

DOES BAPTISM WASH AWAY SIN?

The word BAPTISM is derived from the Greek word baptizo which means immersion or dipping in water.

Baptism is a vital requirement in the life of a true Christian. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved", said Jesus Christ, "but he that believeth not shall be damned." – Mark 16:16.

Jesus commanded his apostles: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Spirit)." – Matthew 28:19

Immersion

A Christian is baptized when he or she is immersed or dipped in water in the name of the Father (JEHOVAH), the Son (Jesus Christ) through the Holy Spirit, which is, the power of the Father. It is therefore wrong to administer baptism by pouring or sprinkling of water as some people do.

All the instances of baptism known in the Bible were of immersion. There was never an occasion anyone for any reason was baptized by sprinkling or pouring of water.

John the Baptist who started baptism never poured water on anybody, and he always administered it in a place where there was enough water for people to be immersed. (John 3:23) He baptized Jesus Christ in a river at Jordan. – Matthew 3:13-17.

It is this example of Jesus Christ, the Founder of Christianity, his disciples must follow. There was no unnecessary ceremony or formality: no one stood as "godfather" or "godmother" of Jesus, and money was not charged as some churches do.

It was the same example of Christ's baptism, which in fact, is the standard, Philip the Apostle followed when he baptized the Eunuch of Ethiopia. Both of them entered the water and the Eunuch was baptized. – Acts 8:26-39.

Many church denominations today believe that baptism washes away sin, and it is because of this wrong belief countless number of people all over the world (including infants) have been baptized by the priests.

The truth of the Bible which no one can gainsay is that baptism does not wash away sin. It is the blood of Jesus Christ through the truth that cleanses one from sin. Jesus said in his prayer to the Almighty Father concerning his apostles: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17) And in 1 John 1:7 It is written: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. See also Matthew 26:27,28; Revelation 1:5.

If the purpose of baptism is to wash away sins, why was Jesus Christ who was not a sinner baptized? (1 Peter 2:21,22; Hebrews 4:15) The fact that he who was without sin received baptism, gives the understanding that it has a different meaning in the context of the Scriptures.

Symbol

Baptism is an outward expression of one's conversion and vow or agreement to serve God by doing His will through Jesus Christ, by the power of God, all the days of one's life until death, but with the hope of resurrection. St. Peter said: "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 towards God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." – 1 Peter 3:21.

Without being dipped in water, the spiritual significance of baptism cannot be fulfilled. The water covering the person is a symbol of death, and being brought out of water denotes resurrection. The idea is that the person has agreed to submit to the will of God and serve Him faithfully till death (if it is God's will that he should die). Such ones who die have the belief or faith that he would be resurrected in due time as Christ was raised from the dead to the glory of God.

In the light of this understanding St. Paul said: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 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." – Romans 6:3-6; Colossians 2:12.

If one must be buried with Christ by baptism into death, how does sprinkling or pouring of water fulfil this? And how then is resurrection symbolized?

Should Infants be Baptised?

Some church groups hold that infants should be baptized. Some of them make reference to the statement of Jesus Christ in which he said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." – Mark 10:13,14.

This is a very misleading argument. Christ Jesus did not make the statement on the occasion of baptism nor did he by that instruct anyone to baptise children. He did not baptise children; he did not even baptize anyone but his disciples did. – John 4:1-3.

What happened was that the children who were brought before Christ were blessed by him. (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16) This is what the pastors and priests should do and not to baptise infants.

There is no single instance of a child that was baptised. Even Jesus Christ himself received baptism when he was about the age of thirty.

A person must repent of his sins, believe and accept Jesus Christ as of faith before he is baptised. And that was why when the Ethiopian eunuch asked for baptism, Philip answered: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." The eunuch then said: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." It was there and then the eunuch was baptized. – Acts 8:36-39.

Infants cannot fulfil these conditions: they are too “innocent” to repent, and have not the knowledge to believe in Christ or to accept the spiritual responsibilities baptism imposes on one.

It is clear that baptism does not wash away sin. If it does, there would have been no need for Jesus Christ to come and die for the sins of the whole world.

This is the truth, and we can do nothing against the truth but for it. – 2 Corinthians 13:8