

Essentiality of Baptism

Introduction.

I. One of the most controversial subjects of our time is baptism. For centuries men have been discussing and debating this subject, perhaps more than any other subject. Many maintain that baptism is non-essential to salvation and contend that at most is a beautiful ceremony indicating one has already been saved. Others, including myself, contend that baptism is absolutely essential to salvation.

II. For the next few minutes I would like to give some reasons a person must be baptized to be saved.

I. **Arguments Against Baptism** - First, let's consider some arguments against baptism.

A. Some contend that baptism is non-essential because **it does not make sense**.

1. A few years ago I read about a young lady who was baptized, but no one could get her brother inside of the church building. Do you know why? He said the idea of getting into water to be saved was the most idiotic and ridiculous thing he had ever heard in his life. This man failed to realize that God often uses that which seems foolish to test our faith and see how much we trust Him.

2. **Let me illustrate.** (Exod. 12:7; Num. 21:4,5; 2 Kgs. 5).

3. In like manner, many do not see any sense to baptism. God has, however, put baptism in the scheme of redemption as a test of faith to see if we trust Him enough to do what He says even though it does agree with our human reasoning.

B. Others contend that baptism is non-essential to salvation because they **regard baptism as a meritorious work** that earns a person salvation, whereas the Bible teaches a man is saved by grace. (Eph. 2:8, 9).

1. The fallacy of this argument is that baptism is not a meritorious work, but it is an act of faith. A person could be baptized 1,000 times every day until he dies and it would not wash away a single sin.

2. Even though salvation is by the unmerited mercy of God and cannot be earned, God has ordained that only those who have enough faith to go to the waters of baptism will be saved.

C. Others contend that baptism is non-essential to salvation because the **thief on the cross was saved without baptism**.

1. Jesus said to the thief, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise." The word "paradise" refers to the abode of the righteous spirits after death. To be in paradise then is to be saved. This means the thief was saved, but is his salvation applicable to us? The answer is no.

2. Perhaps this simple illustration will help us to see why we cannot be saved like the thief. Suppose a man were to write **the Internal Revenue Office** and say, "I am not going to pay income tax and I will tell you why. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson did not pay income tax. If they could be good law abiding citizens in their day and not pay taxes, I don't have to pay income tax to be a good citizen."

3. Now all of us can see the fallacy of this kind of thinking. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson lived under a different law than we do. They lived before income tax laws were enacted and were not required to

pay income tax. Today, the law has changed and we must pay income tax or have the Internal Revenue Service after us.

4. Some use this same fallacious reasoning when it comes to salvation. They say, "I can be saved just like the thief on the cross" failing to realize that the thief lived under a different law than we do.
 - a. The thief lived under the **Mosaical law which did not require baptism**.
 - b. Christ abolished the Mosaical law on the cross and established a new law. (Rom. 7:4; Col. 2:14; Heb. 8:6, 7).
 - c. The new law of Christ requires that a person must be baptized to be saved.

D. Others contend that baptism is non-essential to salvation by **using hypothetical situations**.

1. For example some say, "What if a man is killed on the way to be baptized? Will he be lost just because he was not baptized?"
2. This same argument that is used against the necessity of baptism could be used against the necessity of faith in Christ. Suppose a man is accidentally killed on his way to hear about Christ for the first time. Will he be lost just because he did not believe? Will he be saved without faith in Christ?
3. If this type of reasoning were valid, we could dream up hypothetical situations to get around faith, baptism and every other commandment of Jesus. It is not our business to dream up hypothetical cases, but to do the will of God. God alone, who is the Lawgiver, who knows all the facts, must judge the hypothetical situations that arise.

E. Others contend baptism is non-essential because of Paul's statement in **1 Corinthians 1:17**.

1. Paul said. (1 Cor. 1:17).
2. This statement is not a valid argument against the necessity of baptism.
 - a. Paul was personally baptized. (Acts 9:18).
 - b. Paul baptized Lydia and her family. (Acts 16:15). He baptized the Philippian jailer and his family. (Acts 16:33).
 - c. Paul baptized Crispus, Gaius and the household of Stephanas white at Corinth. (1 Cor. 1:14-16).
 - d. Acts 18:8 indicates that all of those who heard and believe at Corinth were baptized.
 - e. Paul was here affirming that he did not come to Corinth to baptize people personally, but spent his precious time preaching the gospel of Christ. Others did the baptizing. It does not make any difference who does the baptizing. The important thing is that is be done.

II. **Reasons A Person Must Be Baptized** - Let us now consider some reasons why a person must be baptized to be saved.

- A. In the first place, a person should be baptized because **it is commanded**. (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 10:48).

B. In the second place, a person should be baptized because **it is necessary for salvation**. (Mk. 16:16; Jn. 3:5; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21).

C. In the third place, a person must be baptized because **it is for the remission of sins**. (Acts 2:37, 38; 22:16).

1. These scriptures make it quite clear that salvation (forgiveness of sins) occurs when a person is baptized.
2. It should be emphasized here, however, that there is no efficacy or atoning power in the water. The waters of baptism are not holy, but they are just ordinary water. Salvation is by the blood of Jesus. When a person submits to baptism the blood of Jesus washed away his sins. (Rev. 1:5).

D. In the fourth place, a person must be **baptized to get into Christ**.

1. To be in Christ means to be in union with Christ and share the blessings of His death.
2. Once I had **a religious discussion with a minister** who took the position that a person is saved and comes into union with Christ the very moment he believes.
3. This is not, however, what the Bible teaches.
 - a. There are just two verses in the Bible that tell us how to get into Christ. Listen to what they say about how to get into union with Christ. (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:26, 27).
 - b. Neither of these verses teach a person is saved the moment he believes. Both of these verses set forth a person is baptized into Christ. A person cannot get into Christ in any other way.
 - c. This means that baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation unless someone is ready to maintain that a person can be saved outside of Christ, which is the opposite of what the Bible teaches. (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12).

E. In the fifth place, a person must be baptize to **become a new creature in Christ**. The old, sinful man is to be buried in the waters of baptism and a new person is to emerge from the water ready to walk in the newness of life. (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12, 3:1-2).

Conclusion.

- I. For these five reasons every person who has reached the age of accountability (the age where he knows right from wrong and has sinned), he must believe in Christ, repent of sins and be baptized to be saved.
- II. If you have not been born anew, in the words of Ananias, “Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptize, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name.” (Acts 22:16). Will you come as we stand and sing?