

The Theology of Baptism

In talking to my friend, Blake, about a month ago, I decided to change what message I would give for the third time. I got a little nervous as I was preparing this message, even though I had given it before, because I was changing it up for this morning. But I did a dry run on baptism and then I was okay!

Why a message on baptism? Baptism is one of two ordinances of the local church (required practice or regulation). The other is a memorial service of the Lord's Supper, which we will observe in about twenty minutes. It is amazing that such an important practice is so confusing to some. It is actually quite simple.

Here are the Terms (the New Testament Greek word occurs 3x in the Hebrew Old Testament Greek translation - LXX). These words are transliterated into English.

- Baptizo – “to baptize” (89x): verb, meaning to immerse or like ‘50’s songs, “to dip, to dip” (short version baptō occurs 3x).
- Baptisma – “baptism” (22x): noun.
- Baptismos – “washing” (4x): participle, used of washing (e.g. pots and pans).
- Baptistais – “Baptist” (22x): nick name John picked up because of his frequent practice.

Approach to Understanding

- There are six uses of the terms so we must look in context to determine usage.
- It's important to ask which usage when encountering a passage with the word to “baptize” or “baptism”.
- There are three *non-technical* uses and three *technical* uses.

Non-technical Usages:

- Washings
 - Religious - Mark 7:4; 10:38-39; Mt. 23:25; Lk. 11:38
 - Mundane (outside NT – e.g. I will baptize the dishes!)
- Obscure metaphorical usage - I Cor. 10:2: by being identified with Moses and the cloud, they were united with and identified with Moses and his ministry, i.e., they were “immersed” in that ministry.
- Jewish proselyte baptism (Not found in the Bible).

The First Technical Usage: The Baptism of the Holy Spirit or Spiritual Baptism (no water!)

- Dry (cf. I Pet. 3:21).
- Rom. 6:3-5 (cf. Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:12): We are identified with His death, burial, & resurrection
- Occurs at the moment of salvation.
- I Cor. 12:13: We are placed into the Body of Christ. This is universal, even for the carnal Corinthian Christians.
- Occurs once. It is permanent, not to be repeated.
- Apostolic sign gifts not required as proof.
- Not to be confused with other ministries of the Holy Spirit (filling, indwelling, sealing, regenerating, teaching, leading – see attached).

The Second Technical Usage: Water Baptism of repentance (John's – Matt. 3:1-17)

Because the King was present on earth, Israel was given an opportunity to repent, or have a change in mind toward their God, which was supposed to result in a change in their behavior. Only a remnant made the decision to repent, thus the offer was withdrawn and will be offered to a future Israel when the entire nation will repent. But John's baptism was to identify those people who did repent as distinct from those who did not.

The Third Technical Usage: Believer's Water Baptism

- **Not required for salvation**

- Baptismal regeneration (both "in" and "by")
 - Thief on the cross (Lk. 23:39ff.)
 - Works righteousness (analogous to circumcision required for salvation)
 - Water is just water (H₂O)
- Misunderstood texts (samples)
 - Mk. 16:16
 - Acts 2:38 (for example)
 - Peter doesn't mention baptism in his four other sermons in Acts (3:12-26; 5:31; 10:43; 15:11; cf. I Pet. 3:21 written almost 30 years later).
 - Cornelius and his house received the Holy Spirit *before* baptism (Acts 10:44)
 - Eis means "with respect to" or possibly, "because of" or "on account of" (Matt. 12:41)
 - Some take this as "baptism of the Holy Spirit" (it is used that way in the context – Pentecost)
 - See attached diagram (repentance used as equivalent for faith, aorist imperatives)

- **Baptism is for believers**

- The New Testament practice *and* that of early church was that baptism *follows* belief. And it closely followed belief, as that external sign would identify that person as a believer.
- The baptism of infants would have been commanded in epistles. The baptism of infants began with covenant theology, and a misunderstanding of texts such as Acts 16:31-33 (first person singular: you, singular).
- Faith *alone* is required for spiritual baptism, of which water baptism is the external sign (like a wedding ring).
- We get baptized in water to make an outward public demonstration of something that has already taken place on the inside. That is the sequence in Scripture. People are first saved. Then water baptism follows. That is why we call it "believer's baptism". By being baptized, we are making a public statement that we are following the Lord, being identified with His death, burial, and resurrection.

- **Immersion** is clearly the mode of believer's baptism

- It's the basic meaning of the word; other Greek words could have been used: ekeo means pouring; rhantizo means sprinkling. Actually, pouring and sprinkling arose historically as a way to baptize someone who was severely ill.
- Book of Acts: pools and rivers were used (cf. Jn. 3:23 – “much water”).
- Prepositions used: “into”, “out of”, not “on”, “upon”
- It was the predominant practice of the early church until the 12th century
- Okay to be **rebaptized** – Acts 19:1-7
- G.C.: Matt. 28:18-20 – not only are we commanded to follow the Lord in believer's baptism, but we are to encourage others to be baptized.

Obedience to the Command!

L. Swanson
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Operations of the Holy Spirit for the Believer

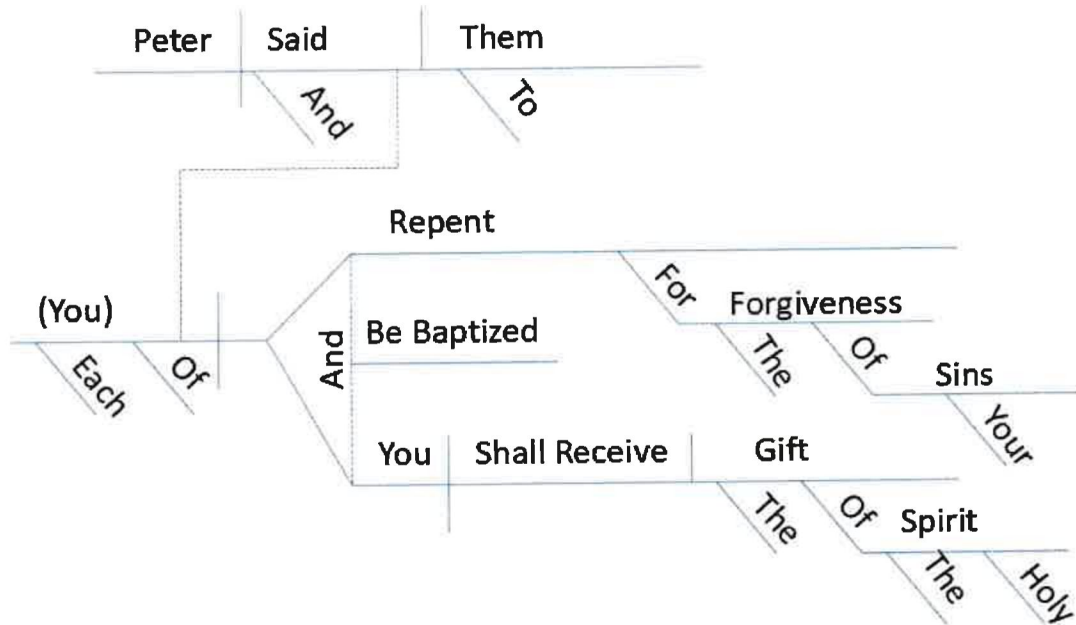
Repeated or On-going	One-time or Permanent
<u>Filling of the Spirit:</u> “empowered by the Holy Spirit for growth, worship, submission, and service” (Jn. 7:37-39; Acts 4:31; Eph. 5:18-21)	<u>Indwelling of the Holy Spirit:</u> “at the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit permanently comes to live inside of the believer” (Jn. 14:16; Rom. 5:5; I Cor. 2:12; 6:19; II Cor. 5:5; I Jn. 3:24); “He also comes to live inside the church” (I Cor. 3:16)
<u>Teaching or Illumination:</u> “an ability to apply Biblical principles in our lives” (Jn. 14:26; 16:13-14; I Cor. 2:12-13)	<u>Baptism of the Spirit:</u> “action at salvation which placed us as members into the Body of Christ, and actualized our co-crucifixion with Christ” (Mt. 3:11; Acts 1:5; 11:15-16; Rom. 6:3-4; I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:4-6; Col. 2:12; II Tim. 1:14; I Pet. 3:21)
<u>The Leading of the Spirit:</u> “a supernatural ability to make moral choices, as a replacement for the Law” (Rom. 8:12-14; Gal. 5:18; cf. “walk by the Spirit” – Gal. 5:16)	<u>Sealed by the Holy Spirit:</u> “permanently identified the child of God as belonging to and protected by God the Holy Spirit” (II Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30)
<u>The Internal Witness:</u> “the Holy Spirit assures the children of God of their salvation” (Rom. 8:16; Eph. 1:13-14; I Jn. 3:24)	<u>Spiritual Gifts by the Holy Spirit:</u> “a unique spiritual ability to serve God given at salvation” (Rom. 12:3-8; I Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:11-16; I Pet. 4:10)
<u>Intercession of the Spirit:</u> “the Holy Spirit both intercedes for us, and guides and enables us as we pray” (Rom. 8:26-28; Eph. 6:18; Jd. 20)	<u>Anointing:</u> “an ability to detect error in false teachers” (I Jn. 2:20, 26-27)
<u>Sanctification:</u> “the progressive process of being set apart for God’s use” (Rom. 5:5; 14:17; 15:13, 16; Gal. 5:16, 18); by the way, the word “Holy” in Holy Spirit comes from the same root	<u>Efficacious Grace or Effectual Calling:</u> “a work of the Holy Spirit that opens the heart in response to the gospel” (Jn. 6:37, 44, 63-65; 10:27; Acts 16:14; I Cor. 1:24; II Thess. 2:14; I Tim. 6:12; I Pet. 1:3)
	<u>Regeneration (New Birth):</u> “spiritual birth out of spiritual death” (Jn. 1:12-13; 3:3-8; II Cor. 5:17; Titus 3:5; Ja. 1:18; I Pet. 1:3, 23)

There are two additional ministries of the Holy Spirit that are universal, irrespective of belief: 1)

Convicting the world: “the Holy Spirit universally convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment” (Jn. 16:7-11). The Holy Spirit does this for everyone, whether they come to faith in Christ or not. A believer continues to be convicted of sin to assist spiritual growth by both the Holy Spirit and the conscience (Psa. 139:23-24; Rom. 14:22-23; Phil. 3:15b; I Jn. 1:5-10), and, 2) The

Inspiration of the Scriptures: “the Holy Spirit superintended the process of the writing of the Bible so that while using the human authors and their personalities, grammar, vocabulary, and circumstances, the process resulted in the message being the inerrant, infallible, verbal, plenary, inspired word of God in the originals (Mt. 5:17-18; Jn. 10:35b; I Thess. 2:13; II Tim. 3:16-17; II Pet. 1:20-21; 3:15-16). Lance Swanson Revised 5-27-14

Diagram of Acts 2:38



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