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Doctrinal Outlines

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT BAPTISM

I. Introduction

- A. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations," Jesus commanded His disciples, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).
- B. This plain, direct command of Jesus Christ certainly sounds simple enough, doesn't it? Yet surprisingly, today, more than 1,900 years later, the varying opinions about the proper methods, reasons, symbols, age for and words said at baptism are legion.
- C. But the incredible need to properly understand this topic is greater in our sinful age than ever before! For every single one of us has, in the clearest terms, been commanded to be baptized upon meeting the qualifications.
- D. As Acts 2:38 directs, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you" (King James Version).
- E. How can we be properly baptized unless we understand this important doctrine of Jesus Christ? Happily, in spite of the utter confusion surrounding this subject in religious circles, the biblical truth about baptism is plain and clear.

II. The Basic Doctrine

- A. Water baptism is the ceremony by which a mature person is immersed quickly under water, upon proper repentance and belief, accompanied by the proper words, in a symbolic burial of the sinful man and raising of the new, as a show of faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- *B. Those who undergo a proper baptism are promised forgiveness of sins and receipt of God's Holy Spirit.

III. The Usual Teachings of This World

- A. Certainly, many religionists would disagree with the simple definition above, even though each part can be proven from the Bible.

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B. Some think, for example, that children and even infants of only a few days old should be baptized. Others do not believe in immersion of the baptizee, but rather consider sprinkling or pouring of water over the person to be sufficient to baptize properly.

MORMONS C. A few have even misunderstood one biblical verse to conclude that they may, and even should, be "baptized for the dead" (meaning to them that they may be baptized in place of and for the benefit of a deceased person).

* D. Finally, some misunderstand John the Baptist's words that Jesus Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11), thinking this means that Christians will speak in an excited jibberish that they mistakenly call "tongues." Clearly, the confusion needs to be wiped away.

IV. The Bible Teaching

A. We should review the clear command that we be baptized, which states in part: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38, KJV).

B. Further, we should compare that verse with Romans 8:9, which states dogmatically, "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."

C. The conclusion is astounding:

+ LAY HANDS
1. If we are not baptized we do not receive the Holy Spirit. Yet if we do not receive the Holy Spirit, we do not belong to Jesus Christ!

2. Proper baptism is essential.

C. The word baptize comes from the Greek word baptizo, which means "immerse" or "plunge into."

1. Since the word baptize means "to immerse," to say that sprinkling or pouring means to baptize is a contradiction of terms.

2. Sprinkling or pouring is not immersing, and therefore is not baptizing.

D. Besides, those who would say it is proper to sprinkle or pour ignore the plain examples of the Bible.

1. Jesus Himself was baptized in the Jordan River and had to have been immersed, for He "came up...from" the water (Matthew 3:13-17).
2. Likewise, John baptized in Aenon because there was "much water" there (John 3:23). He wouldn't have needed "much water" for mere sprinkling or pouring.
3. Again, Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch traveled to where they could find enough water to go "down into" (Acts 8:36-39).

E. But what does the immersion of a person under water symbolize? Romans 6:3-4, 6 explains:

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 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...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."

- F. Baptism is a symbolic burial of the old, sinful self. A new person intent on obeying God in every way comes out of the water. Baptism is therefore an outward statement, by our actions, of the inward determination to obey God and leave our sinful past.
- G. But it is even more than this, for, as Paul explains in these verses, our baptism is also a subtle picturing of our faith in the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By acting out His death in our baptism, we show our acceptance of His death's meaning in our life. The results of baptism in our spiritual lives are the forgiveness of our sins and the subsequent receipt of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).
- H. The actual process of forgiveness through Jesus' blood is called justification. And although proper baptism is prerequisite to receipt of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is actually received in an associated but separate ceremony called the laying on of hands, performed immediately after baptism.
- I. Forgiveness of sin and receipt of the Spirit do not come to us automatically. No, there are qualifications one must meet before baptism.
1. The first of these is repentance (Acts 2:38). Repentance is the abhorrence of past sin and the

sinful self, and the decision to obey God in the future.

2. The second qualification is ~~belief~~ faith (Mark 1:14-15, Acts 8:34-37, Mark 16:15-16).

a. The faith required by a person at baptism is our own human faith, rather than the faith of Jesus Christ in us, which we receive after baptism, by His Holy Spirit in us (Galatians 2:16).

b. This faith is toward Christ (Acts 20:21), and is a belief in who and what Christ is, in His message (the Gospel) and in His sacrifice and forgiveness through it.

18 yrs min.

J. Now we can begin to see why an infant or even teenager should not be baptized. Children are simply too young to understand the deep symbolism, or to assume the responsibilities of such a decision.

K. And certainly, the living attitudes of mind required for proper baptism preclude anyone being baptized on behalf of a deceased person.

L. Finally, proper baptism requires the proper words be said. Confusion has arisen about whether we should be baptized in the name of Jesus or in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

1. We should indeed be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). But this phrase merely means that the person who does the baptizing (usually ~~the~~ the minister) is doing the baptism not on his own authority, but by the authority of Jesus Christ.

2. In addition, we should be baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

a. The Greek word for "in" here would better convey the sense if translated "into."

b. We are baptized into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, meaning we are being initiated into the Family of God.

c. We are baptized, not into a denomination of men, but through receipt of the Spirit into the Body of Christ, which composes the Church (I Corinthians 12:13).

- M. A few words must be said about John the Baptist's statement in Matthew 3:11 that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit.
1. This merely refers to the actual receipt of the Holy Spirit after baptism (in the laying-on-of-hands ceremony).
 2. The sometimes-held belief that baptism with the Spirit is the overpowering gyrations and jibberish that some people call "tongues" is mistaken.
 3. Our booklet The Tongues Question contains more information on this subject.

V. Key Verses

Here are a few main scriptures that help explain baptism:

- A. Hebrews 6:1-2 shows baptism is a basic doctrine of God's Church.
- B. Acts 2:38 shows baptism is commanded, that it should be in Jesus' name, that repentance is required, that it is for the forgiveness of sins and that receipt of the Holy Spirit will follow (after laying on of hands).
- C. Acts 8:37 shows that belief is required for baptism.
- D. Romans 6:1-6 shows the dual meaning of baptism as the burial of the old self and the analogy of Jesus Christ's sacrifice.
- E. Matthew 3:13-17 shows that baptism is by complete immersion in water, since Jesus Christ Himself, after baptism in the Jordan River, "came up...from the water."
- F. Matthew 28:19 shows that the Church should baptize, and that baptism is into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- G. Our booklet All About Water Baptism offers a thorough study of this topic, including many other facts and scriptures.

VI. Conclusion

Yes, baptism is a most important subject. And, although through the last 1,900 years many religions have professed to baptize properly and have not, baptism is accurately understood today by God's true Church, and done exactly as Jesus commanded.

