

GREAT DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE
(Special English Edition)

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BAPTISM

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we will learn the meaning of Christian baptism. We will also present the method of Christian baptism and why it is important. This is not a discussion of the baptism in the Spirit or by the Spirit. We already considered that fully in Lessons 6, 7, 8. In this lesson we will study the benefit of water baptism. We will also see that there is a proper way to baptize a person. This ordinance is clearly commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ. We plan to show some of the errors people teach about baptism. We plan to show the great importance of water baptism for every believer. We will not consider all the secondary parts of this subject. All the necessary teaching about biblical baptism is included.

IMPORTANCE OF THIS LESSON

- ❑ The Bible places great importance on this doctrine. Christ began His ministry by submitting to water baptism. At the close of His ministry Christ commanded his disciples to “teach and baptize all nations”. Baptism is not to be put aside as unimportant.
- ❑ Baptism is not done by choice. It is a command. Therefore, it is very important that we receive the proper baptism. It is also important that we fully understand the meaning and benefits of water baptism.
- ❑ There are many great errors about this doctrine. Many people do not understand this important doctrine.
- ❑ Many Christian churches interpret this biblical doctrine of baptism completely wrong. They are teaching this doctrine without basing it on the Bible. Therefore, millions of people believe they are children of God because at one time they received baptism. They are trusting in an empty hope.
- ❑ You should pray seriously, while you study this lesson, that God will give you complete understanding as to what biblical baptism is, and the reason for it.

THE LESSON

I. THE MEANING OF THE WORD “BAPTISM

- A. The word “baptism” is the English form of the Greek word “baptisma” (this means dipping something into water and taking it out again). The word “baptism” comes from the Greek word “baptizo,” which is a form of the verb “bapto”. “Bapto” means to dip, to put something under the water. In the New Testament this word is used for putting color in a piece of cloth, or dipping a container in a well to draw water.
- B. All accepted Greek dictionaries, like Liddell and Scott, say that the meaning of “baptizo” is to put something into water and take it out again. “Baptizo” never means to sprinkle or to pour.
- C. Dr. A.T. Robertson (International Standard Encyclopedia) says that the word “baptizo” is the only proper word to use for Christian baptism.
- D. The Greek language has continued up to today. Today we find the Greek Church in Greece, Russia, and other places, and they all use the word “baptizo” baptism. They all baptize people by putting them under the water and taking them up again.
E.A. Sophocles said that Luke and Paul and other writers of the New Testament never put a different meaning on the word “baptizo”. They only used the word as the Greeks knew it. He said this in the “GREEK LEXICON OF THE ROMAN AND BYZANTINE PERIODS,” p. 297.
- E. THAYER’S Greek Dictionary, says that “baptizo means to put a person under the water and out again. Some churches did it as a sign that their sins were washed away”

- F. Alfred Plummer, a pastor in the Church of England, wrote in his commentary on Matthew on p. 28, “The office of John the Baptist was to bind them to a new life symbolized by putting them under the water and out again.”
- G. Adolph Harnack, well-known German theologian said, “Without doubt ‘baptism’ means to put something under the water and then to take it out again”. There is no proof in the New Testament or in any Christian books that “baptism” mean any thing else.”
- ◆ *The world of professors and teachers decided with all fairness that the Baptists have the correct meaning of the word “baptizo”!!*

II. THE DIFFERENT METHODS OF BAPTISM AND THE REASONS WHY CHURCHES USE THEM

Most of the important churches today baptize in one of three methods:

1. Immersion – this means to dip, or put under water and take out again.
 2. Affusion – this means to pour water on a person’s head.
 3. Aspersion – this means to sprinkle water on a person’s head.
- A. The Greek words for these three ways of baptism 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 methods of baptism in the New Testament.*
- B. The reason for immersion:
1. Because the word “baptizo” is used every time water baptism is practiced in the New Testament.
 2. Because professors and Bible teachers who are not Baptists, agree (as shown under Section 1) that “baptizo” always means immersion. They also agree that people in the New Testament practiced immersion as the only method of baptism.
 3. Baptism is a picture that we belong to Christ. Baptism is a picture of His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12-13). Immersion is the only method that fits this picture. Only through immersion are we “buried with him in baptism” and “planted together in the likeness of his death.”
 4. The reasonable 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) Jesus walked 60 miles from Nazareth to be baptized (Mark 1:9).
 - c) Acts 8:38-39 – When Phillip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, they “went down both into the water...and came up out of the water.” This clearly shows that he used immersion as the method.
 - d) John the Baptist baptized IN the Jordan River. No need for a river, if pouring or sprinkling were adequate.
 5. The “Didache”, which is “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles”, was probably written during the first half of the second century. It was found again in the 17th century. This book is the oldest guidebook we have for churches to use in the first and second centuries. This book strongly advises immersion, but it permits pouring under certain circumstances (more explanation later).
 6. Immersion is necessary because it is the only method that fits the picture. The New Testament commands only immersion. Immersion is the only method that shows Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. A picture must always represent the real thing. If you change the method of baptism, you must change the picture. No one has a right to change the picture for his own purposes.
 7. Lightfoot was a British professor in the Church of England. He writes about Colossians 2:12 in his book on Colossians. On page 182 he writes, “Baptism is the grave of the old man and the birth of the new man. As a person sinks beneath the baptismal waters, the believer buries there all of his love for sin...he rises born again, to new hope and life.” (Lightfoot teaches regeneration through baptism here. I believe he is wrong. This only shows that great Bible teachers, who are not Baptist, believe in immersion.)

8. Dr. A.T. Robertson says, that if we look at books of the old church and books written by the early church fathers, we see that almost all of them teach baptism by immersion.
 9. The problem of the use of “with” in Matthew 3:11 and Mark 1:8. The committee of THE AMERICAN STANDARD REVISION, which had no Baptist members at the final revision, substituted “in” for “with.”
- D. The reasons why pouring or sprinkling is wrong.
1. Neither one of these methods was practiced in the New Testament.
 2. Pouring is a better picture of how the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers. But remember, God gives the Holy Spirit to the believer immediately after repentance and faith. God does not give the Holy Spirit at the time a person receives baptism (Romans 8:15, 16; Gal. 4:6-7).
 3. The church did not practice sprinkling very much until the 13th century. In earlier centuries the church hated people who received baptism by pouring. The Council of Trent, which met three times between 1545 and 1563, officially approved sprinkling and pouring.
 4. As early as the second century, some Christians began to give to baptism a meaning that was not taught and practiced in the New Testament. Some Christians began to teach the false doctrine that baptism saves a person. Pouring and sprinkling and the baptism of babies came out of practicing biblical baptism in the wrong way.

III. DOES BAPTISM SAVE A PERSON?

Keep in mind that many churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, teach that a person is saved through baptism. Many of these same churches teach the baptism of babies.

- A. If we say that baptism saves a person, we destroy the picture of baptism. Biblical baptism is a public confession of that which has already happened in our hearts (Acts 8:37).
- B. Baptism is a privilege and a duty. Baptism is not a method of receiving the grace of God. We lose the picture when we add something that is not in the Bible.
- C. People who believe in salvation by baptism use the following texts to prove that they are right.
 1. John 3:3-5 – This verse speaks about a person who is not “born of water and of the Spirit.”
 - 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 says that a person’s body is born from his human parents but a person’s spiritual life is born from the Spirit. It is clear that Christ 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...” (This is a verse that is often used by people who believe that baptism can save a person.)
 - a) The Greek word for “FOR” is “eis,” which means “into.”
 - b) However, “into” is not the only way to translate “eis”. Luke 11:32 says, “They repented “at” ‘eis’ the preaching of Jonas.” Here “into” makes no sense. It makes better sense to translate it “on the basis of”. We can translate Acts 2:38 correctly in this way: “Change your mind about your sin and receive baptism in the name of Jesus Messiah, in order that God will forgive your sins and you will receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.
- ◆ *We cannot say that “FOR” means that God forgives our sins because we received baptism. That is salvation by works and that is clearly against what the Bible teaches (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6).*
- ◆ *It is wrong to build a doctrine on a word that can be translated many different ways. It is even more wrong to build a doctrine that is completely against the Bible on such a word.*
3. Acts 22:16 – “arise, and receive baptism, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
 - a) Here the Apostle Paul is giving his testimony at Jerusalem.
 - b) In Acts 9:6 Saul of Tarsus was confused and broken in spirit. He called Jesus Lord and gave Him control of his life.
 - c) In Acts 9:11 it says that Saul was praying.
 - d) In Acts 9:15 God said that Saul was an instrument whom God had chosen.

- e) In Acts 9:17 Annanias called him, Brother Saul.
 - f) In Acts 9:17 Annanias said, "The Lord...hath sent me, in order that you may...be filled with the Holy Ghost."
 - g) Then in Acts 9:18, Paul receives baptism.
 - ◆ *It is clear that the Holy Spirit saved and filled Paul BEFORE he was baptized.*
 - ◆ *A person must always interpret a difficult verse in the light of verses 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. We are saved by faith.*
 - ◆ *It is better to translate the word "calling" in Acts 22:16 as "by means of". Then the verse reads, "...and wash away your sins, (by means of) calling on the name of the Lord".*
 - ◆ *Baptism then is a public confession that we are one with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.*
4. 1 Peter 3:19-21 (People who believe that baptism saves us, also like to use these verses.)
- a) Peter here clearly states that baptism does not wash the dirt from our bodies. Only the blood of Jesus can do this (Rev. 1:5; 1 John 1:7).
 - b) Peter also says that eight souls went into the ark. They obeyed God when they did this. Millions of people at that time did not obey God. Baptism is a matter of obedience and "the answer of a good conscience toward God."
 - c) Noah built the ark to save his family (Hebrews 11:7). God saved the bodies of eight souls in Noah's family in the ark. Our ark of safety is Christ (Romans 8:1).
The word "figure" or "sign" means "the picture of our real salvation." It is the outward testimony of faith that is in our hearts.
5. Mark 16:16, The person who believes and is baptized shall be saved.
- a) Rule #1 – We must interpret every verse in the light of all the verses in the Bible (2 Peter 1:20).
 - b) Rule #2 – We must interpret a difficult or unclear verse in the light of clear verses (Matthew 28:19).
 - c) Rule #3 – It is wrong to build a doctrine on a verse that does not have a clear meaning. The two oldest original documents do not include verses 9-20 in Mark 16, although it is difficult to find absolute proof for refusing these verses.

IV. THE TEACHING ON BAPTISM OF BABIES

- A. Sadly, we must admit that the Roman Catholic Church practices the baptism of babies. Many Protestant churches that preach the Bible also practice the baptism of babies.
- B. The reasons why some people practice the baptism of babies.
 - 1. In Acts 2:38-39 it says "the promise is for you, and for your children." It is assumed that "children" here includes babies.
 - 2. It is said that Lydia (Acts 16:15) and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:31-33) received baptism with the people who lived in the house. People say that this included babies.
 - 3. They believe that children of parents who are believers are "born within the church". God has promised special grace to these children concerning salvation. The baptism of such babies is a sign of that salvation.
 - 4. They say that babies can be full of the Holy Ghost from their mother's womb (Luke 1:15). They also say that the rule of heaven belong to those who are like little children (Matthew 19:14). Babies that are born to parents who are believers, are holy. We should not stop them from receiving baptism.

- C. Reasons why we should not baptize babies.
1. Even the Didache, the Christian guidebook of the early church, does not allow the baptism of babies.
 2. Many Bible teachers who are not Baptists disapprove of the baptism of babies.
Jacobus – a Congregationalist says, “In the New Testament we have no report of a baby receiving baptism.”
Scott – a Presbyterian says, “In the New Testament there is no clear mention of babies or young children receiving the baptism.”
Plummer – of the Church of England says, “The people who received Christian baptism were required to repent and believe.”
 3. Like sprinkling and pouring, the early church made a mistake concerning the baptism of babies. They made the baptism of babies more important than the Bible did. Baptism became a promise of salvation, instead of something that was done in obedience to the command of God. Because of this wrong idea the doctrine of salvation through baptism was accepted. People knew that babies are born with sinful natures. They thought baptism is necessary for salvation. Since babies needed to be saved, they should certainly receive baptism.
 4. The New Testament requirements for baptism are:
 - a) Repentance – Acts 2:38; Matthew 3:2; Acts 17:30
 - b) Faith – Acts 8:12, 36-37; Acts 16:31
 - c) Teaching – Matthew 28:19-20Babies cannot do these three things. Baptism is for believers who have repented. The believers should receive teaching in doctrine and the Christian way of life.
 5. The Bible teaches that babies and small children are saved without baptism. (Read Matthew 18:3-4, 10, 14; Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14-15.) You may also read the story of David’s sin (2 Samuel 12:13-23).
 6. Receiving salvation by baptism is completely without a biblical foundation. Baptists everywhere totally reject the baptism of babies.

V. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ORDINANCE AND A SACRAMENT.

- A. An ordinance is a practice by the church that does not impart (pass on) grace, and is commanded by the Lord.
1. The Lord has given us two ordinances:
 - a) The Lord’s Supper – Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.
 - b) Water baptism by immersion – Matthew 28:19-20.
 2. God commanded water baptism by immersion. God requires it of every believer. Baptism does not save a person.
- B. A sacrament is a practice of the Church that gives grace for salvation. A person who receives a sacrament receives spiritual grace that will help him in living the Christian life. Roman Catholics, for example, have adopted seven sacraments. These sacraments are baptism, confirmation (accepted into the church), the Eucharist (Lord’s Supper), penance (sorrow for sin), extreme unction (anointing with oil), holy orders (becoming a priest, monk or nun), and matrimony (marriage). The Council of Trent said that Christ established all seven sacraments!!!

VI. THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR BAPTISM

- A. Our Lord Himself, is our example in all things and He was baptized. He commanded that we receive baptism. Therefore we know that it is important.
- B. Baptism is an act of obedience to Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20).
- C. Baptism 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. Baptism is a statement that you are one with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5).

- E. Baptism is a picture of the world's greatest miracle, the resurrection (Colossians 2:12).
- F. Baptism shows that your life is changed. After you are buried with Christ in baptism, you rise with Him to live in the power of a new and resurrected life.

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

The Lord Jesus Christ commanded Bible baptism. It is not an act that gives grace for salvation. It is an act of obedience. God requires that every believer should receive baptism, but it has no power to save a person. It is an outward witness to what already happened in a person's heart. Baptists dip a person in water. By this act a person shows that he is one with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection according to the Bible. Baptism is only for those who have repented of their sins and placed their faith in Christ as their Savior. Baptism is for those who learned about the Christian beliefs and way of life. The New Testament does not say who may baptize. A pastor usually performs the baptism in a local church, but the church may delegate any member to do it for the church.

GREAT DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE
EXAM – LESSON 18

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

Register No _____

Name _____

Address _____

PLEASE ROUND (○) THE CORRECT ANSWER

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? (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 13th century.
 - b. the 5th century.
 - c. the 15th 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.
9. The apostle Paul was saved: (Value 4 points)
 - a. before he was baptized.
 - b. when he was baptized.
 - c. after he was baptized.

Baptism

10. What verse do people use to defend the sprinkling of infants? (Value 4 points)
 a. Acts 8:38-39 b. Acts 2:38-39 c. Mark 16:16
11. What does the New Testament require as qualifications for baptism? (Value 4 points)
 a. A good life b. The filling of the Holy Spirit
 c. The new birth in Christ
12. What is an ordinance? (Value 4 points)
 a. A practice that is said by churches to have saving value.
 b. A practice in the church that has been commanded by God.
 c. 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. A practice that is said by churches to have saving value.
 b. A practice that has been commanded by God.
 c. 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)
 a. 3 b. 2 c. 7
15. Who may baptize a person? (Value 4 points)
 a. only a pastor
 b. any member in good standing with the church when duly authorized by the church
 c. 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)
 a. _____
 b. _____
18. Give two main proof texts used by people who believe in baptismal regeneration. (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

If you are born again but have never received Bible baptism, you need to receive Bible baptism according to the Word of God. It would be good to find a pastor. This person will be able to help you in your obedience to Christ.