

How Should I Be Baptized?

- **Does the Mode or Formula Really Make any Difference?**

Does it make any difference what the Bible says about water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ? Opinions are plentiful. Almost everyone has some idea to contribute when a discussion of Christian baptism arises. Some argue pro and some argue con on the questions of whether candidates should be sprinkled or immersed and whether they should be baptized in the titles Father, Son, and Holy Ghost or in the name of Jesus Christ. Quite a few have recently raised the question, "Does it really make any difference?"

Our opinions are actually worthless; one person's idea is as good as another's. The only criterion in determining the truth is God's Word-the Bible. What does it have to say about the mode and formula for Christian baptism?

- **The Importance of Baptism**

Christian baptism has its roots in Jewish practice during the pre-Christian era. Converts to Judaism were baptized to express their faith in Jehovah God. When John the Baptist came upon the scene to prepare the hearts of the Jews to receive their Messiah, he demanded repentance, confession of sin, and baptism in water. He declared, "I needed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me... shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matthew 3:11).

Jesus Himself was baptized of Jon (Matthew 3:16). After this, He and His disciples baptized large numbers of believers (John 3:22;4:1-2). He included baptism as a vital part of the inauguration of a convert into the church He established (Mark 16:16).

After His resurrection, He instructed His apostles to "Go... teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). Just before His ascension, He met with His apostles and "opened... their understanding, that they might understand the scripture, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem' (Luke 24:45-47).

Therefore, the responsibility of continuing His ministry, propagating the gospel, and establishing and extending the New Testament church fell upon the relatively few disciples. Having their understanding opened to the will of God regarding the plan of redemption, they were filled with the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, which further enlightened their minds. When a curious multitude gathered to witness this historic event in Jerusalem, Peter preached a sermon that brought them under deep conviction for their sins. They asked the apostles, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

Peter's answer was unmistakably plain: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Through the spiritual understanding that Peter had received, he was able to comprehend that the new birth consisted of water and Spirit baptism (John 3:5), that God had chosen the combination of the name and the water for remission of sins, and that the Lord intended for His name to be called in the act of baptism.

Likewise, Ananias instructed Paul, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

- **The Mode of Baptism**

The form or mode of water baptism is undeniably immersion. The very term baptize has for its root the Greek word baptizo, which means "to dip, plunge, submerge, immerse." All scriptural incidents of baptism support this position. Let us note these three: (John also was baptizing in Aenon... because there was much water there" (John 3:23). When Jesus was baptized by John, He "went up straightway out of the water, ... and he baptized him" (Acts 8:38).

- **The Formula for Baptism**

The Bible gives us specific instructions of deep spiritual significance for the proper administration of water baptism, and God means for everyone to comply with them.

The Apostle Paul commanded, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17). Certainly this instruction applies to water baptism.

The apostles knew the exact meaning of all the teaching of Jesus concerning baptism and carried them out explicitly. They understood that the singular name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost—the name that reveals the fulness of the Godhead—is Jesus. (See Matthew 1:21; John 5:43; 14:26; Colossians 2:9). On every occasion they used, or commanded the use of, the name of Jesus Christ in the baptismal formula. (See Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16). It is significant that they plainly prescribed His name in the baptismal ceremony. The name Jesus identifies and validates the baptism just as the proper name signed to a check makes it valid.

We cannot leave to mere chance or speculation the essentials of Christian baptism, but we must heed Acts 4:12: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

True, some denominations have traditionally sprinkled instead of immersing and have mistakenly substituted the use of the titles Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for the use of the actual name Jesus. But those who are sincere will value truth above tradition and will obey the teaching of the gospel.

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."

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