

THE SUBJECT SATAN HATES

Before Jesus ascended back to heaven He gave to His followers the "gospel commission" found in Matthew 28:19-20. Many people today however, tend to minimize or completely disregard the importance of baptism; but it is the natural conclusion to the preaching of the gospel. The two go hand in hand.

Today there are many methods of baptism being practiced. Some churches pour water over the person, some sprinkle, some immerse, some use salt, some rose petals, and at least one used a garden hose. There are many types of baptism today, but the word of God recognizes only one. Ephesians 4:5. If there is only one baptism acceptable in the sight of God it would have to be the one with which Jesus Christ, our Example, was baptized; and that was by immersion. Matthew 3:13-17.

There are many pictures and movies today show Jesus being baptized by John pouring water on His head from a sea shell. It makes for a pretty picture, but it is not what the word of God says. John needed "much water" when he baptized. Enough for people to go down into and to come up "out of the water." If John had baptized like many ministers do today he could have baptized the 5,000 with just a little over two gallons of water.

The word baptize comes from the Greek word "baptizo" which means literally to immerse, or to submerge. When a minister baptizes he literally says "I immerse you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." How ridiculous is this statement when one uses only a few drops of water.

Baptism by immersion is the only method of baptism found in the Scriptures. It was not until the council of Ravenna in 1311 that sprinkling and pouring were officially accepted as valid as immersion in the rite of baptism.

When Philip baptized the Ethiopian they stopped at a place where there was much water and they both went down into the water. Acts 8:35-39. If only a little water were needed for sprinkling they would not even have had to stop, for the man would have surely had water in his chariot while making such a long journey through the desert.

Once one understands the true meaning of baptism it becomes clear why immersion is the only method acceptable to God. Romans 6:3-4. Baptism is a type of burial. When someone is buried do we simply throw a handful of dirt on them and say they are buried? The same principle applies to baptism. Baptism commemorates the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus; and signifies the believer's dying to the old way of life, the burial of the old man of sin, and rising to walk in a newness of life. Baptism by immersion is the only one that signifies this death, burial, and resurrection.

A burial should only be conducted for those who have died and a baptism should only be conducted for those who have died to the world, and chosen to live for Christ. Romans 8:6-8, 10-12. We have died to self and allow Christ to live in us, by faith. Galatians 2:20. "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Galatians 3:27.

Everyone should take seriously the Biblical instruction concerning baptism for it is essential to salvation (John 3:3), but who and when should one be baptized? Since baptism indicates a decision by the individual to accept Jesus as his or her Saviour, they should be old enough to understand what is taking place. This would of necessity eliminate babies and small children.

There are three prerequisites to baptism that help to clarify this issue.

Matthew 28:19 tells us one should be taught the gospel before being baptized. Teaching the gospel and baptism go hand-in-hand. Any one too young to be taught the gospel is too young to be baptized as commanded by the gospel.

Mark 16:16 informs us that once one is taught the gospel they must believe before being baptized. How much can an infant or small child believe? If an individual is not old enough to be taught, to believe, and to choose to surrender their life to Christ; they are not old enough to be baptized.

Acts 2:38 is very clear that if one believes what they have been taught and truly surrenders their

life to Jesus, they will repent of their sins. How much can a baby repent of? It has not even committed any sins to require repentance.

Centuries ago a corrupt church introduced the erroneous teaching of infant baptism. There were two primary factors which contributed to this. One was an attempt to absorb, and appease, the pagans which were coming into the church who were accustomed to sprinkling water on their children in their fertility rites; and second was the attempt to bring funds into the church coffers by telling the people that if they did not pay a priest, or monk, to baptize the babies and these children died unbaptized they would go to limbo to suffer punishment for having not been baptized. They were also denied burial on "holy church ground" and could not have a priest officiate at the funeral.

How different is this teaching from that of Jesus who took little children in His arms and said to let the little children come to Him, for of such is the kingdom of heaven? Mark 10:14-16.

Compare man's method of baptism with God's method.

God's: Taught to observe all things He has commanded.

Man's: Baptize anyone (without teaching), including infants who can not be taught.

God's: To believe what has been taught.

Man's: Babies are incapable of understanding, or believing anything.

God's: An intelligent decision on the part of the individual.

Man's: A decision on the part of the parents for the person.

God's: The result of a conversion experience. A surrender of the life to Christ.

Man's: A contract between the parents and the church concerning the child.

God's: The Holy Spirit enters the believer's heart and gives him the power to live a new life.

Man's: The god-father, or god-mother, takes over until the child reaches the age of accountability.

God's: Immersion, which signifies a type of death, burial, and resurrection.

Man's: A few drops of water on the head.

Isn't it amazing how far apart these two methods are?

It is most evident that the Lord places a great importance on baptism. None should ever minimize its importance for themselves, or anyone else, for such a course could be fatal. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16) for "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5.

God's call to His people is the same today as it was during the time of the apostles. "Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." Acts 22:16.

Study Helps

John 3:5 ----- How essential is baptism?
Ephesians 4:5 ----- How many baptisms?
Matthew 3:13-17 ----- How was Jesus baptized?
John 3:23 ----- Why did John baptize there?
Acts 8:38 ----- How did Philip baptize the Ethiopian?
Matthew 28:19, 20 ----- What must precede baptism?
Mark 16:16 ----- What else must take place?
Acts 2:37, 38, 41 ----- What must follow belief?
Romans 6:3-6 ----- What does baptism symbolize?
Galatians 2:20 ----- Who now lives in us?
Galatians 3:26-29 ----- What are we declared to be?
2 Corinthians 6:2 ----- When should we be baptized?
Acts 19:1-5 ----- For what reason might one be rebaptized?
Acts 22:16 ----- What should one not do?