



“Ten Marks of Bible Baptism”

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Today, we’re going to be talking about baptism; more specifically, the blessings and benefits that the Bible associates with baptism. Baptism is a practice that is nearly iconic when it comes to Christianity. In fact, nearly all religious institutions, regardless of their origin or their platform of belief/faith, claim to baptize in one way or another and for some reason or another. But what does the Bible actually teach about baptism? What is it for? Who should be baptized and how does it benefit the person who submits to it? The Bible has much to say about that. We’ll take our text from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 4:4-6 “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

Paul’s context is the unity of believers and he points to seven things of which there are each *one*, among which is *one baptism*. What he is simply saying is that there is one common baptism that unites those who are in Christ. That is a significant statement in view of the fact that the Bible actually mentions more than one baptism.

For example, we read about *the baptism of the Holy Spirit* that was promised to the apostles and was poured out upon them as a sign unto those who witnessed it of God’s vindication upon them and their preaching of the gospel message revealed through them. In the same context where John promised that Jesus would baptize His disciples in the Holy Spirit, John warned of *the baptism of fire*. That’s a baptism that you don’t want. It is a warning in the Bible to those who would reject Jesus and His gospel message. The *baptism of the Holy Spirit* is not applicable to all Christians; it was never promised to all Christians. The *baptism of fire* is something that no Christian wants to experience. But there IS a baptism that is commanded of everybody and it is a *baptism in water*. I know that it’s commanded of ALL because of what Peter said:

Acts 2:38 “Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”

This is a baptism that is *commanded*, whereas Holy Spirit baptism was a *promise*, and baptism in fire was a *warning*. So, in our text passage **Ephesians 4**, Paul teaches that there is *one baptism* common to all believers, and it is the one commanded and demonstrated throughout the New Testament, particularly the book of **Acts** when the gospel was preached and obeyed.

I Corinthians 1:13 “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”

We are not baptized in the name of different religious leaders or into different religious bodies. Rather, there is but one baptism and it is a baptism into Christ Jesus, for a specific purpose that the Bible outlines for us.

As I said, most groups practice some form of what they call *baptism* for one reason or another as it fits within their church dogma. But they don't necessarily practice *Bible baptism* and there is a difference. That which men call *baptism* isn't necessarily what the Bible refers to as *baptism*. You might be asking, *What's the difference?* Baptism has long been a much-debated subject. There are numerous conflicting views today about what baptism is, what is it for, who is a candidate for it, and even what exactly constitutes baptism.

I suppose the most dominant view in modern religion is that baptism is a church ordinance and nothing more than that. It's just a symbolic ceremony that takes place within the church that people are encouraged to participate in for the purpose of outwardly demonstrating the former inward process of conversion. In other words, they say you are saved well before you're baptized; you're saved when you believe, then you are encouraged to later be baptized to outwardly demonstrate that you were saved. There are those who place baptism at the door to their church in the sense that to become a member of their denomination or church, you must submit to their form of baptism. Consequently, I know of people who have been baptized many times because they've gone from one church to another, each of which requires some form of baptism in order to be recognized as a part of that fellowship. Well, is that what the Bible says about baptism? I do think it strange that many feel at liberty to place baptism at the door of their church, but they don't allow the Lord Jesus Christ to do the same with HIS church. Nonetheless, there are numerous ideas about baptism and I feel it safe to assume that if you are a member of a religious organization, if you view yourself as a Christian, then you at some point have either been encouraged to be baptized or you have submitted to something that someone called baptism for one reason or another. But was your baptism Bible baptism? Was it the same one that Jesus commanded, that the apostles and the early church practiced, and that we read about within the scriptures? How can you know if your baptism is right in the sight of God? We'll notice ten marks of Bible baptism today, and if your baptism doesn't bear these ten marks, then it is not Bible baptism.

I. Bible baptism is an immersion in water.

There is a lot of confusion about that today, because many religious leaders will tell you that baptism can be accomplished by sprinkling or pouring. Many times, babies are “baptized” by having water sprinkled on their heads. It is often left up to the candidate for baptism whether he'd rather have water poured on his head, be sprinkled with water or be immersed. But do we read about baptism under the preaching of the apostles taking the form of sprinkling or pouring? No, because

the very definition of the word that Bible writers used does not mean to sprinkle or pour; rather it means *to dip, submerge, plunge, or immerse*. When you read the word *baptize* in the New Testament, it is the transliteration of the Greek word *baptizo*. That's the word the Bible writers used, which again means *to immerse*.

King James, when he commissioned the translation of the Bible into English, his translators chose not to translate the word *baptize*, but to transliterate it from *baptizo* to *baptize*. What they did in so doing was to obscure the meaning of the word. Church tradition had allowed the word *baptize* to come to mean any number of things, but that is not the original meaning of the word *baptizo*. If we were to translate the word *baptizo* accurately into English, we would use a word like *immerse*.

For example, **Mark 16:16** "**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.**" would be properly translated, ***He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved...*** So, by the very definition of the original word, *baptism* means *to immerse*, and the Bible always depicts baptism as an immersion.

Colossians 2:12 "**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.**"

Baptism is a transaction in which we are *buried with Christ* and we *rise with Him*. We can read in **Acts 8** of the Ethiopian nobleman who heard Philip preach the gospel to him and immediately decided that he needed to be baptized in response to hearing the gospel.

Acts 8:38-39 "**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. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.**"

So, the Bible consistently describes baptism as an immersion in water.

II. Bible baptism is preceded by belief and repentance.

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

Consequently, that's why baptism is not stated in the negative in the second half of that verse: baptism is predicated upon belief, and if a person does not believe, there is no reason for him to be baptized. Baptism doesn't even come under consideration if he doesn't believe. So, Jesus positively states that *he that believeth and is baptized (or immersed) shall be saved*.

In **Acts 2**, Peter commanded those on Pentecost:

Acts 2:38 "**...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...**"

Those people had to repent before they could be baptized. Jesus said a person must believe before they could be baptized. That rules out baptism for an infant, who first of all has no sins of which to repent, and secondly does not have the mental ability at that point in his life to even believe in Jesus, know who

Jesus is, or repent of any sins even if he had them to repent of. Therefore, infants and unaccountable children are not candidates for Bible baptism. Baptism is for the penitent believer.

III. **Baptism is submitted to in order to receive the forgiveness of sins.**

In our King James translation of the Bible, that phrase is *the remission of sins*, which means the same thing.

Acts 2:38 ““...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”

That little word *for* comes from the Greek word *eis*, which means *in order to or in view of*. Someone says, *Well, what that actually means is that we're baptized because Christ has forgiven us of our sins.* Let's just try that on. In **Matthew 26**, when Jesus was instituting the Lord's Supper, the Bible says this:

Matthew 26:27-28 “And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

Question: Was Jesus crucified and was His blood shed *because* our sins had already been forgiven? Did He die *because* God had already forgiven the sins of the world? Or did He die and shed His blood *in order that* we might be forgiven? We all know the answer to that question, and the very same language is used in **Acts 2:38**. Here's another question: Can a person be saved without repentance? Can a person receive the forgiveness of his sins if he never repents of his sins?

Luke 13:3 “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Jesus warns that I'll be lost if I don't repent. So, I must repent if I'm to be forgiven of my sins. Peter joins these two things with the conjunction “and” in **Acts 2:38** when he said, “**Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins.**” Friend, a person isn't forgiven of their sins *before* they're baptized, rather they are forgiven *when* they are baptized into Christ, according to the commandment of the Lord Jesus.

IV. **Bible baptism is a step that begins a new relationship to Christ.**

Baptism is not a step that comes *after* one has established a new relationship to Christ, but it IS the step that initiates a new relationship with Jesus Christ.

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

At that point, the Bible says we *put on Christ*. Not before, but when we are baptized. Every step in a sinner's conversion to Christ is not only important, but essential. A person must believe in order to be saved; you can't be saved without faith. A person must repent; you can't be saved without repentance. A person is not saved at the point when they believe, nor at the point when they repent, but those steps ARE essential in getting to the point of salvation.

For example, when I believe in Jesus, I change my mind concerning my sins, who Jesus is, and the will of God. When I repent, I change my will in regard to Jesus. I am not only sorry for what I've done and the

life I've lived, but I resolve to change. I make a change of heart and will, and I now turn toward Christ and away from sin. That is repentance.

But baptism is unique in that in baptism, it is not merely our mind and our will that change, but rather our state actually changes. We are *baptized into Christ*, according to the Bible. It doesn't say that we believe or repent into Christ, but that we are *baptized into Christ*. It is the step that begins a new relationship to Jesus.

V. Bible baptism is the identification with the suffering and vindication of Christ.

In other words, when I am baptized, I unite with Jesus in His death and in His resurrection and therefore, I participate in the benefits of that.

Romans 6:3-5 "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:"

Notice that Paul does NOT say that baptism pictures *our death* and *our resurrection*, but he tells us that baptism identifies us with *Christ's death and His resurrection*. It is not an after-the-fact symbol that a Christian participates in that depicts his former death to sin. Baptism is the point at which one identifies with the death of Jesus, and therefore, at that point, dies to his sins and is raised to walk in newness of life. Baptism is a symbol of the suffering and resurrection of Jesus. It's not a symbol of something that we did in the past. It is the point at which we identify with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

VI. Bible baptism is the point at which one becomes free from sin.

Not before, not later. Bible baptism is the very point when one becomes free from sin. Understand that in and of itself, baptism is not a meritorious work wherein we earn salvation; that is not what is being suggested at all. It is an act of obedience. It is a submissive act of faith where we claim and accept the promise and the blessing of the forgiveness of sins. We are made free from sin in that watery transaction. How do we know that? Listen to Paul:

Romans 6:17-18 "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

Paul says, *You were sinners, but now you're not*. When were you made free from sin? *When you obeyed that form of doctrine delivered you*. The word *form* means *likeness* and *the doctrine* refers to *the teaching that was delivered them*. If you look at **I Corinthians 15:1-6**, the apostle Paul shows that the gospel that he preached or delivered to them was the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Therefore, what Paul is saying in **Romans 6:17-18** is that they were sinners, but they were made free from sin when they obeyed a likeness of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. When, where, and how did they do that? We've already noticed earlier in that chapter:

Romans 6:3-5 “5 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:”

That makes sense why Paul would say, *being then* (when you obeyed) *made free from sin*...If you've not been baptized for the forgiveness of your sins, you've not been made free from your sins. You remain in your sins. You need to be baptized in order to have your sins washed away.

VII. Bible baptism is where one washes in the blood of Jesus.

The blood of Jesus is what remits our sins.

Hebrews 9:22 “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”

We've sung the hymn throughout the ages, “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” How true that is! It is the blood of Jesus, the blood drawn from Immanuel's veins that can wash away all of our sinful stains. But how do we contact the blood of Jesus? How do we avail ourselves of His precious cleansing blood? Well, His blood was shed in His death. When He died on the cross, the soldier pierced His side and the Bible says, “*forthwith came there out blood and water*” (**John 19:34**). We've already noticed that Paul said that we are “*baptized into His death*” (**Romans 6:3**). Remember what Ananias told Saul?

Acts 22:16 “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

Do you want to wash in the blood of Jesus? Do you want to wash your robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb? You need to be baptized for the remission of your sins.

VIII. Bible baptism is where and when one calls on the name of the Lord.

Someone says, *To be saved, all you have to do is call on the name of Jesus*. The Bible surely does say that.

Romans 10:13 “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

That's very true. The question is, HOW do we call upon the name of the Lord? Let's go back to **Acts**.

Acts 22:16 “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

Calling on the name of the Lord simply means that we submit to the Lord's offer of salvation, to His will and to His authority. His blood then remits our sins and we are saved. When? When we submit to Him in baptism.

IX. Bible baptism is an act of obedience to the gospel.

It is NOT an act of obedience to the church. It is NOT a church ordinance; it is a gospel ordinance. It is a teaching of the gospel itself. For example, the Bible tells us that the gospel IS something to be obeyed—not just believed. It is to be obeyed. The Bible says that if we don't obey it, we'll be lost.

II Thessalonians 1:8 “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:”

So, how do you obey the gospel? You do so when you submit to the teaching of the gospel, and when Jesus put it this way when He commissioned His apostles:

Matthew 28:19-20 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

X. Bible baptism is the point of salvation.

We conclude from our study that baptism is the point when one is saved.

I Peter 3:21 “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:”

Have you been baptized with a Bible baptism? Is your baptism from heaven or is it from men? I hope you'll give some serious thought to that today.

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