

Title: Baptism: What it is and is not
Text: Mark 16: 15
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**Mark 16: 15: And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.
16: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.**

Title and subject: Baptism: What it is and is not

Some of you have asked about believer's baptism. I do not take your questions lightly because I do not take this ordinance of God lightly.

In fact, when it comes to baptizing someone I want to be very careful. I am fearful of playing any part in giving any sinner a false hope of salvation. I understand something of what Paul meant when he said,

1 Corinthians 1: 17: For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Paul had baptized some—he just said that. But Paul was not sent to try to coerce sinners into being baptized. He said,

1 Corinthians 2: 4: And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Since the fall of Adam—and the fall of all men in him—we are born with a depraved nature. A nature that seeks some work—some act—whereby we can come to God trusting in something we have done.

Therefore, it is no great feat to talk a sinner into doing something—as long as you make that “something” in which the sinner can at least partly boast and take credit. The Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisee's saying,

Matthew 23: 15: Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

There is nothing more damning than for a sinner to imagine that by some act—such as baptism—that he has earned salvation.

So let me begin by stating this firmly and clearly—baptism is not salvation. Baptism never saved anyone. Every believer is saved by the grace of God by Christ through faith. Salvation is of the Lord. Baptism is an act of obedience to our Lord whereby we are confessing our salvation is accomplished by Christ. There are some necessary things that come before baptism.

**Mark 16: 15: And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature
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Before baptism God gives life, faith and repentance and this work of God is done through the preaching of the gospel—the TRUTH of Christ and him crucified.

There is “another jesus” being preached in this world. “Another” who accomplished nothing but is utterly dependent upon the sinner by their decision, by their act of faith, by their being baptized, to make his work a success. That is not the Lord Jesus Christ who I proclaim to you. That is “not another gospel” but a deception—anything that makes salvation to hinge upon something done by the sinner is not true. That is not another baptism—anyone who has been baptized to make that ‘little jesus’ blood to have some saving efficacy has not truly been called of God and not truly been baptized—that is free will, works religion.

Salvation is of the Lord—that is the truth.

Romans 10: 14: How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

- Baptism is not salvation
- Baptism does not make Christ’s blood effectual, any more than faith does
- Baptism is not the putting away of our sin—Christ by himself purged our sins
- Baptism is not how we are born again, dedicated or rededicated or anything of that nature

Divisions: 1) Baptism is the public confession of our sin; 2) Baptism is the public confession that we believe Christ accomplished our salvation; 3) Baptism is a public avowed commitment to Christ

I. BAPTISM IS A PUBLIC CONFESSION THAT ALL I AM IS A SINNER.

Matthew 3: 5: Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, 6: And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

The gospel declares “all flesh is grass”. The Spirit of God first convinces us that “in my flesh dwells no good thing.”—only sin. We are confessing that we are such sinners that the Spirit of God had to first create life in us

Note: We are not confessing that by being baptized we are regenerating ourselves—we do not preach “baptismal regeneration.” Baptism is not even a picture of regeneration—circumcision is the old testament picture of regeneration.

In water-baptism the believer confesses that we are so sinful, that it is through the gospel that the Holy Spirit has entered into us and given us life where there was no life before.

John 3: 3: Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Confessing our sin, we agree with Christ.

John 6: 63: It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

We are confessing that we did not choose God, he chose us and revealed Christ in us by his Spirit through his gospel, our flesh profited nothing in the matter.

John 5: 40: And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

John 6: 44: No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Illustration: When Paul was born of Christ and converted, the Lord sent Ananias to him with this gospel:

Acts 22: 14: And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

No merit in us—we are confessing:

2 Thessalonians 2: 13: But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In baptism, we are confessing our sin, saying that we have repented and believed on Christ because our Prince and Savior has given us repentance and forgiveness of sin freely by his grace.

Acts 5: 31: Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

The Spirit of God convinces us of sin, makes us truly mourn our sin. Then we confess to God we are sinners and cease boasting to men that there is anything that commends us to God or anything we have done to bring ourselves to God. We are confessing that we are sinners who now believe by his grace and the gift of faith that he has given.

Ephesians 2: 8: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

Application: In the ordinance of water-baptism itself, just as we confess to God and no longer boast before men, we are confessing publicly that we are sinners and that life and repentance and faith and forgiveness of sin is the gift the triune God to us in Christ by his grace. So, first, none but those who truly acknowledge their sin are to be admitted to this ordinance of baptism.

II. WATER-BAPTISM IS THE PUBLIC CONFESSION THAT WE BELIEVE OUR SALVATION IS IN CHRIST BY HIS FINISHED WORK FOR US. (Romans 6)

Romans 6: 3: Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4: Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death:

First, we confess by going down into the watery grave that we were crucified and died when Christ died. Just as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners—Adam; so by the obedience of one—Christ—shall many be made righteous. Christ obeyed the Father from his birth unto his death—as the representative of his people—to fulfill all righteousness for us. We are confessing in baptism that by the obedience of one we are made righteous. Christ was that spotless Lamb of God, just and perfect, therefore he was fit to have the sins of his people laid upon him. And with our transgressions and iniquities on him, for the transgressions of God's people, he was justly stricken by God. This is the solemn awe put into our hearts when we behold Christ by faith. Our Lord spoke of what he endured on the cross as a baptism.

Luke 12: 50: But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

Note: Christ called it baptism because baptism means immersion. Christ was immersed in the righteous judgment of God. Listen to scripture:

Psalm 69: 1: «To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, *A Psalm of David.*» Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto *my* soul. 2 I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.

Psalm 18: 4: The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

Lamentations 3: 54: Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off.

Illustration: The Ark in Noah's day

God broke up the waterspouts of the deep and from above and the flood of judgment immersed the ark as a picture of the fury of judgment immersing Christ.

Psalm 42: 7: Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

Christ body was at last buried in a tomb. We are confessing in water-baptism that we were spiritually in Christ when he was baptized unto death and buried in him.

Romans 6: 3: Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Spiritually, truly, all God's elect were in Christ: when he lived we lived, when he was immersed, even unto death, so were we, when he was buried we were buried.

Note: We do not sprinkle or pour because neither is baptism—the word means immersion. Only the complete immersion down into the water truly shows the immersion, the death and the burial our Savior endured as our Substitute. Nor are we declaring that we are washing away our sins or remitting our sins—when Peter said, to be baptized “for the remission of sins” he was saying baptism is a public declaration that we believe our sins have been put away by Christ.

We are confessing that we believe that by his death he accomplished the purging of our sins by himself.

Romans 6: 6: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7: For he that is dead is freed from sin. (justified)

Illustration: Noah in the Ark—in the ark Noah and those with him died, even as those outside the ark. The difference was they were in the ark. God's elect were in Christ when he died--**v4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death:**

Secondly, when we come up out of that watery-grave we are confessing publicly that we believe when Christ arose from the grave to heaven's glory we arose in him.

Romans 6: 4: 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. 5: For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7: For he that is dead is freed from sin.

- Our old man is crucified
- The body of sin destroyed
- We are freed from sin—justified
- We are raised, alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord

Romans 8: 1: There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Review: By water baptism: 1) We confess our sin; 2) We confess we lived, died, were buried, and rose in Christ.

III. IN BELIEVERS BAPTISM WE CONFESS WE ARE COMMITTED TO CHRIST WALKING IN NEWNESS OF LIFE.

Romans 6: 8: Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10: For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 12: Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13: Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. We have this assurance 14: For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Baptism is our public avowed commitment to Christ, to his gospel and to our brethren, to walk with Christ, as a resurrected people, in the newness of life.

Galatians 2: 20; I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Galatians 3:27: For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

2 Corinthians 5: 17: Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Galatians 6: 14: But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. 15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. 16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Peter calls it “the answer of a good conscience toward God” (1 Pet 3: 21)—

1 Peter 2: 13: And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? 14: But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: 16: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. 17: For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. 18: For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust,

that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit...[it was pictured by the ark Noah entered] 21: 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: 22: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. 3: 1 : Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; 2 That he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

Mark 16: 15: And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. Let's think about what we just heard: Water baptism is the public confession that I believe the gospel of Christ in my heart.

Believing the gospel, in believers baptism I confess my sin. I am nothing but sin but the Spirit has given me life, repentance and faith—it is all of him.

Believing the gospel, in believers baptism I confess Christ is all my salvation—in him I died to sin, was buried and am risen to newness of life

Believing the gospel, in believers baptism I confess I am committed to Christ, his people, his gospel in newness of life

One Last word:

Do not be baptized simply because you never have and you feel guilty that you should be or because someone else is being baptized.

Do not be baptized to please someone else—faith is personal, confessing Christ in believers baptism must be because you believe on Christ, not because someone forces you to--whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Listen to Philipp and the Ethiopian eunuch

Acts 8: 36: And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37: And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38: 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.

But if God has called you and believe that all your salvation is the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ then confess him in believers baptism, it is the Lord's will that we do so. Ananias said to Paul, "Why tarriest thou?"

Luke 12: 8: Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: 9: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

Amen!