

96. BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

Question: Does baptism save a person from hell?

Answer: No, for the following reasons:

Baptism is not a part of the gospel. To include baptism in the gospel is to add a **work** to Christ's work on the cross. It means that if we must be baptised in order to be saved, then Christ's work on the cross was not good enough to pay for our sins. Those groups who believe in baptismal regeneration (the error that baptism saves us from hell) include:

- The Boston Movement International Churches of Christ.
- The Old Anglican Church Prayer Book, page 289. "my Baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."
- Roman Catholic Church as one of the sacraments.

I. THE GOSPEL.

The gospel that saves us is defined in I Corinthians 15:1-4. It contains no hint of baptism as part of it. "Moreover, brethren, **I declare** unto you the **gospel** which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved ... how that

- i) **Christ died for our sins** according to the scriptures;
- ii) And that **he was buried**,
- iii) And that **he rose again** the third day according to the scriptures.

II. FAITH IN CHRIST SAVES US, NOT BAPTISM.

It is never said that baptism saves us from hell, but many times the Bible says that faith or belief in Christ saves us. Consider these 16 examples:

- i) The woman who anointed Jesus' feet with ointment: "He said to the woman, **Thy faith** hath saved thee; go in peace." Luke 7:50.
- ii) The repentant leper: "**Thy faith** hath saved thee." Luke 17:19.
- iii) Blind Bartimaeus: "Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight; **thy faith** hath saved thee." Luke 18:42.
- iv) Woman who touched Jesus: "Daughter, **thy faith** hath made thee whole; go in peace." Mark 5:34.
- v) Palsied man let down through a roof: "When Jesus saw their **faith**, he said unto the sick of the palsy, son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Luke 5:20; Mark 2:5.
- vi) Jews and Gentiles: "Put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts **by faith**." Acts 15:9.
- vii) "We believe that through the **grace** of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." Acts 15:11.
- viii) "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever **believeth in him** shall receive remission of sins." Acts 10:43.
- ix) "By him **all that believe** are **justified from all things**, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts 13:39.
- x) "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified **by faith** that is in me." Acts 26:18.
- xi) "This is the work of God, that ye **believe** on him whom he hath sent." John 6:29.
Note: 50 verses in chapter 91 showing that "works do not save us."
- xii) **KEY PASSAGE:** Acts 10:43-48 teaches we are **Saved first, baptised later:**

If baptismal regeneration is right, then we should see people baptised first, then saved later, or saved and baptised simultaneously. We never see this. We do

see many times people being saved first, then being baptised. Notice the first Gentile convert in the Church age, Cornelius and his household in Acts 10:43-48.

The order of events in Acts 10:43-48 are:

- Hear: a) **Peter preaches** that through Christ's name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. v.43.
- Saved: b) Cornelius' household was **saved**, as seen by:
"the **Holy Ghost** fell on all them which heard the Word.....
on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the **Holy Ghost**." v.44,45.
"they heard them **speak with tongues**, and **magnify** God." v.46.
"which **have received the Holy Ghost** as well as we." v.47.
Four times the Bible says that they were saved.
- Baptised: c) Cornelius' household was **baptised** straight away **AFTER** they were saved.
"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised which **HAVE RECEIVED** (past tense) the Holy Ghost as well as we?" v.47.
"And he commanded them to be **baptised** in the name of the Lord." v.48.
Two verses prove that they were **saved first, then baptised** afterwards.

Conclusion: The New Testament pattern is:

SAVED first, then BAPTISED later

This disproves Baptismal Regeneration, and shows that **Baptism does not save us.**

- xiii) The Blood of Christ saves us, not water.
"In whom we have redemption through his **blood**, the forgiveness of sins." Colossians 1:14.
- xiv) Believers in heaven sing of salvation by Christ's blood, not by water baptism:
"They sung a new song, saying ... thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by **thy blood** ..." Revelation 5:9.
- xv) Believers overcome satan, **not by water baptism**, but "they overcame him by the **blood** of the lamb, and by the **word** of their testimony..." Revelation 12:11.
- xvi) Paul did not teach a different plan of salvation in Acts 22:16 than he taught the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:31.
"**Believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

III. MISUNDERSTOOD VERSES that seem to TEACH BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

If water baptism saves us, then everybody who believed on Christ and died without the chance to be baptised are doomed to hell forever, just because no water was available.

Those who died as babies, or those saved on their deathbed, or those saved on the battlefield then killed would not have eternal life according to this false doctrine. How do Baptismal Regenerationists arrive at this doctrine?

1. **1 Peter 3:21** "Baptism doth also now save us ..."
Let us quote the full verse: "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."

Notice the following about this verse:

a) Baptism saves **US**. **Question:** Who is the “us”?

Answer: “Us” is believers, those already born again, including Peter and his readers in the churches.

b) **Question:** How does baptism save believers in Christ?

Answer: Baptism saves us from having a bad conscience toward God, not from sins or from hell. When a believer is told that he must get baptised, he is faced with a choice. If I get baptised, I have a **good** conscience toward God, knowing that I have obeyed what God has commanded me.

If I **don't** get baptised, I have a **bad** conscience toward God, knowing that I have disobeyed what God has commanded me. Therefore, getting baptised saves a believer from a **bad** conscience toward God. Baptism is truly the “answer of a good conscience toward God.”

2. **John 3:5** “Except a man be **born of water** and of the **Spirit**, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”

Baptismal Regenerationists think that “born of water” means salvation by baptism. Yet this contradicts all other salvation scriptures which we cannot possibly throw out.

Question: What does “born of water” mean?

Answer: Just as there are two parents required for physical birth, so there are two parents required for spiritual birth: the Spirit of God and the Word of God. The Spirit of God takes the Word of God, and when the sinner believes, He imparts eternal life.

The following verses show that “**born of water**” means born of the **Word of God**:

a) James 1:18 “Of his own will **begat** he us with the **word** of truth ...”

b) 1 Peter 1:23 “Being **born again**, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **by the Word of God** ...”

c) John 15:3 “Now ye are **clean** through the **word** which I have spoken unto you.”

d) Ephesians 5:26 “That he (Christ) might sanctify and **cleanse** it (the church) with the **washing of water** by the **word**.”

The Word of God (symbolized by water) washes away our sins.

e) Psalm 19:7 “The **law** of the Lord is perfect, **converting the soul**.”
God’s Word saves our souls.

The Bible is called “the sword of the Spirit.” Ephesians 6:17.

The following verses link the Spirit, or the Word, or the washing of the new birth:

a) 1 Corinthians 6:11 “But ye are **washed**, ... sanctified, ... **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

The Lord Jesus is the Word, who, along with the Holy Spirit, saves us.

b) Titus 3:5 “he saved us, by the **washing** of regeneration and renewing of the **Holy Ghost**”

c) John 6:63,68: “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; ... the **words** that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are **life** ... Thou hast the **words** of eternal life.”

3. **Acts 2:38** “Then Peter said unto them, repent, and **be baptised** 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.”

Baptismal Regenerationists understand this verse to teach that repentance and baptism lead to forgiveness of sins. When the Jewish crowd asked what they should do, Peter said to **repent** (change their minds about Jesus Christ) and **be baptised** (give clear public proof of that change).

Question: What does it mean: “be baptised ... **for** the remission of sins?” Does it mean that baptism remits sins, or saves us from sin?

Answer: No! It means baptism “**because of**” the forgiveness of sins that had already taken place earlier at repentance.

“FOR” in Greek is “EIS” meaning:

- “because of”,
- “on the basis of”, or
- “on account of”, something.

For example,

1. “I am taking a tablet **for** a headache that I got in the past” means that I am taking a tablet “**because of**” a headache. This is the meaning of “for” (Greek: ‘eis’) in Acts 2:38.

It does not mean that “I am taking a tablet **to give me** a headache in the future” as the baptismal regenerationist’s think “for” means in Acts 2:38.

2. “Ned Kelly is wanted **for** robbery”, can have two meanings, either:

- i) Ned Kelly is wanted “**because of**” a robbery that he has committed in the past, or
- ii) Ned Kelly is wanted “to help commit” a robbery in the future.

The Greek word “EIS” in Acts 2:38 is the first meaning in each of the above two examples. It is used to mean “because of” in these references:

1. Matthew 3:11 “I indeed ²baptise you with water **unto** (EIS = because of) ¹repentance (in the past).”

2. Matthew 10:41 “He that ²receives a prophet **in** (EIS = because of) the ¹name of a prophet.”

3. Matthew 12:41 “They ²repented **at** (EIS = because of) the ¹preaching of Jonah.”

4. Mark 1:4 “Preach the ²baptism of repentance **for** (EIS=because of) the ¹remission of sins.”

5. Acts 7:53 “Who have ²received the law **by** (EIS=because of) the ¹disposition of angels

6. Acts 2:38 “Repent, and be ²baptised ... **for** (EIS = because of) the ¹remission of sins.”

[¹ means the first action, ² means the following action.]

Therefore in Acts 2:38 we should understand it to mean: “be baptised because of the remission of sins.” These Jews were to be baptised as a public witness that their sins had been forgiven. Peter did not suggest that baptism is necessary for the forgiveness of sins. Rather, he was calling for members of that generation which were guilty of having crucified Christ to separate themselves from a generation under the judgment of God. That separation was to be publicly signified through baptism. The baptism that they were challenged to submit to, signified that the people had received the forgiveness of sins.

Question 1: If baptism is essential for salvation, why did Peter say nothing about baptism as a condition for salvation in his 3 other sermons in Acts 3:12-26; 5:29-32; 10:34-43?

Question 2: If baptism is essential for salvation, why did Cornelius' household receive the Holy Spirit (and hence salvation) before they were baptised? This clearly disproves the baptism regeneration position.

Question 3: Why does the same writer Luke say that **repentance results in remission of sins** without baptism in Luke 24:47 "that **repentance** and **remission** of sins should be preached in his name among all nations..." "Saviour, for to give **repentance** to Israel, and **forgiveness** of sins." Acts 5:31.

Conclusion: Acts 2:38 means:

1. **Repent** and you will be saved,
2. At salvation **you get** the **Holy Ghost**,
3. Then **be baptised** because your sins have been remitted.

4. **Acts 22:16** "And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

This verse of Ananias speaking to Paul has four segments:

- i) **Arise** (which is a participle, meaning "arising").
- ii) **Be baptised** (a command to Paul).
- iii) **Wash away your sins** (a command meaning: "You Paul, wash away your sins")
- iv) **Calling** on the name of the Lord. ("Calling on" is not a present participle, but is an **aorist** (point in time) participle also translated "having called on" or "since you called upon." This means "having previously called on the name of the Lord."

Question 1: Does Acts 22:16 teach that water baptism washes away sins, and that we are saved by water baptism?

Answer: No. This question can be answered by asking two other questions.

Question 2: When was Paul saved? On the Damascus Road (which proves baptism does not save) or at Judas' house with Ananias?

Answer: Several reasons indicate that he was saved on the road to Damascus:

- i) Ananias called him "**Brother Saul**" in Acts 22:13 and 9:17. 1 Corinthians 5:11 says that "brother" means "a believer." "If any man that is called a brother." Saul was called a brother.
- ii) The Gospel was presented to Saul on the Damascus road **directly by Christ**, not later by Ananias. Galatians 1:11,12, "the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For **I neither received it of man**, neither was I taught it, but by the **revelation of Jesus Christ**." Paul says here that Ananias did not preach the gospel to him, but Jesus Christ did. Paul would not have rejected Christ's gospel message on the Damascus Road.
- iii) Paul had already submitted in faith to Christ by calling Him "Lord" in Acts 22:10 "What shall I do Lord?" and in Acts 9:6 "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." 1 Corinthians 12:3.

iv) Paul was filled with the Spirit BEFORE his baptism in water in Acts 9:17,18. "Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou might receive thy sight, and **be filled** with the Holy Ghost. And **immediately** there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received his sight therewith, and arose, and **was baptised**."

v) Revelation 1:5 and 7:14 both state that the **Blood of Christ washes away sins**, not water, as far as God is concerned, "unto him that loved us, and **washed us** from our **sins** in his **own blood**." Revelation 1:5. "**washed** their robes, and made them white in the **blood** of the Lamb." Revelation 7:14.

Question 3: What do the words "**wash away thy sins**" mean?

Do they teach that water baptism brings salvation?

Answer: No. Because Paul was already cleansed spiritually. Water baptism is an outward picture expressing God's inner work of washing away sin. "But ye are **washed**, ... but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and **by the Spirit** of our God." 1 Corinthians 6:11.

Note: In 1 Corinthians 6:11 the washing refers to the inward cleansing of the heart by the Holy Spirit as seen by the use of the Greek: "apelousasthe" meaning "you were and are washed", instead of the Greek: "ebaptisthete" meaning "you were baptised".

The complete N.T. Word Study Dictionary by S. Zodhiates, P.232.

"He saved us by the **washing** of regeneration, and renewing of the **Holy Ghost**." Titus 3:5.

Question 4: Why did Ananias use the words "wash away thy sins"?

Answer: Paul by killing Christians, had a bad conscience, bad memories and bad regrets. Baptism for Paul was truly "the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21), showing to men that he had finished with the old life, and was truly forgiven and saved by Christ as a new creature. Ananias is saying to Saul: "show to men that your sins have been washed away."

5. **Mark 16:16** "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

A superficial reading of Mark 16:16 may suggest that sinners must be baptised to be saved.

"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved" is not the same as saying that "baptism is necessary for salvation".

Question: What does it mean? What does baptism save us from?

Believing in Christ saves us from our sins and from hell (John 3:16).

Being baptised saves us from having a bad conscience toward God. (1 Peter 3:21).

To teach that baptism saved us from hell would injure hundreds of verses teaching us that salvation is by faith in Christ alone and not by our works. We must not throw out hundreds of verses in order to force one verse to fit.

The last part of verse 16 omits baptism, saying that condemnation to hell comes **only from refusal to believe**, not from a failure to be baptised.

Note: John 3:18 is a similar verse that clarifies Mark 16:16.

“He that **believeth** on him is **not condemned**: but he that **believeth not** is **condemned already**, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

This verse proves that:

- i) The person who **believes** in Christ is **not condemned**, whether or not he has been baptised.
- ii) A person is **condemned**, “because he has not believed”, even if he has been baptised and attends church, etc.

Note: Baptismal Regenerationists try to get around the many scriptures saying that “he who believes in Christ is saved”, by saying that “**faith includes baptism**.” That is to say, if one believes in Christ he will be baptised, and they say that “faith is not complete until one is baptised.” This is false because:

- i) Mark 16:16. **Belief and Baptism** are separated as two different things.
“He that believeth and is baptised.”
If believing included baptism, then Jesus would not have added the word “baptism”.
- ii) Acts 2:38. **Repentance and Baptism** are separated as two different things.
“Repent and be baptised.”
If repentance included baptism, then Peter would not have added the word “be baptised”
It is never stated in the Bible that if one believes or repents, then he will be baptised.

Note: People can be saved from things other than hell, such as from:

- i) Antichrist’s persecutions (Matthew 24:13),
- ii) Physical death (Matthew 24:22; Acts 27:20,31),
- iii) Suffering (Matthew 27:42),
- iv) A purposeless life by childbearing (I Timothy 2:15),
- v) Drowning in the Flood (I Peter 3:20),
- vi) Slavery in Egypt (Jude 5).

6. **Galatians 3:27** “As many of you as have been **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ.”

Does “**baptized into Christ**” mean water or spirit baptism? Check the context:

“That we might be justified by **faith**.” Galatians 3:24.

“But after that **faith** is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.” v.25.

“For ye are **all** the children of God by **faith** in Christ Jesus.” v.26.

“For as many of you as have been **baptized into Christ** have **put on Christ**.” v.27.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free ...: for ye are **all one in Christ Jesus**.” v.28.

Because it is clear that v.24,25,26 and 28 all refer to justification by faith, then v.27, “baptized into Christ”, must refer to the Holy Spirit baptism at salvation, and not to water baptism. The context demands it.

“For by one Spirit are we **all baptized** into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into **one Spirit**.” 1 Corinthians 12:13.

Four reasons that Galatians 3:27 must be Spirit baptism:

- i) 1 Corinthians 12:13 clearly refers to Spirit baptism, placing us all in the body of Christ at salvation.
- ii) Both 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Galatians 3:28 say that in Spirit baptism, there is **neither Jew nor Greek**, neither bond nor free.
- iii) Galatians 3:27 says that being baptised into Christ is **putting on Christ**, referring to a change of garments. The believer has put off the dirty garments of sin (Isaiah 64:6), and by faith, received the robes of Christ’s righteousness (Colossians 3:8-15).
- iv) The **context** of Galatians 3:24,25,26 and 28 are all Spirit baptism of salvation by faith, not by water baptism, which appears nowhere in the context. Therefore, faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour baptises us into Christ, not water baptism.

7. **Colossians 2:12.** Is this Spirit or water baptism?

“**Buried with him in baptism**, wherein also ye are risen with him through the **faith** of the **operation of God**, who hath raised him from the dead.” This is Spirit baptism because:

- i) It is through **faith**. It is the operation of God. It was the power of God that changed us, not the power of water.
- ii) v.11 compares salvation to the “circumcision made **without hands**.” This is an act of God at a time in the past. If it was made “without hands” then it was spiritually wrought, not wrought by man.
- iii) The **effect** of this was “the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by circumcision of Christ.” v.11. It is not by water baptism.
- iv) v.13: “And you,... hath he quickened together with him, having **forgiven** you **all trespasses**.” This can only come by faith in Christ, which results in Spirit baptism.

Conclusion: Baptism here refers to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit by Jesus Christ at salvation, and not to water baptism.

8. **Romans 6:1-5**

The **literal** meaning of New Testament baptism is “to dip, to immerse.”

The **figurative** meaning of New Testament baptism is “to be identified with.”

For example, in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 the Jewish nation was “baptised unto Moses” when it went through the Red Sea. There was no water involved in this baptism, because they went over on dry land. Here, the nation was identified with Moses, and baptism here means “identification with.”

In Romans 6:1-5, Paul had **both** the **literal** and **figurative** meanings in mind, because he used the reader’s experience of water baptism to remind them of their identification with Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

To be “baptised **into Jesus Christ**” (Romans 6:3) is the same as “For by one Spirit are we all baptised **into one body**” (1 Corinthians 12:13), which is Baptism of the Holy Spirit at salvation. Paul is not saying that their immersion in water put them “into Christ”, but that water immersion was a picture of what the Holy Spirit did at our salvation, identifying us with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

“Baptised into his death” means that every believer has a new relationship to sin. We are “dead to sin.” “I am crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20). We now walk in newness of life and in the power of Christ’s resurrection, because we share His life.

Too many Christians are “betweeners.” They live between Egypt and Canaan, saved but are never satisfied; or they live between Good Friday and Easter, believing in the cross, but not entering into the power of Christ’s resurrection life.

Conclusion:

Water baptism does not save us from damnation because:

- i) The blood of Christ saves us. Revelation 1:5; 7:14.
- ii) Baptism is not part of the gospel.
“For Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel...” 1 Corinthians 1:17.
“The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth”
Romans 1:16. Not “to every one that is baptised.”
- iii) Baptism is mentioned 80 times in the New Testament. Paul uses it only 16 times:
 - a) 11 refer to water baptism. 6 out of 11 times he uses it in I Corinthians 1:13-17 to explain that Christ sent him not to baptise.
 - b) Paul refers to water baptism only twice in his letters (I Corinthians 15:29).
 - c) Paul emphasizes Spirit baptism (in Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 10:2; 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12) more than water baptism. Paul’s small usage of baptism proves that it does not bring salvation.
- iv) Salvation by water baptism takes away from the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins.
Leave any church today that teaches the error of Baptismal Regeneration of infants or adults.