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Baptism

The theology of baptism

The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" 35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" [37] [c] 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

(Acts 8:34-39)

1) Immersion or sprinkling

Francis Xavier



Is said to have baptised over 100,000 people in India

The number of people he baptised in the short time he had to do it meant that after his death, his right forearm was taken back to Rome to be put on display



Francis Xavier was a great example of baptism

As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?"

Acts 8:36



In our church constitution, membership is by baptism by immersion for those who have not been baptised

Most churches therefore take the stance that immersion is a more scriptural means of baptism but would not expect those who have been baptised by another means such as sprinkling should be baptised again

There are some cases where baptism is done by sprinkling

- To do with the person's health
- If there is no water



When we came into the wilderness, a Hebrew with us became mortally sick, so we were in great distress, for we did not know what to do for him. But we did not abandon him. Each of us carried him as far as he was able. We wanted to get him to a city or to a market town so that he should not die in the wilderness. But when the young man was completely worn out and was brought to the point of death by hunger and a burning fever, by utter exhaustion and a raging thirst from the heat (in fact he was about to expire), he could no longer bear to be carried. With many tears, we decided to abandon him in the wilderness and go our way. We could see death from thirst lying in store for us. We were in tears when we set him down in the sand. When he saw that we were going to leave him, he began to adjure us, saying: 'By the God who is going to judge both the quick and the dead, leave me not to die as a Jew, but as a Christian. Have mercy on me and baptise me so that I too may depart this life as a Christian and go to the Lord.' We said to him: 'Truly brother, it is impossible for us to do anything of the sort. We are laymen and baptizing is bishops' work and priests.' Besides, there is no water here.' But he continued to adjure us in the same terms and with tears, saying: 'Oh, Christians, please do not deprive me of this benefit.' While we were most unsure of what to do next, the fellow with initiative among us, inspired by God, said to us: 'Stand him up and take off his clothes.' We got him to his feet and with great difficulty and stripped him. The one with initiative filled both his hands with sand and poured it three times over the sick man's head saying: 'Theodore is baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'

2) Essential or important

Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Mark 16:16

Baptism is the external signature of the inner faith of the heart

Robert Jamieson

"Baptism is not necessary for salvation. But it is necessary if we are to be obedient to Christ, for he commanded Baptism for all who believe in him.

Wayne Grudem

- A wedding may not be necessary for romantic love
- It is however the best demonstration of love between a couple
- A baptism is similar because it is a ceremony we can use to demonstrate the love we already have

3) Adult or any age



Eunuch saw the water and wanted to be baptised (verse 36)

Baptism must have come up in the discussion with Philip (verse 35)

People must come to baptism, freely as responsible persons, so that their baptism is a personal response to the word of God

Kevin Roy

The Ethiopian official understood what Philip had explained and therefore believed

Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Acts 8:37

Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Mark 16:16

Faith must precede baptism, as these words of Christ

Andrew Gill

Therefore, these verses and comments point many to the theology that baptism is for those who understand the significance of the act

An alternative view is that babies can be baptised (also known as christened) My siblings and I were all christened in the Presbyterian church We were all later baptised believing that while our christenings were important, baptism itself was complete baptism because we understood what we were doing – we were making our own personal decision to make a public declaration to be followers of Jesus

Infant baptism says that salvation is about what God has done, rather than what we have done. It also testifies that our children are real, genuine members of God's kingdom. They are not little pagans that need converting

“Baptise those Babies” – Craig Schwarze

Dedication is an alternative to infant baptism

Responsibility of the parents and the church to raise the child until they make a decision themselves to be baptised when they themselves understand the significance of baptism

Dedication is therefore similar to infant baptism but allows a person to make a decision themselves rather than the decision being made by their parents.

This is the position I take and is probably the most common theological stance on the age someone can be baptised

Theoretically, believers can be baptised at any age. Practically, though, while many children make a personal decision for Christ at an early age, baptism is often postponed to teenage years when it is felt that people can better appreciate and grasp the significance of the ordinance

Kevin Roy

For me, if a person was baptised as an infant, I would support their decision to be baptised as an adult if that was what they wanted to do.

I also believe that baptism only needs to be done once so if someone was to count their infant baptism as baptism, I would happily support that decision.

4) One or many baptisms

Baptism of John the Baptist

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the interior and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?"

"No," they answered, "we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

"Into what, then, were you baptised?" Paul asked.

"The baptism of John," they replied.

Paul explained: "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the One coming after him, that is, in Jesus."

On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Acts 19:1-6

These disciples were baptised twice

The baptism of John is an incomplete baptism (which is why we don't have it today)

It became redundant after people were being baptised in the name of Jesus

The need of repentance is important but it is incorporated in the baptism of Jesus

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a separate baptism

Baptism shows the trinity working together as the Holy Spirit came on people when they were baptised in the name of Jesus

For we were all baptised by one Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:13

When the Holy Spirit comes on someone it is often called a baptism of the spirit

With the Ethiopian official, the Holy Spirit was involved with the process

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

Acts 8:39

Usually the Spirit falls on the person being baptised not the one doing the baptising (he still went on his way rejoicing)

If I disappear after I baptise someone, at least it is in line with scripture

What about the day of Pentecost?

For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:5

When the day of Pentecost came, the believers were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw tongues like flames of a fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Acts 2:1-4

I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.

Joel 2:28

Being baptised with the Holy Spirit is when a believer in Jesus Christ receives extraordinary power for Christ-exalting ministry

John Piper

I believe the baptism of the Spirit during Pentecost, where believers were empowered to ministry and proclaim the gospel, was the same baptism for the disciples in Ephesus when they were baptised as followers of Jesus

When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied

Acts 19:6

Being filled with the Spirit can happen during baptism, as in Ephesus, or it can be described as 'being baptised', a term that does not mean a separate baptism to being baptised in the Lord Jesus.

Summary

Full immersion is the scriptural way to be baptised

Baptism itself does not save but is rather a demonstration of a person's faith

It is better to be baptised with an understanding of what it signifies

Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a pouring out of the Spirit at God's discretion

Challenge: To consider being baptised if you haven't already