

The History of the Doctrine of Baptism

The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

I Peter 3:21

The idea of baptism became common practice around the 3rd century B.C., typically being used to recognise the departing of one religious body by joining another. The proselytisation of Gentiles to Judaism was widely the most common. Gentiles would forsake their heritage of pagan practices to identify with Jews and therefore the method chosen to depict such was that of baptism. According to ALL historical records, immersion was the only method used to display such actions. The majority of Jews no longer considered baptised individuals Gentiles and welcomed them as fellow-Jews.

It was almost 400 years of silence, when Israel possessed no prophet and heard nothing from the Lord, until John that is. John openly preached repentance and faith in the *coming* Messiah. John used the same common ‘sign’ of repentance which was used when Gentiles forsook their heritage (whether family or national) to confess the one true God of Israel. John became so identified with this practice he was titled John the ‘Baptist’. There is no other method, per Scripture, practiced to Baptise people, therefore the perfect practice of baptism was performed by John in the form of immersion.

- This is supported by Scripture in John’s ministry as large bodies of water were needed in order to baptise: [*John 3.23*](#)

“And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.”, *Mark 1.5* And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.”

- Had baptism been performed by merely ‘pouring’ or ‘sprinkling’, there would be NO need for **“much water”** - much less to be “in” the river Jordan.

Baptism had already been pictured in identification of religious truth and conversion. Immersion depicts greatly: (the death), burial and resurrection of the promised Messiah. In this fact, the importance of Christ’s baptism is seen. He did not need a sign of conversion, He is the sinless Saviour. However, with His baptism, Jesus Christ identified Himself with the truth of which John was preaching and therefore pictures His (own death), burial and resurrection which was to come some three and one half years later. The question of Jesus’ baptism as to whether or not it was by immersion is answered precisely and perfectly in:

***Mark 1:9-11* “And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. ¹⁰ And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: ¹¹ And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”**

Take strong note to the fact that they came **“up out of the water”**... No pouring or sprinkling took place here!

The context of Biblical Baptism:

Baptism C _____

The baptism of new converts was a clear command of Jesus Christ as expressed in the Great Commission: *Matthew 28:19*
“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”

Baptism P _____

The practice of Biblical Baptism is vividly seen in the New Testament church only status post conversion:

Acts 2:41 **“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.”**

Lydia

Acts 16:14-15 **“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. ¹⁵ And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained *us*.”**

Philippian Jailor

Acts 16:30-34 **And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? ³¹ And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. ³² And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. ³³ And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all**

his, straightway. ³⁴ And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”

Stephanas

I Corinthians 1:16 “And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.”

The Conception of Anti-Biblical Baptism

C_____ baptism

The concept of sprinkling derived from the great difficulty in baptising the infirm and handicapped. The practice arose as early as the 2nd century A.D. and was taught God would accept this as the ‘*best*’ form of baptism since these particular people were incapable of being immersed. However, as the Greek language began to demise, the true meaning of word baptism lost its familiarity. This led to the false belief of any identification with Christ and water was considered a Biblical baptism.

As in most cases, false teaching starts out small and grows exponentially. As early as the 3rd century A.D., a church leader named Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, taught baptism, the Lord's supper and identification with the church were essential *for* conversion (sounds awful familiar). This is a clear early false teaching of baptismal regeneration. What followed was the fruit of this wicked tree, namely infant baptism, of which Tertullian strongly taught against the idea in the 3rd century.

The time line that started with being 1 degree of the mark proceeds throughout history with the distortion of not only baptism, but the church and its pure essence:

- Fourth century (327 A.D.), Emperor Constantine merged the church and state. Baptism took on a whole new meaning with most people. It was now was looked on as a sign of homage to the state.
- Sixth century (550 A.D.), Justinian ordered all non-Christians in the Roman Empire to become 'Christians', including children, by way of 'baptism'. (Control just like all cults)
- Ninth century, Charlemagne ordered the Germanic tribes to become 'Christians', including infants, again by way of baptism. It was considered political resistance to refuse.
- Twelfth century A.D. the common practice of sprinkling accepted in Rome.
- Seventeenth century most countries commonly accepted sprinkling as a form of baptism.
- For almost 300 years there were three main teachings about baptism:
 - The Roman Catholic teachings of sprinkling infants as a part of their salvation and for church membership;

- The Protestant teaching of baptism (typically by sprinkling) of infants for church membership; and
- The Baptist teaching of baptism by immersion of believers only (as a believer one has to have the ability to believe and make a decision, ruling out infants).
- 17th century in England, the church of England was determined to do away with the practice of baptism by immersion in the nation. They did so by printing new Greek lexicons which erroneously taught the word '*baptizo*' meant 'sprinkle'. However there were many Greek students who knew better and ridiculed the text so it was soon removed from public use.
- Mid-19th century a new teaching reared its ugly head, known as Campbellism. Alexander Campbell, an active Baptist in Kentucky and Tennessee (USA) began to teach the act of baptism was a part of expressing faith.
 - This addition to the Gospel of Christ was rejected by the vast majority of Baptist. Soon the Campbellites (as they were known) formed a separate movement calling themselves "Disciples of Christ" or "Church of Christ." This created a fourth distinct teaching of baptism.

As the Roman Catholic system grew in power and strength from its conception in 327 A.D., organisational aspects of the institution grew with it. Thus the idea of baptism as a part of salvation became more common. The denial of this doctrine was used to mark non-conformist to the Catholic institution. The Protestant reformers did teach the glorious truth of salvation by faith, which was incompatible with the Catholic institution. However, most reformers finally concluded infant baptism,

typically by sprinkling, was good and therefore constituted church membership.

Baptist or Baptismal P_____

Proof of this is in the very words of our Lord: “**And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**” (*Matthew 16.18* emphasis added). When the disciples came to Caesarea Philippi the church was yet formed. The Lord said ‘**shall**’, not ‘is’ a substantive verb such as ‘am’, ‘are’ or ‘be’. Instead the Lord chose to use a verb in the infinitive is especially used here in the future tense.

Whereas John the Baptist was a great and wonderful man of God (**For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist:but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.** *Luke 7.28*). Nevertheless, John was not part of the church which is the Bride of Christ, he is the ‘best man’ per se, to the Bridegroom, but not part of the Bride. *John 3* records John’s very words:

“28Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. 29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom:but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice:this my joy therefore is fulfilled. 30

He must increase, but I must decrease.”

Many good men and woman of God have fallen prey to this teaching, they are not to be excommunicated, but educated and edified with the proper Scriptural teaching of rightly dividing the word of truth.

One can plainly see that “a **little leaven leaveneth the whole lump...**” *I Corinthians 5:6*