

Doctrine of Baptism and the Great Commission

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1. In the act of parting of the Lord's Supper, and in the act of Baptism, the gospel is preached symbolically.
2. When the symbolism of baptism is forgotten it leads to sacramentalism.
3. The main thrust of baptism is found in Matthew 28:16-20.
 - *Matthew 28:16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore [having gone], and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 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.*
4. The mandate of the risen Lord was to make disciples of all the nations.
5. Up until now, the streams of grace was bound to national Israel. But now, His disciples were to be made of all the nations, including the heathen.
6. Baptism is united to the mandate of making disciples.
7. Four overarching principles are to be noted.
 - The supreme authority which undergirds the act of baptism. Or, "Why should we baptize?"
 - The indispensable attendant of baptism. Or, "Who should be baptized?"
 - The essential significance of baptism. Or, "What is the meaning of baptism?"
 - The immutable permanence of baptism. Or, "How long should people baptize within the framework of this commission?"
8. When considering the supreme authority which undergirds the act of baptism, or, "Why should we baptize?" we come upon two undeniable facts.
 - Fact. In the conferring of grace and salvation, the sinner and the Saviour come into direct contact by faith alone.

Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Acts 10:43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins

Acts 13:38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

The believer does not come to Christ by priests, by the church, or by sacraments such as the cup, or baptism.

Romans 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

- Fact. Baptism has been historically the occasion of much confusion, delusion, and controversy in the church.
9. The subject of baptism remains important to understand because of the supreme authority of Jesus Christ as Head of the church. The Lord directs attention to baptism. Jesus has the right to rule, and to govern, because all authority has been given to Him. Jesus is the Saviour of His people, and the Head of His church.
 - *Matthew 28:16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*
 10. The work of disciples among the nations cannot be divorced from the act of baptism, and teaching of the whole counsel of God. We stand in the streams of water because the Lord has commanded it.
 11. The word baptism means something to the disciples who heard Jesus give the command. The disciples were to baptism them, the persons of whom Jesus said were to be made disciples.
 12. Partial obedience is not pleasing to the Lord, as Saul discovered.
 - *1 Samuel 15:13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord. 14 And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?*
 - 15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.*
 - 16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. 17 And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?*

18 And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. 19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?

20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal.

22 And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

24 And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord.

26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

27 And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. 28 And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou.

13. The indispensable attendance of baptism, Or, “Who should be baptized?” The text of Matthew 28 commands the making of disciples. The disciples are the ones to be baptized.

- Sacramentalist argue that you make disciples by baptizing, and by teaching.
- Non-sacramentalist argue that the text commands first the making of disciples, and then the baptizing of them.

14. The pronoun “them” is the key. Nations cannot be baptized. Only disciples can be baptized. The Lord would have “them” be baptized and taught.

15. How are disciples made? What does it mean to teach them? The answer is found in the ministry of the apostles.

16. In Acts 2, on the Day of Pentecost, the gospel was preached. Disciples were taught, and then they were baptized, based upon receiving the Word of God.
- *Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*
17. Luke records that there was a group of people who received the narrative, the exhortation, the indictment, the promise, and command of the gospel, and in response to that were gladly baptized.
18. The way a person becomes a disciple of Jesus is to gladly receive the Word of God with a view to gospel obedience.
19. Luke records that this group, and no others, were baptized. Only those that received Peter's word were baptized. This fact is both inclusive and exclusive. Those that did not receive the Word of the Lord were not baptized.
20. Luke records that this group was added to the 120, and came under apostolic authority who taught them all that Christ had taught them.
21. The events of Acts 2 form the template, the framework for every other clear act of baptism. First there is belief, and then there is baptism. First there is the receiving of the Word of the Lord by personal faith, with a view to gospel obedience, and then there is baptism.
- The baptism of men and women. *Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*
 - The baptism of Simon. *Acts 8:13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.*
 - The baptism of the eunuch. *Acts 8:34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 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? 37 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. 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. 39 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.*

- The baptism of Cornelius. *Acts 10:45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*
- The baptism of Lydia. *Acts 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.*
- The baptism of the Philippian jailer. *Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.*
- The Crispus. *Acts 18:8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized....11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*

22. Baptism in Scripture was also a sign of an existing faith or it was a hypocritical profession of faith in the case of Simon.

23. If the two attendants of baptism were acceptance of the Word, with a view to gospel obedience, then several conclusions are warranted.

- All administrations of baptism, where there is the absence of pure gospel preaching, turns baptism into a religious, superstitious institution, or act.

Special Note.

Baptism follows the making of disciples, not by a magical incantation of a priest, but by the clear proclamation of the gospel truth. A Christian baptism can take place only if there a bride. The church is the bride of Christ, which is washed by water and the Word. As water cleanses the body, so the blood of Christ cleanses the soul. The gospel of grace is found in the act of baptism, whereby the believer is buried with Christ in the likeness of His death, and raised in the likeness of His resurrection.

- All administration of the ordinance of baptism, where there is no discipleship through acceptance of the Word preached, is a violation of the Lord's commission. Does the act of paedo-baptism fit the framework of the Great Commission which is to make disciples, baptizing them? No. The reverse order is practiced. Children are presented for baptism with the hope, and prayer, of being made a disciple.

- All profession of faith in the Word that is not followed by baptism is a violation of the directives of the Great Commission. Make disciples by preaching the Word. Once disciples are made, they must be baptized. It is not an option. *“Arise and be baptized”* (Acts 22:16).

If you ask, “Must I be rebaptized?” I answer, “Should you not obey Christ?”