

THE BIBLE VIEW

In This Issue:

[*Down and Under*](#)

[*A Symbol*](#)

[*A Desert Baptism*](#)

[*Jesus' Baptism*](#)

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Theme: Baptism

Down and Under

Bill Brinkworth

The Scriptures have much to say about baptism. In Mark 1, one can glean some important facts about that step of obedience to God's commandment. Some of what is seen there would dispel what many think incorrectly about baptism.

In Mark 1:9, we read that even Jesus was baptized. This should prick the hearts of those who are saved but never humbled themselves to be scripturally baptized. If Jesus was baptized, certainly we should.

The fact that Jesus was baptized shows that those who believe baptism "washes away sin" are wrong, as Jesus had no sin to wash away. Baptism is simply a commandment that should be obeyed by those who have trusted Christ as Saviour.

When Jesus was baptized, God immediately spoke to Him, expressing that He was well pleased with what His Son had done (Mark 1:11). When we follow Christ's example by being scripturally baptized, the Father is also well pleased with one of our first steps of obedience. Unfortunately, too many do not obey God in this area, and never grow spiritually because they have grieved the Spirit of God by their disobedience. The rest of their lives may be affected by their never having taken that first step of doing what God had required of them.

Right after Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit directed Him to do something else (Mark 1:12-13). If Jesus was not baptized, His ministry may not have gone any further. Right after we show God that we will do whatever He tells us by obeying His first command, He will use us further. God desires our obedience.

This instance also teaches that baptism is by immersion, not sprinkling christening water over a baby's head. We read in Mark 1:10 that Christ came "out of the water," so He was physically in the water. Christening does not picture the death, burial, and resurrection that immersion does in the baptismal waters.

When christening is performed today, it is done on babies. In the Bible, all instances of baptism involve believers. How can a baby know who Jesus is, let alone that what he is doing is picturing what the Saviour did for us? Christening is not scriptural baptism and is a relatively modern denominational practice.

If you have been saved, have you obeyed God by being baptized? God will be pleased if you obey Him in this area. Your future spiritual growth may depend on it.

A Symbol

Oliver Green

Baptism is like a wedding ring; they both symbolize that a transaction has occurred. A wedding ring symbolizes marriage, just as baptism symbolizes salvation. Wearing a wedding ring does not make you married, any more than being baptized makes you saved.

To extend the parallel, if a person does not wear a wedding ring, you can usually assume that the person is not married. So, it was in New Testament times that if a person was not baptized, they were likely not a believer.

On this, we must be clear, baptism is a symbol of salvation and only a symbol. Like a wedding ring, it is such an effective symbol that it should never be taken for granted or taken lightly.

A Desert Baptism

Edited from a "Water Baptism" pamphlet by M. R. DeHaan

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." Acts 8:35-39

The evangelist Philip was commanded by God to go into the desert. There he had the opportunity to preach about Jesus to an Ethiopian eunuch. The eunuch had been to Jerusalem to worship, but had come back from that religious center of ceremonialism and religion without anyone having told him how to be saved from a tormenting Hell.

When Philip met the man, the eunuch was reading the Scriptures. He was interested, but spiritually lost. Philip preached to him the only way of salvation — by trusting Jesus' sacrifice as payment for his sins.

The man believed and then requested that Philip baptize him in a pool of water along the way. Philip told him that it was his privilege to be baptized, upon one condition, that he believe and confess that Jesus was the Son of God. After making that confession, Philip and the eunuch dismounted from the carriage, stepped into the water, and the eunuch was baptized by immersion.

Notice the eunuch was an adult. He was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ as the result of Philip's teaching and preaching. The man requested to be baptized. Philip did not command him to be baptized, but said, "... *If thou believest thou mayest* ...". Baptism here was a privilege and a testimony, not a requirement for salvation. It was voluntary on the part of the applicant, and it was by immersion.

After the eunuch's salvation and baptism, Philip was supernaturally taken away, and the man went on his way rejoicing.

Jesus' Baptism

H. A. Ironside

John's baptism was unto repentance. He announced the near approach of the kingdom of God and called upon the people of Israel to get right with God, that they might be ready to receive and enter into it. Those who turned to God, confessed their sins, and were baptized (Luke 7:28-29).

"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. And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John." Luke 7:28-29

Jesus had no sins to confess. He had nothing of which to repent, yet He came to John for baptism, much to the desert preacher's surprise (Mat. 3:13-14). Jesus reassured John that he should baptize Him.

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him." Mat. 3:13-15

God's son submitted to baptism as the divinely appointed way of declaring His interest in and identification with the godly remnant in Israel, who were waiting for His coming. His baptism was a pledge to fulfil every righteous demand of the throne of God on behalf of those who owned their guilt and took the place of repentance before Him. They were like debtors giving their notes to a creditor — acknowledging a debt they could not pay. He, by His baptism, endorsed all their notes and made Himself responsible to pay all they owed. On the cross, He settled for all when He endured the baptism of judgment in our place.

"Why should our Lord, who was without sin, have come to a baptism of repentance? Because He was made sin for us. For the same reason He suffered the curse of the law. It became Him, being in the likeness of sinful flesh, to go through those 'rites' and purifications which belonged to that flesh. There is no more strangeness in His having been baptized by John than in His keeping the Passovers. The one 'rite', as the other, belonged to sinners, and among the transgressors He was numbered." — Alford