

What Does This Mean? (Regarding Baptism)

Jason Hilburn

Years ago a married couple responded to a door knocking campaign by expressing interest in a personal Bible study. My wife and I studied with them, and we eventually got to the subject of baptism. Upon reading various Scriptures, the woman with whom we were studying acknowledged that baptism was necessary for salvation, but her husband was in denial of this fact. After studying other pertinent Scriptures, we all read these words together:

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 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 (1 Peter 3:20-21).

We noted that the Bible says that baptism saves us (by God's grace through obedience to His commands), but the husband said he did not believe that. I then asked him what Peter meant when he wrote that "baptism doth also now save us." What happened next is something that has been etched deeply into my memory since that day. He sat there in silence staring at me after I asked the question, and tears began welling up in his eyes. He refused to admit that baptism is necessary for salvation. He saw the Truth that day, but refused to admit it.

Perhaps he denied the Truth because he had deceased family members who had never been Scripturally baptized. Perhaps he denied the Truth because he had always been taught that one does not have to be baptized to be saved, and thus he chose tradition over Truth. I do not know the reason, but I do know that excuses such as those will not avail on the Judgment Day when we all will be judged by the Word of God (John 12:48; Matt. 7:21-23). It seems that his denial also caused his wife to remain in disobedience to God as well, which is just as sad. To this day I do not know if either of them ever obeyed the Gospel, but I hope that they have or will before it is too late.

Of course, this is by no means the first time someone saw the clear Truth of God's Word and stubbornly rejected it, but any time this happens it is sad because a soul has rejected God's wonderful plan for saving man. They have rejected the sacrifice Christ made for them by not

obeying the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in baptism (Romans 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Col. 2:12-13; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; 1 Pet. 4:17).

The man I mentioned was asked a simple question which he refused to answer. Here are more questions that demand honest answers:

1. Salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). If people are in Christ before baptism, why does the Bible say that people are “baptized into Christ”? (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3).
2. The Bible says that the blood of Christ was shed for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28). Why does it also say that baptism is for the remission of sins? (Acts 2:38).
3. The Bible says that the blood of Christ washes away our sins (Rev. 1:5). Why does it also say that baptism washes away our sins? (Acts 22:16).
4. The Bible says that we are saved by the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9). Why does it also say that we are saved by water baptism? (1 Pet. 3:20-21).
5. The Bible says that we are sanctified by the blood of Christ (Heb. 13:12). Why does it also say we are sanctified by “the washing of water”? (Eph. 5:25-26).
6. The Bible says we are spiritually cleansed by the blood of Christ (Rev. 7:14). Why does it also say we are cleansed by “the washing of water”? (Eph. 5:25-26).
7. The Bible says we can have a clear conscience because of the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:14). Why does it also link a clear conscience with obeying the command to be baptized in water? (Heb. 10:22; cf. 1 Pet. 3:21).
8. Why did the Ethiopian not rejoice until after he was baptized in water? (Acts 8:35-39).
9. Why were Saul’s sins not already washed away after he had believed and had been praying? (Acts 9:3-11).
10. Since Saul had been fasting for days, why did he not stop to eat before being baptized? (Acts 9:18-19).
11. If the Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, what does it mean to “obey the Gospel” to be saved? (2 Thess. 1:7-9; 1 Pet. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12-13).
12. Why should a living person be buried? Should we not bury a spiritually dead person, to have him come up as a new creature baptized into Christ? (Rom. 6:1-13; Col. 2:12-13; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:1; 4:22-24).
13. Since Christians “walk in newness of life” after water baptism (Rom. 6:4), is this not when they are born of water? (John 3:5).

14. If one is “baptized into Jesus Christ” to “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3-5), is this not when he becomes a “new creature in Christ”? (2 Cor. 5:17).
15. Regarding being born again, why does the Bible teach that we become “the children of God” through obedient faith at the point of being baptized into Christ? (Gal. 3:26-27).
16. Does not the phrase “washing of regeneration (rebirth)” imply that a washing is involved in the new birth of a Christian? (Titus 3:5). See “washing of water” (Eph. 5:26; Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 3:20-21; Acts 22:16; John 3:5).
17. Is it possible that being “born of water,” undergoing the “washing of regeneration,” and the “washing of water” could all be references to water baptism? (cf. Eph. 5:25-26; John 3:5; Titus 3:5; Heb. 10:22).
18. Is being born of water to enter the kingdom (John 3:5) any different than being baptized to enter the one body of the saved (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 5:23-26), or being baptized to be added to the Lord’s church? (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; Matt. 16:18-19, 28; Eph. 1:22-23).
19. Why did Jesus include preaching water baptism as a part of preaching the Gospel of Christ for the salvation of men? (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; cf. Acts 2:38; 8:35-39).
20. Where does the Bible say that water baptism has nothing to do with our salvation, but is only an “outward sign of an inward faith”?
21. Why are there no examples of anyone living under the New Testament who were commanded to pray to become children of God?
22. Why are there examples of people who believed in Jesus, but were still lost because they did not obey Him? (John 8:30-44; 12:42-43).
23. Why did Jesus warn us about people being rejected on the Judgment Day who believed in Him but did not obey Him? (Matt. 7:21-23).
24. Why did James compare disobedient believers to demons who believe? (James 2:19-20).
25. Why did James write that a man is justified by works, and “not by faith only”? (James 2:24).
26. If belief alone is enough to be saved, why did James write that “faith without works is dead”? (James 2:26).

Many more questions could be asked, but honesty, sincerity, and integrity are always needed, as well as diligent Bible study to rightly divide the Word (Luke 8:15; John 8:37, 43; 2 Tim. 2:15). Passages emphasizing belief or grace must be harmonized with passages emphasizing obedience, because they are all complementary, not contradictory.

If you are reading this and you have not been baptized for the purpose of washing away your sins, why reject this command of God for your salvation? If you were told that you were saved before baptism, you were taught incorrectly, and you need to be baptized Scripturally with a proper understanding (cf. Rom. 6:17-18; Acts 19:1-5). Belief is necessary to be saved, but there are other factors involved, including the love of God, the grace and mercy of God, and the obedience of man (Luke 6:46; Acts 2:40; 10:34-35; Rom. 6:17-18; Heb. 5:9; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 2:3-6; 5:3, etc.). Man's obedience includes repenting (Acts 17:30), confessing faith in Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37), being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to wash away sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), and faithfully walking in the light of God's Word (Psa. 119:105; Heb. 10:23-31; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 2:10). Please open your heart to the Truth and obey it. Then go out and teach others, worship according to the New Testament pattern, and refuse to bid Godspeed to those who teach falsehoods (2 John 9-11; Eph. 5:11; Rom. 16:17; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

<http://www.TheBibleDomain.com>