

If a person is baptized by a woman, is it valid according to scripture?

In order to answer this question, we will consider two issues. First, does the Bible place limitation on women? Second, do these limitations prohibit baptism of a man by a woman?

The New Testament does place limitations on Christian women in their relationship to Christian men. In 1 Tim 2:11-12, Paul taught, "11 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent." He also taught in 1 Cor 14:33-35:

As in all the congregations of the saints, 34 women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. 35 If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

It is clear that woman cannot teach nor have authority over a man. Baptism does not require the baptizer to speak, teach, or have authority over the one baptized. From the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, the verb form used is passive. Passive verbs are used when the actor of the sentence is unimportant. Beginning with the baptism of Jesus Matt 3:13-17:

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan **to be baptized** by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need **to be baptized** by you, and do you come to me?"

15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

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."

In this passage, baptism is used three times and it is always in the passive voice – the actor is unimportant.

This same passive voice was used when the Lord gave the great commission. Mark 16:15-17 teaches, "15 He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and **is baptized** will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.'"

In Acts 2 when they ask what to do to be saved, they were told in Acts 2:38 in the passive voice, "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.

When the apostle Paul was baptized, the passive form is also used in Acts 22:16, "16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, **be baptized** and wash your sins away, calling on his name."

In Acts 16:31-34 where the Philippian jailor received the word, the text uses the same form of baptism:

31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

There would be no violation of scripture if a woman were to baptize a man, since the baptizer is irrelevant.

We might also note that it is not necessary to have a preacher or priest to do the baptism to make it "official."