

Should I Be Baptized Again?

Many people are baptized (sometimes at a young age), but through further study of God's Word discover they were baptized for the wrong reasons or incorrectly. What to do? Be baptized again or just move on with a fuller understanding, retroactively assigning the correct meaning to the baptism.

Let us consider Acts 19:1-5. Here, Paul runs into some disciples who have been baptized incorrectly. They had received John's baptism which pointed to Jesus and their sins were rolled forward. Upon hearing this, they were immediately baptized into Jesus' name. Notice they had been baptized for the wrong reasons, but corrected it by being baptized again.

Many today teach and obey baptism as a sign of their salvation – i.e., they count themselves to have been saved apart from baptism and are baptized to show fellow believers they are saved. The Scriptures, however, teach that baptism saves us (1 Peter 3:21). The purpose of baptism is to receive the forgiveness of our sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:28). It is the point at which we, by our actions, ask God to forgive our sins (cf. 1 Peter 3:21). Anyone who has been baptized in order to show others they are saved has not followed scriptural baptism and, like the disciples in Acts 19, was baptized incorrectly. The same remedy applies: he or she should be baptized again for the purpose of having their sins forgiven and to receive the Holy Spirit.

The method one is baptized is equally important as the reason. Many today use methods of sprinkling or pouring water and call it a baptism. The Scriptures however, use the Greek word BAPTIZO which means to dip, plunge, or immerse. In addition, examples of recorded baptisms fit an immersion, not a sprinkling or pouring. In Acts 8:38-39, when Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, they both went "into" and came up "out of" the water. Why go into the water if not to immerse? All they needed to sprinkle or pour was available in the chariot (since they would have been carrying water to drink). Just as one who is baptized for the wrong reason was baptized incorrectly, so is one who is baptized with the wrong method. If we are to follow the teachings of Acts 19, those baptized by methods not described in the Bible should be baptized again by the method the Bible teaches.

Ephesians 4:5 tells us there is one baptism. This is not to say that one can only be baptized one time, but rather expresses that there is only one correct baptism prescribed by the Bible. It tells us the purpose (for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit) and the method (immersion in water). Anyone baptized for a different purpose or a different method really hasn't been baptized and needs to obey God's command to be saved.

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