

Line Upon Line

“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept: line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little...” *Isaiah 28:10*



Understanding Baptism

Doctrinal Statement:

The ceremony of water baptism is performed by immersion for the forgiveness of sins upon true repentance and acceptance of Christ's sacrifice. After this ceremony, the laying on of hands follows and one receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. Baptism symbolizes the renunciation of the past sinful way of life, the burial of the “old man” in a watery grave, and the emergence of a new Spirit-led man living with Christ's mind and following in His footsteps.

The New Testament places great emphasis upon the ceremony and symbolism of water baptism. It is a deeply meaningful initiatory rite referred to in Hebrew 6:1 as one of the foundational doctrines of Christian belief. John the Baptist is the one who introduced water baptism as a ceremony through which one outwardly demonstrates his inward attitude of repentance and his desire to submit to God.

Christ placed His stamp of approval upon John's baptism and set the example for us by undergoing the ritual Himself (Matthew 3:13-17). The Father likewise expressed His favor with Jesus' baptism by saying through an angel immediately afterward that Jesus was His beloved Son in whom He was “well pleased” (verse 17).

Jesus' disciples continued to baptize in a manner similar to John until the death and resurrection of their Master, when the

practice took a new and deeper significance.

(John's baptism did not make available the Holy Spirit. Later we have an example which shows the necessity of re-baptism in the name of Jesus for some who had undergone only the baptism of John—Acts 19:1-6).

In *Matthew 28:19-20*, Jesus commanded that the apostles go into all nations preaching the gospel and baptizing the disciples. They followed Christ's command and they themselves both stressed the importance of baptism and explained its meaning in their preaching and teaching.

The Command

Jesus Christ is our example to follow in all things. Not only is He our Savior, but He is our Lord, Master, soon-coming King, and the Captain of our Salvation. Therefore, we need to think in terms of following in His footsteps, walking as He walked. “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

Why did Jesus go to John and ask to be baptized? It was not for repentance of sin, because He never sinned. The statement “to fulfill all righteousness” means to accomplish what God gave Him to do. Jesus saw His baptism as furthering God's work (Matthew 3:13-15).

Jesus was baptized because He was

personally confessing the sin of the nation, as Nehemiah, Ezra, Moses, and Daniel had done. He was showing support for what John was doing, and He was inaugurating His own public ministry. Jesus, the perfect man, didn't need baptism for sin, but He accepted it in obedient service to the Father, and God showed His approval (Matthew 3:16-17).

After Jesus was resurrected, He gave instructions to His twelve apostles (Mark 16:15, 16). Notice the fate of those who do not believe and are not baptized. Therefore, it was Jesus Christ Himself that commands baptism. Please read Matthew's version of this command given by Jesus (Matthew 28:19, 20).

On the Day of Pentecost, when the New Testament church began, the apostle Peter gave an inspired sermon that pricked the hearts of the people (Acts 2:14-40). The people were so upset, they asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter then said unto them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

If we are to be saved from the death penalty of sin, we must repent and be baptized for the remission of those sins. Baptism symbolizes our belief in God and faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Also it is symbolic of putting to death the old sinning self by burying it under water.

It is easy to say that we repent and believe in Jesus Christ, but will we be obedient and willing to be immersed in water through baptism? Not only is baptism an act of our willingness to change our life, but it is also a test of our obedience. Water baptism, then, is a requisite towards the way of salvation.

Final Instructions

God has not gone far off somewhere. It should become clear to you as you study His Word, the Bible, that He is very near to you, and is very interested in your welfare and progress. The reason many prayers are not answered is that those who pray do not really understand or know the true God. They think of God as some far-off, vague, ethereal, undefinable Something. They do not think of God as a real personality who is actively sustaining the whole universe, which He created and maintained.

God is the active, law-giving Ruler of the universe. He reveals Himself in His Word, the Bible, and clearly shows us what kind of God He is. He tells us how we should worship Him. He informs us how we should obey Him. And He fulfills all His promises.

God is of paramount importance that we take His Word literally. It should be meaningful to each one of us in a personal way. God means what He says.

Jesus certainly understood this, He said, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). All of the apostles lived their lives and constantly taught and acted as if God's Word was literally their guide.

We constantly have choices to make. Will we choose to obey Jesus and live by every word of God (Matthew 4:4), or will we listen to the cacophony of different ideas of men?

If we expect to get results in our prayers, we must believe the God of the Bible. We must believe that it is truth, and be willing to allow the truth to guide our lives.

We must seek the true God by praying, studying His Word to learn His commandments, and acting on the revealed Word by putting it to use in our lives. In other words, we must believe the Bible. This is one of the keys to effective prayers.

Before beginning this lesson, have you prayed for God's guidance, asking Him to open your heart and mind to understand the message He has for you? Are you willing to accept correction through this lesson? Are you grateful to

God for His loving compassion for you? Have you found a quiet place for your Bible study? Do you have your Bible at hand and paper for your own personal notes? If so, you are ready!

Understanding Baptism

The biblical passage concerning water baptism and its importance is found in Acts 2:36-41. The apostle Peter gave an inspired sermon on the Day of Pentecost in which he convicted the hearts of his listeners for having put the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to death. Thousands heard that message and became filled with guilt and shame for their part in this act of treachery. Their spontaneous cry was, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (verse 37). A very honest question.

When people come to recognize, as this first-century group did, that they have been living contrary to the commandments of the Lord their God who created them, what should they do as individuals, and as a nation?

Peter's answer to them was, "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (verse 38).

Previous lessons have made clear that repentance and faith are necessary to attain salvation. The next step, as we are shown by Peter, is baptism.

Even though the Scriptures are quite clear about the method of baptism, there is much confusion in the world as to how baptism should be done. Some religious groups sprinkle, pour, immerse—but what does the Bible tell us about this commanded rite?

The word sprinkle occurs a number of times in the New Testament, but always in connection with the blood of Christ, and never to baptism. The word pouring also appears several times, but not in relation to baptism.

The word baptize is not an English word per se. When translating the New Testament from Greek to English the translators left this word untranslated. The Greek word is baptizo. The definition of the word baptize is "immerse". It means, "plunge into" or "put into". It does not mean, "sprinkle" or "pour". The Greek word for "sprinkle" is rantizo, and "pour" is cheo. Therefore, sprinkling and pouring are not forms of baptism. Immersion, being placed fully under water, is. Water baptism has great symbolic meaning, as this lesson will make clear.

Review

1. *The strongest statement for water baptism is found in Acts 2:38.*
2. *Many people ask what they should do to be saved.*
3. *Peter told several thousand people to "repent and be baptized."*
4. *There is confusion or outright disobedience in the manner in which baptism is done.*
5. *While the words sprinkle and pour are used in the New Testament they are never used in regard to baptism. Only the concept of immersion is.*

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite.

1 Peter 2:21; Mark 16:16, 16; Matthew 28: 19, 20; Acts 2:36-41; John 17:17; Matthew 4:4

Baptism by Immersion

The reason John the Baptist was baptizing in the Aenon River was the fact that baptizing requires "much water" (John 3:23). If John were only sprinkling or pouring, a river of water would not be necessary.

Jesus of course had no sins to repent of, but He allowed John to baptize Him, setting an example for us to follow (Matthew 3:13; 1 Peter 2:21).

The baptism of Jesus proves that He was fully immersed, for He "went up straightway out of the water". If sprinkling or pouring were used, He would not have come "up...out" of it (Matthew 3:16)!

In the book of Acts, when Philip baptized the eunuch, they both went into the water. If sprinkling or pouring were being used, Philip could have stood on the bank and leaned over to get the necessary water to sprinkle or pour.

These two examples show that the early New Testament church Jesus established practiced total immersion when baptizing (Acts 8:38; Matthew 28:19, 20).

Review

1. *Baptism requires much water.*
2. *Jesus was immersed, and came up out of the water.*
3. *Jesus also set an example for us to follow.*
4. *Philip had no need to go down into the water with the eunuch if mere sprinkling or pouring water were the custom.*

5. *The New Testament church practiced total immersion.*

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite.

John 3:23; Matthew 3:13-15; Acts 8:38; Matthew 28:19, 20

Meaning of Baptism

The act of baptism is symbolic, and we need to understand what it symbolizes. Water baptism has no magical power; however, God requires this simple physical act of obedience if we are to become His sons and daughters and receive His Holy Spirit.

Baptism is an outward ceremony or sign of an inward repentance. It shows forth one's willingness and desire to put away his or her old life and begin living a new life of obedience to God on a permanent basis.

The apostle Paul tells us that after Jesus was crucified for our sins, His dead body was buried, and then He rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4; Romans 8:11). Jesus was in the heart of the earth, "the grave," for three days and three nights, but then was made alive and given immortal life by God's Spirit (Matthew 12:38-40). His resurrection shows He triumphed over sin and death.

Baptism is symbolic of one's death, burial, and resurrection from the grave (Colossians 2:12, 13; Romans 6:3-13). Just as Jesus died for our sins and was buried, in like fashion, symbolically, our immersion in a watery grave pictures the death and burial of our old sinful life. So also as Jesus was resurrected in newness of life, our coming up out of the waters of baptism is symbolic of our rising out of the grave to live a new life of obedience to God. We are now free from the guilt of past sins and the death penalty those sins demanded.

At baptism we begin living as follower of Christ, surrendered to God. We walk in "newness of life." After baptism we consider ourselves as dead, so far as sin is concerned, but alive to God through His Son Jesus Christ (Romans 6:11).

Once we are baptized and receive the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ begins to live within us through His Spirit (Romans 8:9, 10; Colossians 1:27-29).

We now have the spiritual strength we need to yield ourselves to God and resist the influence of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Also God's Spirit furnishes us the faith and love of God to obey His

spiritual law (Romans 5:5; 13:10).

The apostle Paul gave us this beautiful statement: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I am live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Baptism requires a total surrender, which takes place after a heartfelt repentance and the recognition that we are worthy of death because of our sins.

Our willingness to humble ourselves and do what Jesus did in the ordinance of baptism is essential. "He that is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

Review

1. *Baptism is an outward sign of an inward repentance.*
2. *It demonstrates a desire to give up our old life and begin living a new life of obedience to God.*
3. *After three days and three nights in the grave, Jesus was made alive.*
4. *He triumphed over sin and death.*
5. *Being brought up out of the waters of baptism is symbolic of being brought out of the grave to live a new life of obedience.*
6. *We are free from the guilt of past sins and from the death penalty those sins have incurred.*
7. *God's Spirit provides the strength to resist sinful influences.*
8. *Baptism is an expression of our repentance from sin and our desire to bury our old sinful life.*
9. *Baptism is an ordinance by which we express our faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior.*

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite.

1 Corinthians 15:3,4; Romans 8:11; Matthew 12:38-40; Colossians 2:12, 13; Romans 6:3-13; Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9, 10; Colossians 1:27-29; Romans 5:5; 13:10; Galatians 2:20

In the Name of Jesus Christ

There is no salvation through any other person or savior than Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The scriptures tells us that Jesus baptized more disciples than John (John

3:22; 4:1). But the actual work of baptizing these people was done through the disciples who did it for Him (John 4:2).

When the repentant believers were baptized, they were baptized "in the name of Jesus" in other words, by His authority. When you do anything in another's name you do it by his express permission. The disciples of Jesus did the baptizing for Him, by His authority and in His name, and that was the same as if Jesus had actually done it Himself. Ministers of Jesus Christ do all things in His name (Acts 10:48).

Review

1. There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.
2. *Jesus' disciples did the baptizing for Him.*
3. *They baptized repentant believers by the authority of Jesus Christ.*

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite.

Acts 4:12; John 3:22; John 4:1, 2; Acts 10:48; Colossians 3:17

Into the Name!

In Matthew 28:19, we find repentant believers are to be baptized "in" the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Observation: The inspired Greek word translated "in" is *eis*. This word actually means "into". The one who is baptized becomes the possession of, and comes under the protection of, the one whose name he bears. Therefore, Matthew 28:19 should be translated: "...baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". It is done in the name, by the authority of Jesus Christ.

When God's ministers baptize in the name of Jesus Christ, they are not baptizing the baptismal candidate into any humanly devised organization or denomination, but into the very God Family, into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Review

1. We have learned that we are baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
2. *God's ministers do this in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ.*
3. *In so doing the baptismal candidate becomes the*

possession of and under the protection of the One whose name he bears.

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite.

Matthew 28:19

Being Put in the Church

Believe it or not, after baptism and the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit, we become members of the divine Family of God.

Few professing Christians understand that one must first be begotten, then born, into the Family of God. As a matter of fact we are now God's children though only begotten, still subject to the possibility of a spiritual miscarriage. "Beloved, now we are children of God...we know that when He is reveals, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

It is interesting to compare spiritual birth with physical birth. The physical birth begins with a begetting. Then there is a development period of some nine months, and then the birth. The spiritual birth is similar. First a spiritual begetting, then nurtured by God's Spirit, a period of spiritual growth and development in the "womb" of the church, and finally the

appearance of immortal, glorified, spirit-composed sons and daughters of God at Christ's Second Coming (1 Corinthians 15:49-52; 2 Corinthians 6:18).

Jesus promised His disciples the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came and sat upon 120 disciples, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). Also there were an additional 3000 souls who were baptized (Acts 2:41).

God's true church is called body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27; Colossians 1:8). We cannot join this true church of God; we must be put into it by God (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The apostle Paul pointed out that we must have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, or we do not belong to Him (Romans 8:9). We only become Christ's when the Holy Spirit comes into us!

All the members are held together by the same common bond, and that bond is God's Holy Spirit.

So it is possible for someone to associate with the members of the body of Christ and still not be a part of the body. Only God knows who has truly repented. Only God knows who He has given His Spirit to.

It is the receiving of the *Holy Spirit of God that immerses us, puts us into, the*

church of God.

Review

1. *After baptism and the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit, we become members of God's divine family.*
2. *When Jesus Christ appears, we shall be like Him.*
3. *We shall be God's sons and daughters a part of the God family.*
4. *One hundred and twenty disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.*
5. *Three thousand souls were baptized also on the Day of Pentecost.*
6. *God's true church is called the body of Christ.*
7. *Only God can put us into His church.*
8. *It is receiving of the Holy Spirit that puts us into the church of God.*

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite.

1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 15:49-52; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4, 41; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27; Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9. **AG**