



A Closer Look at Baptism (2)

For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, who once were disobedient, when the

patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the* water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him. (1Peter 3:18-22).

Peter clearly establishes that baptism saves. He is also clear that the baptism of which he writes is related to the death—the shedding of the blood—of Christ. Though Scripture speaks of a few baptisms, this one baptism is specific—it is the one baptism related to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (see *The Gospel Guide*, December 27, 2020, for a review). Obviously, baptism is important and needed, but what exactly is it and how does it take place? These are questions to which the religious world at large causes confusion with their answers. What is the simple message of God's word?

What is baptism?

In simple terms, baptism is a burial, a planting. This is how it is related in Scripture (**Romans 6:1-5**; **Colossians 2:12**). It has never been anything other than this in the Bible. “Baptism” and its associated words, were not English words until they were transliterated, not translated, from Greek. So then, the meaning must be determined by the definition of the word which is transliterated, that is, see what someone speaking first-century Greek would have understood the meaning to be. Every reputable Greek lexicon—e.g. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Arndt and Gingrich; *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Grimm-Thayer; *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Liddell & Scott; etc.—defines the word as immerse or submerge completely. The modern dictionary meaning of words changes to the common usage of the word, and while a dictionary such as an edition of Merriam-Webster may define baptism also as a sprinkling or pouring, it was never so in the Bible. This throws light on why they went to Jordan to baptize and as to why it is noted that much water was in that place (**John 3:23**). This helps us to understand about going down into the water (**Acts 8:36-39**).

Why should people be baptized?

Once again, God's word is clear—people are to be baptized in order that they might be saved (**Mark 16:15-16; 1Peter 3:21**). Salvation means that people are to be baptized to have their sins washed away (**Acts 22:16**). People are to be baptized to get into Christ (**Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27**). People are to be baptized to become part of the body of the saved (**1Corinthians 12:13**). People are to be baptized to contact the saving blood of Jesus (**Romans 6:3-4**). There is not one example of baptism in Scripture taking place just to “show” that you are saved from your sins or to “show” that you believe Jesus is the Messiah.

Who is to be baptized?

Since baptism is for the forgiveness of sins, then certainly, the unsaved—unforgiven—are to be baptized. However, God's word provides more detail. It is not just any unsaved who are candidates for baptism: those need first to be taught so they can believe and become disciples (**Matthew 28:18-20**). Then, those who having heard and then believe, are to repent (**Acts 17:30**). In addition, those, who then repent, are to be baptized for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**). This eliminates confusion spread by some religious groups in regard to baptizing infants. An infant is not capable of being taught so as to believe, neither do they have any sins of which to repent.

When should people be baptized?

The plain answer to the question of “when” is that when one is old enough to be taught that he might believe and repent, he is old enough to be baptized. Then “when” is at that point of a good heart answering to God, having heard His word, believed it, repented of past sins, and confessing the name of the Lord. Many people hear, but choose not to believe—they are not ready for baptism even though it is needed. Many people believe, but choose not to repent—they are not ready for baptism. Many are not willing to confess Jesus as Lord—they are not ready for baptism.

Unfortunately, many are unwilling to be baptized fully knowing that is the right thing to do. Even Jesus was baptized because it was the right thing for Him to do in His circumstance (**Matthew 3:15**). It is still the right thing to do for those recognizing Jesus as Lord.