



“Should You Be Re-baptized?”

Kevin Presley

Sometimes the question arises, *Do I need to be re-baptized?* On one hand, that sounds like a strange question; on the other, you will find there are many people who have been baptized more than once—in some cases many times. But is that ever warranted by the scriptures? In **Ephesians 4**, the apostle Paul writes of seven things, each of which there is one.

Ephesians 4:3-6 “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are 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.”

The word *baptism* here simply means *an immersion, an overwhelming* and the word is used in reference to different types of baptism in the Bible. There was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, for example, which the apostles received on the Day of Pentecost. There was the baptism of fire, which the Jewish religious establishment received in AD 70, the destruction of Jerusalem because of their rejection of Christ. There is the baptism of suffering and so forth. But there is only one baptism commanded for men to obey and that is the one that Jesus commanded in the Great Commission; that is, baptism in water for the remission of sins. That baptism is commanded of all who believe in Christ and this is the baptism that all who have obeyed the gospel have in common. It is to only occur once and that is immediately when one believes in Christ and repents of past sins. It is in this one baptism that our sins are washed away, at which time we become children of God, born of water and of the Spirit, and we receive the washing of regeneration.

So, would there ever be a need for one who believes they have been baptized to be baptized again? If so, why? That will be our study today: should you be re-baptized?

Jesus commanded His disciples to go and teach or make disciples of all nations.

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 alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

In the book of **Acts**, we read how the apostles set out to fulfill the Lord’s commission by preaching Christ, and we read where multitudes of people were baptized when they came to believe the gospel. Baptism was never treated as an unimportant incident or optional thing in the New Testament, as some seem to treat it today. Rather, it is commanded of all who would be saved. I repeat, it is a command of the Lord Jesus Christ of all who desire to be saved (**Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, I Peter 3:21...**) I suppose the overwhelming majority of religious people, denominations, and various religious bodies practice what they call baptism in some form or for some varied purpose. In fact, it would be difficult to find someone who professes to be a Christian who would say that they simply don’t believe in baptism in some way. I would venture to say that if you consider yourself a Christian, you have been baptized at some point along the way or you underwent something that you believe was baptism at some point in your religious life.

I want to narrow this down very clearly and finely. The issue at hand is not *do you believe in baptism?*. I’m fairly confident that if you believe in Christ, then you believe that baptism plays some role in your life. And I will say that if you have never been baptized in water but claim to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, you should immediately know that something is wrong because baptism is a direct commandment of the Lord and His apostles. It is impossible to obey God and refuse to be baptized in water.

John 3:5 “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

So, baptism plays a part in the conversion of the sinner to Christianity. We see that evidenced throughout the book of **Acts**. If you have not been baptized and you believe that Jesus is the Christ, and you are willing to change your life in repentance, you immediately need to be baptized into Christ without any delay. You need to be baptized *for the remission of your sins* (**Acts 2:38**). But usually the question is not, *Do you believe in baptism?* The questions are usually, *What do you believe about baptism? What do you believe baptism is for? When and how were you baptized? What was the reason behind your baptism?* There are many ideas and doctrines today concerning baptism. The role that it plays either in salvation or the Christian life is a subject of great debate, varying widely from church to church. But only one approach to baptism can be correct in the eyes of God because the apostle Paul said in our text that there is only **one baptism** (**Ephesians 4:5**). Therefore, I believe it makes a difference what we believe about baptism and why and how we practice it. One reason I believe this is because of an account that we read about in **Acts 19**.

Acts 19:1-3 “And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.”

This was in the miraculous age of the first century when in the absence of the completed scriptures, the apostles would lay hands on the new disciples from place to place and impart the gifts of the Spirit so that through those gifts, the church could be edified and learn and preach the truth in the absence of

the written New Testament as we have it today. Paul wants to know if these believers at Ephesus have received these gifts since the time of their conversion.

Their response was startling to Paul. It told Paul a great deal about where they were. They knew nothing about what had transpired on the Day of Pentecost or in the house of Cornelius, for example. They didn't know that the Holy Spirit had come and brought the kingdom of God to earth. The immediate signal to Paul was that they had not been sufficiently taught about Christ and the fact that His kingdom had come. They were still relying on the preaching of John the Baptist and had gone no farther than that, even though what John pointed forward to had already been fulfilled.

So, Paul asks them what they were baptized for if it wasn't in view of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit as Peter had preached back at the beginning on the Day of Pentecost. Their answer was John's baptism. Now, John's baptism was not inherently wrong. After all, John the Baptist was a messenger of God sent before Jesus Christ to prepare the Jewish people for the beginning of Christ's work and the establishment of His kingdom. John's purpose was to be the harbinger of Christ and His kingdom, to point God's people toward this kingdom that Christ was soon to establish after His death and resurrection. You see, the nation of Israel was a spiritually dead, corrupt nation at the time that Christ came into the world. Their hearts were hard. In order for Jesus to plant the seed of the kingdom there and have anything grow from it, He had to have the hardened soil broken up, you might say. He had to have the field made ready. That was John's job. He went through the wilderness of Judea preaching a fiery sermon in which he told people it was time for them to wake up, to repent of their sins, to return to God. You see, he was preparing them for the preaching and the work of Jesus Christ so they would be receptive to it. When the people determined to repent of their sins, they were baptized by John in view of forgiveness of sins that Christ was about to bring to the world.

There was nothing wrong with all of that. It was all according to God's plan. That baptism was scriptural in mode; it was an immersion in water. It was even for the remission of sins in a prospective sense; that is, looking forward to Christ who would come to take away their sins. John was sent by God to preach that message and baptize for that purpose. The problem here in **Acts 19** was that we're past the ministry of John, but there were still some disciples of John, such as Apollos, who did not understand that the kingdom of Christ had now come and that the things that John's baptism had pointed forward to had been fulfilled and had become reality. Apollos was preaching but knew only the baptism of John (**Acts 18:25**). These disciples of John were therefore preaching a baptism that was behind the times, you might say. It now served no valid purpose since Jesus by His authority had commanded the baptism of the Great Commission.

Well, what was Paul's response to them?

Acts 19:4-5 "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

He didn't say, *Oh well, it's all just a misunderstanding. It doesn't really matter because you were baptized to obey the Lord.* No, he explained to them that Christ, who John pointed forward to, had come. Then they were re-baptized, if you will. Notice that they had already been immersed in water and when they did so, they believed that they were obeying God and doing His will. But their baptism was not acceptable to God at that time. They were therefore baptized *in the name of the Lord Jesus*,

meaning *by the authority or under the commission of the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles*. They submitted themselves to the one baptism of the New Testament age.

Among other things, that tells me that there are cases where re-baptism is called for because the first is invalid for one reason or another. Let's look at some reasons why a person would need to be baptized again. I hope you'll think seriously about this in view of your past baptism.

Let me clear up a few misconceptions first. A person doesn't need to be re-baptized because as a Christian they've since sinned and they want a 'do-over' so to speak. The Bible never teaches that. If a person has become a Christian by being baptized into Christ and he sins, which of course we will from time to time, the answer to that is to confess our sins to God and as a Christian ask God to forgive us of our sins.

I John 1:8-9 "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

We don't have to be baptized again simply because we've sinned or messed up since becoming a Christian. One should not be re-baptized in order to cover an unscriptural situation. Sometimes we get ourselves into very difficult spiritual conditions or situations and people think that the way to sort it out or get it all straightened up is to be baptized again. The Bible doesn't teach that either. One should not be re-baptized for sentimental reasons. One should not be re-baptized because they know more now than when they were baptized. All of us who are Christians have grown, hopefully exponentially, in our faith and knowledge of Christ since becoming Christians. All it takes for one to be scripturally baptized is a simple, trusting, yielding, surrendering faith in Jesus and a willingness to learn of Him, follow Him, obey Him, and grow in Him. You're not going to have all the answers when you become a Christian and that's not a reason to be re-baptized because all of a sudden you know more about the Bible than you did at that time.

There ARE reasons that I believe re-baptism is warranted and necessary. First of all, any person who was sprinkled or had water poured on them in place of baptism really has not been baptized at all in the eyes of God and needs to be baptized correctly, scripturally. That's because neither sprinkling nor pouring are forms of scriptural baptism. Some denominations have replaced or substituted these in place of immersion, but these are not baptism according to the scriptures. In fact, these are not baptism according to the very definition of the word. The Greek word that has been transliterated into our English Bibles is the word *baptizo*, which simply means *to immerse, submerge or plunge*. It means *to overwhelm*. It never means *to sprinkle*. Regardless of what element may be specified or implied by the scriptures in any given context, the act of *baptizing* means *to immerse or overwhelm a person* in that substance or element.

For example, the apostles were not "sprinkled" with the Holy Spirit; they were *overwhelmed or immersed* in power. The same is true with water in the case of Bible baptism. It is a complete covering in water. When the Ethiopian nobleman of **Acts 8** heard Philip preach Jesus to him, he immediately wanted to be baptized. He obviously knew what the word meant when Philip used it in his discourse along the road because as they passed an oasis of water, he asked Philip if he could be baptized.

Acts 8:35-39 "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 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? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 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.”

Besides that, baptism is a form or likeness, a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:3-4 “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.”

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.”

How would sprinkling or pouring represent those events? The answer is that they don’t and they’re not an acceptable form of baptism. Sprinkling for baptism originated after the apostolic era for the sake of the sick and dying, and later when some came to erroneously believe that babies are sinners and need baptism, it was then used as a way to supposedly baptize them. The fact of the matter is that babies are not sinners and they are not in need of being baptized. They are not accountable before God. Baptism is for those who can believe (**Mark 16:16**) and for those who can repent of their sins (**Acts 2:38**). An infant can do neither. Friend, if you were sprinkled in place of baptism—no matter what the circumstance—you need to be baptized scripturally.

Also, if you were not baptized for the forgiveness of your sins, you need to be baptized again. When the apostle Peter preached the gospel on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in **Acts 2**, he was asked by his hearers what they needed to do in order to be forgiven and be saved. Peter had convicted them of their sins by preaching Jesus to them.

Acts 2:37 “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

Listen carefully now to Peter’s answer.

Acts 2:38 “Then Peter said unto them, 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.”

The overwhelming majority of preachers and denominations today DO NOT believe that baptism is for the remission of sins. They do not. And they do not baptize people in view of that purpose although the vast majority of preachers will advise baptism at some point if asked, and most will acknowledge that it is an important step to some degree. But the question is, *Is baptism for the remission of sins?* Peter says it is. The question is, *Can my sins be washed away without calling upon Christ in baptism?* Ananias says they cannot and will not.

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

Baptism is how you call on the name of the Lord and it is where the blood of Jesus washes your sins away. The question is, *Can a person have a new life in Christ without being baptized?* Paul said he can't.

Romans 6:3 “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.”

When do we walk in newness of life? After we're raised up together with Him in the waters of baptism. That's what your Bible says. The question is, *Can a man be “in Christ” without being baptized?* Paul answers that question. He says you can't.

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

Verse after verse contradicts the popular, widespread views of baptism today, which means that most people are baptized for some other reason besides what the Bible teaches people should be baptized for. Most are taught that baptism is important but unessential. They are taught that it is in response to the forgiveness of sins already obtained and not FOR the remission of sins. The Bible says it is FOR the remission of sins.

Friend, if you believe that baptism is a church ordinance, you don't really understand what the Bible teaches about baptism. It is not an ordinance of the church for Christians to keep; it is an act of submissive faith that the sinner must submit to in order to wash in the blood of Jesus Christ and to receive God's grace, to enter into a relationship with Him and come forth to walk in a new life. Finally, if you were baptized to join a denomination, you need to be re-baptized. The Bible teaches that baptism identifies us with the body of Jesus Christ...

I Corinthians 12:13 “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...”

...But not in the way that most people think. You see, in baptism, we are forgiven of our sins and are therefore saved through faith in Jesus Christ. The result of that is that we are considered in the eyes of God and considered by the Lord to be one of His, which means to be part of His church. We become a part of His family, a member of His kingdom, His church. We have been called out of sin and added to the assembly of believers by God Himself. Our names have been written in the Lamb's book of life and that makes us citizens of His kingdom, members of His church.

What most denominations teach today is that baptism is merely an ordinance of the church to gain membership in their particular denomination. They think a person is saved well before they are ever baptized into their denomination. That's not the sequence according to **Acts 2** and other passages as well. In many cases today when a person believes he is saved, a church will vote and decide whether or not to receive him into their membership by the rite of baptism. But the Bible teaches nothing of the sort. It is strange to me that men think it's alright to put baptism at the door of their denomination, but they won't allow Jesus Christ to put baptism at the door to His church.

Friend, baptism is not an ordinance of the church for those who are already saved merely to allow membership into some denomination. It's not up to you, me, or anyone else to allow or disallow you a membership in the body of Christ. Christ does the adding and subtracting. He adds those who are saved at the very moment they are saved. The very fact that they have been saved makes them a part of the church and that is the connection that baptism has to membership in the church. When a man or woman is baptized for the remission of sins, the Lord then adds him/her to the church that you read about in the Bible (**Acts 2:41,47**).

If your baptism was AFTER you thought you were saved, and it was to enter a denomination of your choice, you didn't understand what baptism is FOR. I would implore you today to investigate this. If you've not been baptized scripturally, you need to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

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