

## Great Doctrines of the Bible

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### Baptism

#### Introduction

In this lesson we propose to present the means, nature and importance of Christian baptism. This is not a discussion of the baptism in the Spirit or by the Spirit, which we have already considered fully in Lessons 6, 7, and 8. This lesson will be a study of the value and proper mode of water baptism. It is our purpose to expose some of the myths and errors associated with baptism. At the same time, however, we aim to show the profound significance for every believer of this ordinance so clearly commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ. Minor aspects of this subject are not all considered; however, all essential teaching regarding biblical baptism is included.

#### Importance of this Lesson

- Since Christ began His ministry by submitting to water baptism and closed it by commanding His disciples to “teach and baptize all nations,” one cannot escape the priority the Bible places on this ordinance. Baptism is not to be shrugged aside as being irrelevant. It is not optional. It is a must! It is commanded.
- Therefore, it is of major importance, not only that we be baptized, but that we are baptized properly and with full understanding of its meaning and merit.
- There is gross error and misunderstanding about this important doctrine. Much of the professing Christian Church has given to baptism an interpretation and significance that is totally without biblical foundation. Consequently, millions of professing Christians, believing themselves to be children of God by reason of their baptism, are trusting in a vain hope. Pray earnestly as you study this lesson that God will give you full understanding as to the nature and purpose of biblical baptism.

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### THE LESSON

#### I. THE MEANING OF THE WORD “BAPTISM”

- A. The word, “baptism” is the English or Anglican form of the Greek noun “baptisma,” (the process of immersion equals submersion and emergence), which in turn is derived from the Greek verb “baptizo” – the intensive form of the verb “bapto” – meaning to dip, submerge, or immerse. (It is used in the New Testament also for the dyeing of a garment or the dipping of a vessel in a well to draw water.)
- B. While no Baptist has written a lexicon of the Greek language, the standard lexicons like Liddell and Scott, uniformly give the meaning of “baptizo” as dip or immerse. The verb never means to sprinkle or to pour.
- C. Dr. A.T. Robertson (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia) contends that the word “baptizo” is the only proper word to use for Christian baptism. “Baptisma” and “baptismos” are not used in the New Testament for Christian baptism except by implication.
- D. The Greek language has been continuous from the beginning. Today in Greece, Russia, and wherever the Greek church prevails, “baptizo” is the word for baptism, and immersion is the universal practice.
  - ◆ *“There is no evidence that Luke and Paul and other writers of the New Testament put on ‘baptizo’ meanings not recognized by the Greeks.” E.A. Sophocles, GREEK LEXICON OF THE ROMAN AND BYZANTINE PERIODS, p. 297.*
- E. THAYER’S LEXICON, “baptizo means an immersion in water performed as a sign of the removal of sin.”
- F. Alfred Plummer of the Church of England, in his commentary on Matthew, p. 28, “The office of John the Baptist was to bind them to a new life symbolized by immersion in water.”
- G. Adolph Harnack, well-known German theologian, “Baptism undoubtedly signifies immersion. No proof can be found in the New Testament or in any Christian literature that it signifies any thing else.”

- ◆ *The world of scholarship has rendered its decision with force and impartiality on the side of the Baptists in the meaning of “baptizo”!!*

## II. THE VARIOUS MODES OF BAPTISM AND WHY THEY ARE EMPLOYED

- A. The major denominations today rule that water may be employed for baptism in three ways.
  - 1. Immersion – meaning to dip, immerse, or put under.
  - 2. Affusion – meaning the pouring of water on one’s head.
  - 3. Aspersion – meaning that water is sprinkled on one’s head.
- B. The Greek words for these three modes are:
  - 1. Immersion – “baptismo”
  - 2. Pouring – “ekcheo” – to pour (This is never used for baptism in the New Testament.)
  - 3. Sprinkling – “rhantizo” – to sprinkle (This is never used for baptism in the New Testament.)
- ◆ *It is clear that neither pouring nor sprinkling were accepted modes of baptism in the New Testament.*
- C. The case for immersion:
  - 1. The consistent use of the word “baptizo” whenever water baptism is practiced in the New Testament.
  - 2. The universal agreement of non-baptist scholars (as shown under Section 1) that “baptizo” never means anything but immersion, and that immersion was the only mode of baptism practiced in the New Testament.
  - 3. Since baptism symbolizes our identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (read Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12-13), immersion is the only mode that fits the type or pattern. Only through immersion are we “buried with him in baptism” and “planted together in the likeness of his death.”
  - 4. The logical conclusion from biblical examples:
    - a) John 3:23 – “John also was baptizing...near to Salim, because there was much water there.” (No need for MUCH water if sprinkling or pouring is all that is necessary.)
    - b) Mark 1:9 – Jesus walked 60 miles from Nazareth to be baptized.
    - c) Acts 8:38-39 – in the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, they “went down both into the water...and came up out of the water.” Clearly, immersion was employed.
    - d) John the Baptist baptized IN the Jordan River. There was no need for a river, if pouring or sprinkling were adequate.
  - 5. The “Didach” or “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,” written probably during the first half of the second century (re-discovered during the 17<sup>th</sup> century), the most ancient ecclesiastical manual we have, strongly advocates immersion while permitting pouring under certain circumstances (more explanation later).
  - 6. The form or mode of baptism is necessary to its significance. Only immersion was commanded, and it alone sets forth death, burial, and resurrection. The POINT of a symbol is the form or mode in which it is cast. If you change the form, you change the symbol. No one has a right to change the form for the sake of convenience.
  - 7. Lightfoot, British scholar with the Church of England, says in his commentary on Colossians 2:12, p. 182, “Baptism is the grave of the old man and the birth of the new man. As he sinks beneath the baptismal waters, the believer buries there all of his corrupt affection...he rises regenerate, quickened to new hope and life.”
    - ◆ *Dr. Lightfoot is wrong in his statement that man “rises regenerate,” but right in his belief in immersion. This quote is given merely to show that great scholars who are not Baptist, believe in immersion.*
  - 8. “If evidence is taken from written text – ancient canon or early church fathers – studied alone, the natural conclusion would be that immersion was the almost universal form of administering baptism,” *Dr. A.T. Robertson.*
  - 9. The problem of the use of “with” in Matthew 3:11 and Mark 1:8. The committee of THE AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION, which had no Baptist members at the final revision, substituted “in” for “with.”

- D. The case against pouring or sprinkling:
1. Neither mode was practiced in the New Testament.
  2. Affusion or pouring may best symbolize the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. But the Spirit is given immediately upon repentance and faith, not upon one's baptism (Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:6-7).
  3. Aspersion or sprinkling was not practiced widely until the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The church despised those who received it in earlier centuries. Not until the Council of Trent, meeting, in three sessions between 1545 and 1563 during the 19<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council, were pouring and sprinkling officially approved by the church.
  4. The Didache, referred to earlier, as translated by Philip Schaff, a Presbyterian, says this, "Now concerning baptism, baptize thus; having first taught all these things, baptize you into the name of the Father and the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost in living water! And if you have not living water, baptize into other water. And if you can not in cold, then in warm water. But, if you have not either pour water thrice on the head in the name of the Father, in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost."
    - ◆ *This manual was written early in the second century.*
    - ◆ *Immersion is not only approved, but strongly urged.*
    - ◆ *Some pouring was to be permitted, but with definite guidelines and under extreme conditions.*
  5. As early as the second century, some Christians began to give to baptism an emphasis and meaning not justified by New Testament doctrine and practice. Some began to teach the erroneous doctrine of baptismal regeneration. The practice of pouring and sprinkling and infant baptism resulted largely from this perversion of biblical baptism.

### III. BAPTISMAL REGENERATION – DOES BAPTISM SAVE? (Carefully study A-B-C-for exam)

Many churches, including the Catholic Church, teach baptismal regeneration and the baptism of infants. That is, they teach that a person who is not baptized is not forgiven of his sins, is not saved, is not born again and cannot enter heaven.

To correct the error of baptismal regeneration, we reply:

- A. To give baptism saving value is to ruin the symbol. Bible baptism is a public confession of that which has already transpired in our hearts (Acts 8:37).
- B. Baptism is a privilege and a duty, not a means of receiving saving grace. The picture is lost when something is added.
- C. Below follow some of the texts used by those who believe in and practice baptismal regeneration.
  1. John 3:3-5 – "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit,..." Baptismal regenerationists teach that "water" here means water baptism. Our answer to this is as follows:
    - a) Christian baptism was not commanded until after Pentecost. So, the phrase, "born of water" could not mean water baptism.
    - b) In verse 4, Nicodemus asks about returning to his mother's womb. In verse 6, Jesus speaks of a fleshly and spiritual birth. It seems clear that Christ here is speaking of both a natural and a spiritual birth.
  2. Acts 2:38 – "Repent, and be baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ, FOR the remission of sins..." Baptismal regenerationists teach that baptism is necessary in order to receive the forgiveness of sins and consequently salvation. Our answer to this is as follows:
    - a) The Greek word for "FOR" is "eis," meaning "into."
    - b) However, "into" is not the only interpretation for "eis." Luke 11:32 says, "They repented at 'eis' the preaching of Jonas." Here "into" makes no sense. Here it is logically translated "on the basis of." Acts 2:38, could rightly be translated "On the basis of your repentance and remission of sins be baptized, etc."
    - ◆ *To insist on the use of "FOR" is to make remission of sins the result of a work on our part. This, of course, is contrary to clear Bible teaching (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6).*

*Baptism*

- ◆ *It is wrong to build a doctrine on a questionable preposition, and/or a translation that is diametrically opposed to scripture.*
- 3. Acts 22:16 – “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Baptismal regenerationists teach that baptism washes away a person’s sins. Our answer to this argument is as follows:
  - a) Here the Apostle Paul is giving his testimony at Jerusalem.
  - b) In Acts 9:6 a stunned and shattered Saul of Tarsus called Jesus Lord and yielded to His control.
  - c) In Acts 9:11 it says “behold he prayeth.”
  - d) In Acts 9:15 God said, “...he is a chosen vessel unto me.”
  - e) In Acts 9:17 Ananias called him “Brother Saul.”
  - f) In Acts 9:17 Ananias said, “The Lord...hath sent me, that thou mightest...be filled with the Holy Ghost.”
  - g) Then in Acts 9:18, Paul is baptized.
- ◆ *It is clear that Paul was saved and filled with the Spirit BEFORE he was baptized.*
- ◆ *Always interpret difficult passages in the light of passages that are perfectly clear. Examples: Acts 8:12, “When they believed, they were baptized.” Acts 8:37 – “If you believe, you may be baptized.” Acts 2:21, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Romans 10:13 – “For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*
- ◆ *It is clear that we are saved, not by baptism, but by calling upon the name of the Lord by faith.*
- ◆ *The word “calling” in this text is a participle of “means.” The verse should read, “...and wash away thy sins, (by means of) calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Baptism then follows a public confession of our total identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.*
- 4. 1 Peter 3:19-21 – Of these verses Baptism regenerationists says that as Noah was saved in the ark by means of water, so baptism saves us today. Our answer to this argument is as follows:
  - a) Peter here clearly states that baptism does not put away the filth of the flesh. Only the blood of Jesus can do this (Revelation 1:5; 1 John 1:7).
  - b) Peter also declares that eight souls getting into the ark was a matter of obedience in contrast to the millions who were disobedient. Baptism is a matter of obedience and “the answer of a good conscience toward God.”
  - c) Noah built the ark “to the saving of his house” (Hebrews 11:7). The eight souls were saved physically because they were in the ark. Our ark of safety is Christ (Romans 8:1).
  - d) The word “figure” means “the counterpart of the reality of salvation. It is the outward testimony of an inner faith.”
- 5. Mark 16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Baptismal regenerationists say that baptism is essential to salvation. Our answer to this argument is as follows:
  - a) Rule #1 – Any scripture must be interpreted in the light of all scripture (2 Peter 1:20).
  - b) Rule #2 – A difficult or ambiguous passage should always be interpreted in the light of clear passages (Matthew 28:19).
  - c) Rule #3 – It is wrong to build a doctrine on a disputed passage. The two oldest manuscripts do not include verses 9-20 of this chapter.

## IV. THE MATTER OF INFANT BAPTISM

- A. Sadly, we must admit that not only the Catholic Church, but also the majority of evangelical Protestants practice infant baptism.
- B. The arguments of those who favor and practice infant baptism go like this:
  1. In Acts 2:38-39 “the promise is unto you, and to your children.” It is assumed that “children” here includes infants and not simply descendants.
  2. It is said that Lydia (Acts 16:15) and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:31-33) were baptized with their households. It is presumed that households included infants.
  3. They believe that children of believing parents are “born within the church, have an interest in the covenants of grace and a right to its seal (baptism).”

*Baptism*

4. If children can be full of the Holy Ghost from their mother's womb (Luke 1:15), are in the kingdom, (Matthew 19:14), are holy, are born of believing parents – who dares to hinder them from being baptized?

## C. Arguments against the practice of infant baptism:

1. Even the Didache, the earliest available Christian manual, does not allow the baptism of infants.
2. Many non-Baptist scholars do not approve of infant baptism.  
*Jacobus* – a Congregationalist – “We have no record of infant baptism in the New Testament.”  
*Scott* – a Presbyterian – “The New Testament contains no explicit reference to the baptism of infants or young children.”  
*Plummer* – of the Church of England – “The recipients of Christian baptism were required to repent and believe.”
3. Like sprinkling and pouring, the practice of infant baptism sprang from the early error of giving to baptism a significance not warranted by scripture. Baptism became a sacrament instead of an ordinance, and the doctrine of baptismal regeneration was embraced. The reasoning was, that if babies were born with sinful natures, and if baptism is essential to salvation, then babies should certainly be baptized.
4. The New Testament requirements for baptism are:
  - a) Repentance – Acts 2:38; Matthew 3:2; Acts 17:30
  - b) Faith – Acts 8:12, 37; Acts 16:31
  - c) Instruction – Matthew 28:19-20
  - ◆ *These three things infants simply cannot do. Baptism is for repentant believers who have been duly instructed in the Christian faith.*
5. The Bible teaches that infants and small children are saved without baptism.  
 (Read Matthew 18:3-4, 10, 14; Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14-15), see also the story of David's sin (2 Samuel 12:13-23).
6. The sacramental transmission of regeneration to a child via baptism is wholly without biblical foundation, and it is totally rejected by Baptists everywhere.

## V. IS BAPTISM AN ORDINANCE OR A SACRAMENT?

- A. An ordinance is a practice by the church, which has been ordained or commanded by the Lord.
  1. The Lord has given us but two ordinances.
    - a) The Lord's Supper – Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.
    - b) Water baptism – Matthew 28:19-20.
  2. Water baptism is commanded and is obligatory, but it has no sacramental or redemptive value.
- B. A sacrament is a practice of the Church that has been given saving or redemptive value by the church. It is a visible act by which some spiritual grace is believed to be effectively conveyed.  
 Catholics, for example, have adopted seven sacraments; baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, extreme unction, holy orders, and matrimony. The Council of Trent declared that all seven sacraments were instituted by Christ!!!

VI. THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR BAPTISM (**Know these points for the exam.**)

- A. Since our Lord Himself, who is our example in all things, was baptized, and since He commanded that we be baptized, its importance cannot be avoided.
- B. It is an act of obedience to Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20).
- C. It is a public testimony that you have repented of all your sins, and that you have placed your faith fully in Christ as your Savior and Lord.
- D. It is a confession of your total identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5).
- E. It portrays or reveals the world's greatest miracle, the resurrection (Colossians 2:12).
- F. It witnesses to a revolutionary change in your life. Buried with Christ in baptism, you now rise with Him to live in the power of a new and resurrected life.

*Baptism*

VII. WHO IS ALLOWED TO PERFORM THE BAPTISM?

Normally, the pastor of the local church performs the baptism; however, the New Testament does not limit this to only the pastor. Any officer of the church or other member in good standing may be authorized by the church to perform this ordinance.

**Conclusion:**

Christian baptism is an ordinance commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, an act of obedience. It is not a sacrament. While being obligatory, it has no saving or redemptive power. It is an outward witness to a transaction, which has already occurred in one's heart. It is complete immersion in water so as to fully and scripturally identify with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It is for those alone who have repented of their sins, placed their faith in Christ and have been duly instructed in the Christian faith. While the New Testament does not limit who may baptize, the pastor of a local church normally performs baptism.

**GREAT DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE**  
**EXAM – LESSON 18**

Questions to be answered by every student enrolled in the Rogma International Free Bible Study Course

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

1. The subject of baptism is important to the believer because: (Value 4 points)
  - a. God commands it.
  - b. it is a requirement for salvation.
  - c. it helps the believer to live for Christ.
2. The meaning of the word “baptism” is to: (Value 4 points)
  - a. accept Christ as Savior.
  - b. dip something in a liquid.
  - c. become holy.
3. The three ways commonly used today to baptize are: (**Mark three**) (Value 12 points)
  - a. to dip a person under the water.
  - b. to drink a cup of special water.
  - c. to pour water on a person’s head.
  - d. to sprinkle water on a baby’s head.
  - e. to wash a person with a special water.
4. Immersion symbolizes: (Value 4 points)
  - a. the filling of the Holy Spirit.
  - b. the imputation of our sin on Christ.
  - c. a believer’s identification with Christ.
5. What example in the Bible shows us that much water was used for baptism? (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
  - a. John 3:23
  - b. Colossians 2:12-13
  - c. Romans 6:3-5
6. The practices of pouring and sprinkling began approximately in: (Value 4 points)
  - a. the 13<sup>th</sup> century.
  - b. the 5<sup>th</sup> century.
  - c. the 15<sup>th</sup> century.
7. The church council that officially approved of sprinkling as a method of baptism was: (Value 4 points)
  - a. the Council of Carthage.
  - b. the Council of Rome
  - c. the Council of Trent.
8. What is the effect of baptism on a believer? (Value 4 points)
  - a. It saves the believer.
  - b. It does not save the believer.
  - c. It keeps the believer out of purgatory.

*Baptism*

9. The apostle Paul was saved: (Value 4 points)
- before he was baptized.
  - when he was baptized.
  - after he was baptized.
10. What verse do people use to defend the sprinkling of infants? (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
- Acts 8:38-39
  - Acts 2:38:39
  - Mark 16:16
11. What does the New Testament require as qualifications for baptism? (Value 4 points)
- A good life
  - The filling of the Holy Spirit
  - The new birth in Christ
12. What is an ordinance? (Value 4 points)
- A practice that is said by churches to have saving value.
  - A practice in the church that has been commanded by God.
  - A practice that has been adopted by the church because it makes a person a better Christian.
13. What is a sacrament? (Value 4 points)
- A practice that is said by churches to have saving value.
  - A practice that has been commanded by God.
  - A practice that has been adopted by the church because it makes a person a better Christian.
14. How many ordinances did the Lord give to the church? (Value 4 points)
- 3
  - 2
  - 7
15. Who may baptize a person? (Value 4 points)
- only a pastor
  - any member in good standing with the church when duly authorized by the church
  - only officers of the church
16. **Mark three** reasons why water baptism by immersion is very important. (Value 12 points)
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| a. Christ Himself was our example      | d. it is a confession that you are one with Christ       |
| b. it is an act of obedience to Christ | e. it is a picture of Christ's resurrection              |
| c. it is a public testimony            | f. it shows a change in your life – you have a new life. |
17. What two methods of baptism are never used in the New Testament? (Value 8 points)
- \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

*Baptism*

18. Give two main proof texts used by people who believe in baptismal regeneration.  
(Open Bible) (Value 8 points)

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

19. What does Romans 10:13 tell us about the time a person is saved? (Open Bible)  
(Value 4 points)

\_\_\_\_\_

**DECISION TIME**

I have never accepted Christ as my personal Savior but through these lessons, I have learned that in order to gain eternal life I must receive Him as my Savior.

I hereby accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior at this moment, and believing that He is truly God, I repent from my sins and forsake them.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_

In this lesson I have learned that for a believer water baptism is a step of obedience to Christ, therefore, I hereby promise God that I will take this step of obedience and submit to biblical water baptism.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_

(Doing this will not give you a better grade, but we would like you to tell us about this decision so that we can encourage you.)