, "Baptizo, "to baptize," primarily a frequentative form of bapto, "to dip," was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another, etc." (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.) However, by the 21<sup>st</sup> century general use had caused the word to reflect the various religious teachings of the time, which included sprinkling and pouring. The etymology of the word shows that it meant *to dip* from the beginning: "Middle English, from Anglo-French *baptiser*, from Late Latin *baptizare*, from Greek *baptizein* to dip, baptize, from *baptein* to dip, dye."

### ***Immersion, the Baptism of Christ and the Apostles in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century***

Christ and the apostles taught that baptism was immersion in water. In addition to the word itself, to dip or bury, the New Testament examples show that baptism was always an immersion and a burial. In Matt 3:16-17, Jesus had come to John the Baptist to be baptized:

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.  
17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

He could not have come up out of the water unless he had been down into the water. All the examples are clear: to baptize, one required enough water to bury. John recorded in John 3:22-23:

After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. 23 Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.

The *plenty of water* in this passage precludes sprinkling or pouring. In Acts 8:38-40, Philip converted the eunuch; and after having taught him, baptized him:

Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

The scripture spells out the method of baptizing: they went down into the water; Philip baptized him; and they came up out of the water. The examples of New Testament baptism teach that baptism is immersion.

In addition to these examples, the direct teaching of the apostles teaches that baptism is a complete burial – no sprinkling and no pouring. In Rom 6:3-4, Paul taught that we are buried with Christ in baptism and raised to live a new life:

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized

into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

The phrase *just as* leaves no room for dispute. Christ was buried and raised; just as he, we are buried and raised. Paul summarized this point in Col 2:12, "12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead."

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century, baptism is always a complete burial or immersion in water. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many folks sprinkle and pour as the mode of their baptism. Thus, they pervert the teaching of Christ.

### ***The Forgiveness of Sins and Salvation, the Baptism of Christ and the Apostles in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century***

Christ and the apostles taught that baptism was for the forgiveness of sins and salvation. Few in the 21<sup>st</sup> century believe that baptism is necessary for forgiveness of sins and salvation. Jesus taught clearly Mark 16:16, "16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." To refuse baptism as a necessity for salvation is to deny this plain teaching of Jesus. Luke recorded the Lord's giving his great commission in Luke 24:46-47:

46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

When Peter preached this forgiveness of sins, he told his hearers in Acts 2:38: "38 Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" People who are not baptized cannot have the forgiveness of sins. When the apostle Paul was converted, he was told in Acts 22:16, "And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name." Of course, salvation is in the name of Christ and no one else. Acts 4:12 teaches, "12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Peter directly stated that baptism saves in 1 Peter 3:21, "21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

### ***How Disciples Are Made, the Baptism of Christ and the Apostles in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century***

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century, teaching and baptism are the means by which disciples were made. In Matt 28:19-20, Jesus said:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Jesus specifically taught that baptizing and teaching made disciples. There is no other way. In Acts 2, when Peter and the other apostles taught on the Day of Pentecost, the result was that the people were baptized and made disciples. This teaching, baptism, and making disciples come to fulfillment in Acts 2:40-47:

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 **Those who accepted his message were**

**baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.**

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. **And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.** [Emphasis added]

By this same process, the Lord added them to the church. Paul wrote in 1 Cor 12:13, "13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." The body into which we are baptized is the church, according to Eph 1:22-23:

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

Discipleship and church membership go hand in hand in 1<sup>st</sup> century and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century according to the teaching of Christ and the apostles.

### **Conclusion**

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, baptism was central to the teaching of Jesus and the apostles. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these teachings have been completely ignored or perverted to meet the requirements of the teaching of men. To so ignore and pervert the gospel leaves one open to the most severe of penalties. Paul wrote in Gal 1:6-8:

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

If one in the 21<sup>st</sup> century wants to be in Christ, it will require the same kind of baptism as that practiced in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. In Gal 3:26-27, Paul wrote, "26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

### **Study Questions from the Scriptures**

1. Matt 3:16-17: Jesus was baptized, then what? What did God say about this?
2. John 3:22-23: What were they doing in the Aenon? Why did they pick this place?
3. Acts 8:38-40: Into what did Philip and the eunuch go down? What happened there? What did they come up out of?
4. Rom 6:3-4: Into what two things are we baptized? Why are we baptized into his death?
5. Col 2:12: How is baptism a death and resurrection?
6. Mark 16:16: What did the Lord command in order for us to be saved?
7. Luke 24:46-47: What was going to be preached to all nations beginning in Jerusalem?

8. Acts 2:38: What did Peter say was needed for us to receive the forgiveness of sins?
9. Acts 22:16: What was Paul told to do?
10. Acts 4:12: In whose name are we saved?
11. 1 Peter 3:21: What does now save us?
12. Matt 28:19-20: According to Jesus, how are disciples made? What are they taught to do?
13. Acts 2:40-47: What happened to those who accepted the message? To what were they added? What was happening to those who were added to their number?
14. 1 Cor 12:13: How do we get into one body?
15. Eph 1:22-23: What is another name for the body?
16. Gal 1:6-8: What happens to those who preach another gospel?