

LET THE
BIBLE SPEAK...
about

BAPTISM



*Prove all things...
Hold fast to that which is good*

Over 100 times in the New Testament some form of the word “baptize” or “baptism” is used. This shows the importance of the subject of baptism to the followers of Christ. How ironic and tragic, therefore, that there is such widespread disagreement in the modern religious world over the meaning and purpose of baptism. The question: “What does baptism mean?” should be considered carefully.

1) Baptism Mean Union With Christ. Paul writes in *Romans 6.3* that we are “*baptized into Jesus Christ,*” or as the **Modern Language Bible** translates, we are “*baptized into union with Christ Jesus.*” In *Galatians 3.27*, Paul concludes, “*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” Entrance into Christ and all that it implies (cf. *Romans 8.1; Ephesians 1.7*) is achieved in the act of baptism.

2) Baptism Means Submission to the Lordship of Christ. Jesus said, “*All power is given unto me in heaven and earth.*” (*Matthew 28.18.*) Immediately after making that statement He told His disciples to “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost...*” (*Matthew 28.19.*)

Clearly the command to be baptized is rooted in the authority of Christ. Jesus insisted that there is no genuine submission to His Lordship without obedience to His commands. "*And why call ye me Lord, Lord,*" He asked, "*and do not the things which I say?*" (*Luke 6.46.*) Only those capable of obeying the commands of Christ are suitable candidates for baptism! Those who present themselves for baptism must be able to (1) Believe in Christ (*John 8.24*); (2) Repent of past sins (*Luke 13.3*); and (3) Confess faith in Christ before men. (*Matthew 10.32-33.*) No one is ready for baptism unless and until he has done these things!

3) Baptism Means Entrance Into the Body of Christ. In *1 Corinthians 12.13*, the Apostle Paul writes: "*For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body...*" The one body is the church. (*1 Corinthians 12.12; Ephesians 1.22-23.*) This is borne out by what Paul says in *Ephesians 5.23* where he notes that "*Christ is the head of the church; and he is the saviour of the body.*" Baptism is the act of obedience which causes God to add us to the church. (See *Acts 2.41, 47.*) It is by baptism that we gain entrance into the church and become members of it!

4) Baptism Means Participating in the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ. Paul says that those baptized into Christ “*were baptized into his death?*” (*Romans 6.3.*) In the act of baptism we become the people for whom Christ died; we gain the benefits which His death makes possible; we re-create His death, burial and resurrection by being buried with Him in water to be raised to newness of life. In doing so we obey the “form” or “pattern” of the doctrine which is delivered unto us. (*Romans 6.17.*) It is baptism which ties us to the cross of Christ. (**Note:** In the New Testament, baptism is always described as immersion — never as sprinkling or pouring. The word “baptize” in the Greek language means “to plunge, dip, immerse, overwhelm.” Only through immersion can we be “buried” with Christ. (*Romans 6.3; Colossians 2.12.*)

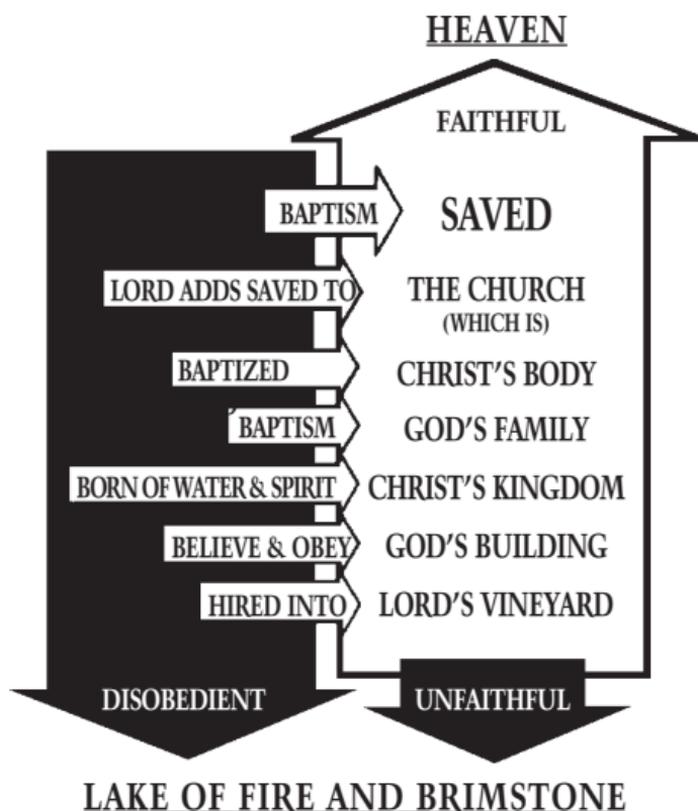
5) Baptism Means Breaking with Sin. *Romans 6.4* says: “*Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death...*” The death which Paul contemplates here is our death to sin. This is confirmed by the 5th verse of the same chapter of *Romans* which says: “*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*”

The multitude on the day of Pentecost were told to "*Repent and be baptized... for the remission of sins.*" (Acts 2.38.) It is baptism which stands squarely between man and forgiveness of sin. Salvation from sin is impossible without baptism! (Acts 22.16.)

6) Baptism Means Newness of Life. Baptism is closely involved in the process of the New Birth. (John 3.3, 5.) We are raised from baptism to "*walk in newness of life.*" (Romans 6.4.) Baptism is not an ending; it is a beginning. It is the starting point of the Christian life. It is in the act of baptism that we are born again!

The fact that baptism is mentioned more than 100 times in the New Testament leaves no doubt as to its importance. The things connected with it show its absolute necessity. "*And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*" (Acts 22.16.)

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, said of Romans 6.3 and John 3.5: "*We are buried with Him, alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion. By ... the water of baptism, we are regenerated, or born again; whence it is also called by apostles, 'The washing of regeneration.'*" (**Notes on New Testament**, 1825.)



Martin Luther, founder of the Lutheran Church, said: "On this account I could wish that such as are baptized should be completely immersed in water, according to the meaning of the word, and the significance of the ordinance . . . as also without doubt, it was instituted by Christ." (*Works*, Volume II, page 76.)

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