

LIVING AS PILGRIMS

Salvation and Baptism

TEXT: 1 Peter 3:21

For context, we will begin in verse 20.

1 Peter 3:20–21 20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. 21 There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

INTRODUCTION: The subject of Peter's words at this point is baptism. I cannot help but remember this story:

The young son of a Baptist minister was in church one morning when he saw for the first time baptism by immersion. He was greatly interested in it, and the next morning proceeded to baptize... you guessed it... his three cats in the bathtub.

The youngest kitten bore it very well, and so did the younger cat, but the old family tom cat rebelled.

The old feline struggled with the boy, clawed and tore his skin, and finally got away. With considerable effort the boy caught the old tom again and proceeded with the "ceremony."

But the cat acted worse than ever, clawing and spitting, and scratching the boy's face.

Finally, after barely getting the cat splattered with water, he dropped him on the floor in disgust and said:

"Fine, be a Methodist if you want to!"

Now the Holy Spirit prompts Peter to make a brief comment about baptism. This is hardly the most extensive teaching in the Scripture about baptism, so we would do well to begin our examination of this verse in light of the other major teachings of the N.T. **There are 95 verses in the New Testament in which a form of the Greek word for baptism appears.**

As a foundation for our consideration of this verse in 1 Peter, make note of the following:

I. NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM IS ALWAYS FOR BELIEVERS ONLY.

Romans 6:3-4 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

None of the references in the N.T. indicate that anyone other than believers were baptized with Christian baptism. **There is not a single example of infant baptism, because an infant cannot be a believer.**

Therefore the Bible never speaks of "having someone baptized." **Baptism is something a person who is of an age of understanding chooses for himself or herself.** Notice in Acts 8 the Ethiopian chose for himself and asked to be baptized.

If you were baptized before you came personally to faith in Christ, it was not believer's baptism as the Scripture teaches.

II. NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM IS ALWAYS BY IMMERSION.

The meaning of “baptize” - to “immerse”

The meaning clearly shown in context

Mark 1:9-10 9 It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.

The meaning in secular Greek

The clearest example that shows the meaning of baptizo is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should ... be 'baptized' (baptizo) in the vinegar solution.

The primary point of above is that **baptizo means complete immersion as opposed to sprinkling or pouring.**

So, why does our English text say “baptize” rather than immerse?

The method of baptism for the early church was always immersion, even after the beginning of the Catholic church.

Even today if you visit Catholic churches built before 1250 A.D. you will often find an ancient baptistry where converts were immersed!

As the church gave a sacramental meaning to baptism, that is that baptism was the visible means through which God's invisible grace flowed, then there

became the necessity to baptize infants so that they could be the recipients of God's grace.

Since infants could not be immersed, sprinkling and pouring arose as the methodology of baptism.

III. BAPTISM IS FOR OBEDIENCE AND TESTIMONY, NOT FOR SALVATION.

Many verses deal with salvation. Do they indicate baptism accomplishes salvation?

John 3:16-18 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Romans 10:9-10 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Is there a case where we know someone was saved and not baptized? (Most in N.T. were both.)

Yes, the thief on the cross.

This is not to minimize baptism, but to properly recognize what it is.

Baptism is a testimony of the of the believer's salvation through faith in Christ who died, was buried, and rose from the dead. (Rom. 6:1-4)

This is the reference we here read in 1 Peter.

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He says, "As the ark reminds us of God's salvation of Noah and his family, there is a figure, a picture that portrays the salvation that God has given us; and that picture is baptism."

Now lest someone take his words to mean that it is the act of baptism that actually produces the salvation, that baptism actually does the cleansing, he says,

“Baptism is ‘the answer of a good conscience toward God,’ that is - baptism is a step of obedience for the new believer.”

Jesus set the example.

Matthew 3:15 But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him.

Jesus commanded it as a preliminary step of discipleship.

Matthew 28:19-20 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

CONCLUSION: My friend, it is a glorious moment when a person yields to the sweet wooing voice of the Holy Spirit to turn their life over to Christ, trusting Him as Lord and Savior. And then as soon as possible after their salvation to enter into the water and picture for all present that they believe that Jesus died for their sin, was buried, and rose again on the third day that they might also rise again.

Has that sweet reality happened in your life? It can today. You can give your heart to Christ tonight and follow Him in baptism as early as next Sunday if you desire. Or if you have trusted the Lord but never followed Him in believer's baptism by immersion as the Scripture teaches, you may come today and take this step of obedience, as an act of a good conscience toward God.