

Doctrine of Water Baptism

Introduction

1. Water baptism was important and a valid ordinance for the early church. In A.D. 56 the Scriptures go mysteriously silent concerning water baptism.

1.1 Water baptism was quite common up until A.D. 56. Water baptism was an excellent teaching aid and testimony that the believer had been buried with Christ and was now raised to walk in newness of life.

1.2 This all appeared to change as New Testament Scriptures were written, circulated, and pastor-teachers were ordained, trained and assigned.

1.3 Let me give you a quick categorical analysis of water baptism.

Concept

1. After 56 A.D. there is no mention of water baptism in the Scripture.

2. Prior to 56 A.D. there is record of many believers receiving water baptism.

Acts 8:36 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? ...

Acts 8:38 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.

3. Water baptism in the early Church Age was a ritual to remind the early church of Christ's work on the cross, the need to become more like Him in time, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the resurrection of our Lord and the imminent bodily resurrection of all Church Age saints at the Rapture.

Acts 1:5 "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence."

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

KJV

1Co 15:29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

4. Today baptism with water makes the recipient no better or worse for the experience.

5. The last mention of water baptism in Scripture can be found in Paul's first letter to the Church at Corinth in 1Co 1:14-17 and 1Co 15:29. This book was written in 56 A.D.

KJV

1Co 1:14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;

1Co 1:15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.

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

1Co 1:17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

6. As you can see Paul puts very little priority on baptism; it was, in the early church as it is today, a cause of controversy.

NIV

1Co 1:11 My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.

1Co 1:12 What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ."

1Co 1:13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?

1Co 1:14 I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius,

1Co 1:15 so no one can say that you were baptized into my name.

1Co 1:16 (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.)

1Co 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel -- not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

7. Water baptism is last mentioned in A.D. 56. There were numerous books of the Bible written after A.D. 56: 1st Timothy, 2nd Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, Jude, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 1st Peter, 2nd Peter, 1st John, 2nd John, 3rd John and Revelation. Water baptism vanished with Paul's negative comment "I thank God I did not baptize any of you ... For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel ..."

8. Paul's declaration about water baptism is framed in the context of controversy. Water baptism was apparently causing factions and divisions among the brethren in Corinth and perhaps elsewhere.

9. Water baptism divided the early church even as it does today. Many denominations today teach water baptism is necessary for salvation and many teach it is an essential element of the faith, and a requirement for church membership. Additionally, arguments abound concerning to "immerse or not to immerse?" To many, this question represents a major theological question.

10. Joh 3:5 is today misinterpreted by certain denominations to make water baptism a condition precedent for salvation "... except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." The water in John 3:5 is the amniotic fluid surrounding the fetus and the being born of the Spirit is the "spiritual rebirth which occurs" at point of faith in Christ.

NIV

Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

11. Water is often used as a metaphor in Scripture, e.g. as the Word in Joh 7:37; and the Holy Spirit in Joh 7:38.

NIV

Joh 7:37 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

Joh 7:38 "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

12. In chapter 15 of the book of 1st Corinthians Paul used water baptism in his explanation to the "doubting Corinthians" of the Scriptural necessity for a bodily resurrection.

NIV

1Co 15:29 Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?

Summary

1. Water baptism along with many other temporary gifts such as tongues, interpretation of tongues, discerning of spirits, miracles, healing, exorcism, teaching and wisdom passed from the scene of history when the Canon of Scripture came.

2. The changes took place when "that which is perfect" came to replace that which was "in part."

1Co 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

1Co 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

1Co 13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

3. Water baptism can be a problem when the person being baptized lacks understanding of its history and meaning.