

January 28, 2023

This is in response to the “Buried Alive?” pamphlet. Baptism has been and will continue to be one of the most controversial subjects of the Bible. It is an ordinance which was practiced in the Levitical Law under the Old Testament and has taken on a different significance under the New. In Matthew 3:15 Jesus stated that it is “to fulfill all righteousness”. Adam Clarke translated that phrase; “to fulfill every righteous ordinance”. What ordinance would Jesus have been speaking about?

Since Aaron, as O.T. high priest (*along with his sons and those who replaced them*), was commanded by Moses to be initiated into the priesthood to serve in that office via the immersion process (*ordinance- Lev 16:4*), it was necessary for Christ to obey such (*He lived under the O.T. Law which He had not yet ‘fulfilled’- Lk 24:44*) in order to become our High Priest (*Heb 2:17; 5:5*) under the New Covenant, which He did “to fulfill every righteous ordinance” (*Thayer: “to perform completely whatever is right”- see Heb 7:27; 9:12; 10:10*); as the ‘example’, per se, that we are to follow via baptism into the N.T. priesthood (*Heb 7:12*). Our baptism is to remove sin (*1 Pet 3:21*) and thus “qualify” us (*Col 1:12*) to enter into the priesthood (*Col 1:13*), whereas His (*Who “knew no sin” -2 Cor 5:21, as the “Lamb without spot”- 1 Pet 1:19*) was as an initiation into the office as our High Priest **whereby that process could be completed** (*Him becoming our Mediator as the O.T. high priest was to Israel*) via His fulfilling “every righteous ordinance”. As people today are fulfilling this ordinance according to the word of God, we become “priests unto God (*Christ*) and His Father” (*Rev 1:6*).

Buried Alive: Lesson 14

1. How important is baptism?

According to Jn 3:5 and Gal 3:27, it truly is necessary for the penitent, as part of the process of being saved, to be Biblically immersed for the forgiveness of sin. But the phrase “according to Jesus, all Christians need to be baptized” seems a bit misleading since a person is not a Christian **until** they are baptized in which only, post baptism, can a “re-birth” be realized (*Jn 3:5*). They can be a student, follower or even a disciple of Christ but they are still not to be considered a Christian until they have died with Him in baptism (*Rom 6:3-6*). Baptism is not a “public demonstration” that confirms their belief in Christ just as the eunuch’s baptism (*Act 8:36-39*) was not public and neither was the Philippian jailor’s “public” (*Act 16:33*). (*And there are other examples.*) If “salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ”, what actually does the word “faith” stand for? It is the Greek (*4102*) word *pistis* which means to have “*reliance* upon Christ for salvation”. Just having faith doesn’t necessarily mean a person has salvation unless they’ve done what Jesus said is required to be saved (*Mk 16:16*). And just calling baptism “an integral part of the Christian experience” is only watering down the true meaning and importance of Biblical immersion.

2. What was one of the last instructions that Jesus gave to His disciples?

True, one of His last instructions to His disciples was the Great Commission in Mat 28:19.

3. How many methods of baptism are recommended in the Bible?

True, there is only one Biblical method of baptism and that is immersion. But Eph 4:5 is speaking of immersion in the context where two types of baptism were under discussion at that time; Holy Spirit baptism (*Act 2:4; 10:44*) and immersion in water. The “one baptism” that exists today, as it has post apostolic, is Biblical immersion in water for the remission of sin (*1 Pet 3:20, 21*).

4. How was Jesus baptized?

“How” Jesus was baptized isn’t as important as for what reason He was. (*See notes above for the reason He was immersed.*)

5. Are there other clear examples of baptism in the Bible?

True, Act 8:38, 39 is a go-to passage to show how immersion is the biblical method prescribed and not what Webster has defined it in modernity.

6. What does the symbol of water represent?

Speaking of what water symbolizes many will say how “water has nothing to do with salvation and that only the blood of Christ can cleanse us from our sin”. (*Any statement that is half true is still to be taken as false since it is also half lie.*) True, water represents cleansing according to Eze 36:25, Isa 1:16 and Jer 4:14. The scriptures command water for cleansing and thus for baptism. It is also one of the “three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood” (*1 Jn 5:6-8*). The water represents Christ’s baptism which marks the beginning of His ministry. The blood represents His sacrifice at the end of it on earth and the Spirit bore “witness, because the Spirit is truth”. When we think of doing laundry, for instance, what two agents are necessary in order for the clothes to be made clean? Water, which is the activating agent and detergent, being the cleansing agent, one without the other will not successfully clean your laundry. Now think of the blood of Christ as being the cleansing agent but in order for it to be activated by water (*the activating agent*) obedience to the ordinance of baptism is necessary. The one without the other will not remove sin in order to grant “a good conscience toward God” (*1 Pet 3:21*).

7. What does the practice of baptism itself symbolize?

According to the statements following the quote of Rom 6:4 I would like to rephrase those three paragraphs in order for them to, again, express the truth as to what baptism represents. Changes in sentencing are marked by [and].

“Baptism [represents] the washing away of the old life of sin and the beginning of a new life in Jesus Christ. Baptism is the [obedient act] by which believers [share] Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection through death to self and rebirth to a new life.”

“Just as Jesus died, was buried, and then was resurrected, so the [old self] dies to the old life of sin, is buried beneath the water in baptism, and then rises with a new life [sealed] by the Holy Spirit.” [Eph 1:13]

“[Obedience to the ordinance of baptism] is at the heart of the meaning and importance of baptism. The person who is baptized first chooses to lay down the life of sin, is buried in the waters of baptism, and is raised out of the water to live a new life in Jesus.”

8. Whose name do people take when they are baptized?

True, Gal 3:27 speaks of putting Christ on in baptism as a garment. It is interesting that this mirrors what the Levites did in their initiation process into the priesthood. Before they could don their priestly garments they had to be immersed in the laver according to Lev 16:4. In 1 Pet 3:21 Peter showed the difference between the Old Testament baptism as a “putting away the filth of the flesh” and the New as being “the answer of a good conscience toward God”.

9. Does it really matter which form of baptism is used?

True, Mk 16:16 shows the necessity of baptism but it does use the conjunction “and”. So to “believe” **and** be “baptized” cannot be separated in order to “be saved”. But to say “baptism is a vital part of the Christian experience” is to imply that it really isn’t an absolute necessity. True, “salvation comes by grace (*without which no one can be saved*) through faith (*a reliance on Jesus to save*) in Jesus Christ”. “Grace” and “faith” are only pieces of the synecdoche pie (*which consists of “calling on- Act 2:21; “grace”- Act 15:11; along with “faith”- Eph 2:8; “belief”- Act 16:31; “confession”- Rom 10:9; etc.*). Each has been used in scripture to signify the whole pie is meant even though none of them states anything about baptism. But baptism **is** vital in order to be saved (*Mk 16:16; 1 Pet 3:21*).

10. What accompanies water baptism?

According to Jn 3:5, baptism is **absolutely** necessary in order to “enter the kingdom of God (*the church*)”. But before we get the idea that this passage promotes “water baptism [being] accompanied by the baptism of the Holy Spirit” we need to understand what the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” entails. As discussed earlier, there is only “one baptism” according to Eph 4:5. Therefore, the baptism of the Holy Spirit needs to be understood in its correct context. The only recorded cases of Holy Spirit baptism are given in Acts 2 and 10. Those first to be baptized in this manner were the apostles on Pentecost (*Act 2:4*). It was so that they would possess all “the signs of an apostle” (*2 Cor 12:12*) with them being the only ones with the ability to transfer those signs to others (*Act 8:18*). In Acts 10 we find the only other example of Holy Spirit baptism. Cornelius and his household were immersed in the Holy Spirit as a sign to Peter that the Gentiles would also be accepted into the church since “God is no respecter of persons” (*v. 34*). Cornelius and all that were with him received only the gift of speaking in foreign languages they had not previously understood as a sign to Peter (*Act 11:17*) since as of that time Peter understood that it was “an unlawful thing for a man that [was] a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation (*i.e., Gentile*)” (*v. 28*). According to Act 2:38 though those who have been scripturally immersed **do** receive the Holy Spirit but only as a “seal” and “guarantee” (*2 Cor 1:22; 5:5*) and not as a miraculous immersion into Him. To be baptized in the Holy Spirit was a miraculous occurrence but was no longer valid once it served its purpose.

The age of miracles had its purpose in the establishment of the infant church (*Eph 4*) but once the completed canonized word came, the miraculous ceased (*1 Cor 13:10*). (*In Jn 16:8, 13 Jesus was speaking to His disciples/apostles who would, on Pentecost, receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and be guided by inspiration through Him in order “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ”- Eph 4:12. Those passages have nothing to do with us presently [except for out “learning”- Rom 15:4] since we have the written word which they did not.*)

11. Does baptism have anything to do with joining a church?

Yes, according to *Act 2:41, 47* along with *1 Cor 12:13* these passages show how “we automatically become part of His body, the church”. Remember there is only one body (*1 Cor 12:13, 25; Eph 2:16; 4:4; Col 3:15*).

12. Is rebaptism ever appropriate?

According to *Act 19:2-5* if a person has been baptized but not scripturally and they realize it, then yes they need to be baptized correctly (*not that it means being “re-baptized” since the prefix “re” has to do with doing the same thing over again; whether it means repeating a mistake or not*). Under “John’s baptism” Holy Spirit was not given for the purposes listed above (*2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:13*) but only when immersed “in the name of Jesus Christ” (*Act 2:38*). It was only “when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied” (*Act 19:6*). They had already received the “gift of the Holy Spirit” when they were immersed “in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of [their] sins” (*Act 2:38*). That was not a miraculous indwelling until Paul laid his hands on them as only an apostle could in order to receive such gifts. The same thing happened when Phillip went to Samaria (*Act 8:12-17*). But if a person has been baptized into Christ scripturally and falls away there is no need to be “re-baptized” since all that’s necessary is repentance (*Lk 17:3*). Baptism is a “betrothal” and a marriage since the church is the “bride” of Christ (*2 Cor 11:2*) and His wife once the “marriage supper of the Lamb” (*Rev 19:9*) has taken place (*Eph 5:27*).

13. When the Apostle Paul was tempted to put off his baptism for a later time, what advice did he receive?

True, according to *Act 22:16*, once a person understands the importance of baptism it becomes essential to be immersed immediately or as soon as possible.

14. How does God feel when a person is baptized?

True, not only is God pleased that one of His creation has been added to His Son’s kingdom (*Col 1:13*), all of Heaven rejoice “over one sinner who repents” (*Lk 15:7*). Remember, repenting is only one piece of the pie that represents the whole pie as was discussed in point 9.

“But What About...?”

The thief on the cross: Since baptism is considered a burial with Christ and Jesus had not yet, at that point, even died, the Old Testament Law was still in effect. It had not yet been nailed to His cross at that point (*Col 2:14*). Under the New Testament though, all need to be scripturally baptized in order to be saved.

The statement “a person is not saved by baptism” is false according to 1 Pet 3:21 where Peter states according to those “saved by water” in Noah’s day, today “baptism now saves you”; it puts the new babe in Christ into a covenant relationship with God by adding him/her to His church. Again, it is only a piece of the whole salvation pie that saves. If you are given a slice of apple pie, wouldn’t that determine in your mind what the rest of the pie consisted of? A person needs to consume the whole pie then in order to be saved.

Infant baptism: True, infant baptism is unscriptural. But to make the statement “Rather than being baptized, infants should be dedicated to God by their parents, as Jesus was (*Lk 2:21-39*)” is adding to scripture where God has not instructed. Joseph and Mary lived under the Old Testament Law which required a consecration of “all the firstborn. Whatever is first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is Mine” (*Ex 13:2*). Since they couldn’t “afford a lamb” the sacrificial offering required “two turtledoves or two pigeons” (*Lev 12:8*) which they brought (*Lk 2:24*) “on the eighth day” (*Lev 15:14, 29; Num 6:10*). Therefore, a “dedication” of infants today is unscriptural.

As people who study context, we need to make every effort to do so in studying these lessons.

In Him,
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