

# THE DOCTRINE OF BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

## CHAPTER 8

In this chapter we are looking at Believer's Baptism. One of the first steps that a new Christian should take as he begins to grow in the grace of God is to join a local church by being Scripturally baptized. Baptism does not add to one's salvation, but is an act of obedience as a child of God. The Lord gave to the local church two ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In this chapter we will study the first ordinance which is BELIEVER'S BAPTISM. Before we finish this chapter you will understand why I am calling it Believer's Baptism. In the Great Commission, Matthew 28:19, the resurrected Lord commanded the disciples to, "***Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST...***"

We will study the following six questions and find the answers to them in the Word of God.

1. What is the *Meaning of Baptism?*
2. What is the *Method of Baptism?*
3. What is the *Message of Baptism?*
4. Who is *Material for Baptism?*
5. Who is to *Minister the Baptism?*
6. What is the *Motive for Baptism?*

### I. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

The word baptize comes to us from the Latin word "*baptizo*" which means to immerse, to bury, or to put under. There are two types of baptism which are taught in the Scriptures. The first one is *Spirit Baptism*. This takes place when God saves a person. The very moment that you were saved, the Holy Spirit baptized you into the body of Christ, I Corinthians 12:13.

The second type of baptism taught in the Word of God is *Water Baptism*. This is the act of baptizing someone in water. *Water baptism is an outward expression of the inward experience*. Just as the Holy Spirit baptized you into the body of Christ when you were saved, the Pastor of the local church baptizes you into the fellowship and membership of that local church body. We will study water baptism in this chapter.

### II. WHAT IS THE METHOD OF BAPTISM?

Now that we have learned the meaning of baptism, it will be easy for us to understand the proper method of baptism. Since baptism means to bury or to put under, we know then that one could not be Scripturally baptized by sprinkling or pouring water on them. The only way one could be Scripturally baptized is by immersing, burying, or putting one completely under the water. When a person dies you do not sprinkle a little dirt on them. You dig a grave, put them in it, and cover them up with dirt. Scriptural baptism is putting one completely under the water.

There are some good examples of baptism in the Word of God; such as John the Baptist baptizing Jesus in Matthew 3:13-17 and Philip baptizing the eunuch from Ethiopia in Acts 8:37. In each of these instances, both men went into the water for the baptism. There is not one single example in the Bible of sprinkling or pouring on water for baptism. The Scriptural method of baptism is for someone who has been authorized by the local church to administer baptism. As we will study later, this **MUST** be done only by the authority of the local church.

### **III. WHAT IS THE MESSAGE OF BAPTISM?**

The primary message of baptism is identification. Baptism identifies the Christian with two things, Christ and the local church. We are told in Romans 6:4-5, the act of baptism identifies us with Christ in His burial and resurrection. Being put under the water is a picture of being buried with Christ and the raising up out of the water is a picture of our being resurrected with Christ. The Word of God says in 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.”*** God enables those who are saved to live such a different lifestyle that the world will see they are a new creature in Christ, II Corinthians 5:17.

Not only does our baptism identify us with the Lord Jesus Christ, but it also identifies us with the local church. At the moment you were saved the Holy Spirit baptized you into the body of Christ, and the Pastor baptizes into the local church body. The local New Testament Church is the only institution on the earth that requires a person to be baptized to become a member of it. In baptism you are giving testimony that you have now separated yourself from the world and have joined up with God’s people at the church.

### **IV. WHO IS MATERIAL FOR BAPTISM?**

There are many places in the Scriptures that teach us both by exhortation and example that only those who profess a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are qualified material for baptism. This is clearly taught in Acts 8:35-37. Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian Eunuch in verse 35, and as they came to some water in verse 36, the eunuch asked Philip to baptize him. Philip’s reply to him in verse 37 was, ***“If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.”*** And he answered and said, ***“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”*** Here we find that the eunuch professed a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ before he was baptized.

Again in Acts 16:23-34, the Philippian jailer and all his family were baptized, but only after that they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Notice verse 34 says, ***“Believing in God with all his house.”***

From the above Scriptures we learn two very important truths. First, we learn that the Bible does not teach the baptism of babies or small children since they are not believers. Second we learn that once a person becomes a believer, he should then unite with a local church and follow the Lord in believer’s baptism. From this short simple study we learn that neither the teaching of Pedo-baptism (baptizing babies), nor Baptismal-Regeneration (being saved by

water baptism) are taught anywhere in the Scriptures, but rather, these teachings are contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures. Those who teach baptismal regeneration lean heavily on Mark 16:15 for their proof text. ***“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*** A careful study of this verse reveals that it is the unbeliever who is damned, not the unbaptized.

## V. WHO IS TO MINISTER THE BAPTISM?

In the Great Commission, given in Matthew 28:19-20, our resurrected Lord gave the disciples both the authority and the responsibility for the ministry of baptism. This is not given to them individually but collectively. Therefore, both the authority and the responsibility of baptizing are laid upon the local church. This is the only institution to which the Lord has given this authority and responsibility. Oftentimes it is made to look like the young Christian has the responsibility to make his own choice about baptism, but this is not the teaching of the Word of God. The resurrected Lord gave that responsibility to the local church. In fact, in the same statement that the Lord commissioned the church to evangelize the sinners, He commands the church to baptize those who are saved.

We have already studied about the church, but let me just insert here once again, the Lord gave only two ordinances to the local church: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. He gave them to the church and no one else. Therefore we must conclude that no individual, organization, or institution besides the local church has the Scriptural authority to baptize anyone. When a church calls a man to be its pastor, it invests in him both the authority and the responsibility to act on behalf of the church and baptize those who are saved by the grace of God.

## VI. WHAT IS THE MOTIVE FOR BAPTISM?

Before we conclude our study on baptism there is one more question that we need to answer. What is the motive or purpose of baptism? Why should a believer be baptized after he is saved since baptism is not a part of his salvation? I will give you two reasons here. First, the *Example of the Saviour* teaches us that we should be baptized. As you study the scriptures, you will discover that before Jesus began any part of His earthly ministry He was first baptized. To follow His example, we too then must do the same.

Second, the *Exhortations of the Scripture* teaches us that we should be baptized. In I Peter 3:21, the Word of God teaches that baptism is ***“the answer of a good conscience toward God.”*** Any person who is saved and will not follow the Lord in believer’s baptism will experience a guilty conscience before God. This is not what a Christian wants, so he will obey the Lord in the matter of baptism if he has really been saved. I know it may be a hard statement, but I seriously doubt anyone’s testimony of salvation if they refuse to follow the Lord in believer’s baptism.

If you are saved, and have not been Scripturally baptized, you should be as soon as you possibly can. Baptism is basically the first step of obedience for a new Christian. If you will not be obedient in the matter of baptism you will have a problem with obedience in other matters also.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Did you read every passage of Scripture that is mentioned in this chapter? If you did not, do so right now.
2. What are the two types of baptism which are mentioned in the Scriptures?
  - a.
  - b.
3. What does the word baptize mean?
4. Name the two things that baptism identify a person with.
  - a.
  - b.
5. Who is a candidate for baptism?
6. Who has the authority to baptize?
7. Is it right Scripturally to baptize babies? Explain why.
8. Is it right to sprinkle someone for baptism? Explain why.
9. Give two reasons that every believer should be baptized.
  - a.
  - b.
10. What are the two ordinances given to the local church?
  - a.
  - b.

*Be sure to study these questions until you know them well before you go to the next chapter.*