

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT BAPTISM

Introduction Eph. 4 : 5: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism."

In spite of the fact that the Bible speaks of only "one baptism", the modern Christian world is divided about this subject. Some have discarded the rite altogether. Others make it absolutely essential to salvation. Even those who still practise baptism are not agreed about it. Some argue for "sprinkling", some for "pouring", some for "total immersion". Some practise "infant baptism". Others insist that only "believers" should be baptised. Many sincere people are perplexed by these disagreements.

Eph. 4 : 5 assures us that there was a time when all Christians were united on this subject. Obviously, then, the logical way to escape from modern confusion is to go back to the New Testament and take a close look at baptism as it came "fresh from the mint", before it had been corrupted or spoiled.

Discussion 1.—THE MANDATE FOR BAPTISM

A mandate is "an authoritative command from a superior", and the first fact that greets us as we open the pages of the New Testament on this topic is that baptism is the subject of just such an "authoritative command." Matt. 28 : 18-20: "Go—teach—baptise."

No Bible mandate is more explicit, emphatic, or final than this. Here are three Divine commands: "GO—TEACH—BAPTISE". Logically all three are of equal importance. If we discard one, we automatically undermine the authority of the other two. This ought to be enough to settle all controversy about the importance of baptism. **We have no right to play fast and loose with any Divine command.** To dismiss this one as trivial is the same as saying to Christ: "I don't attach any importance whatsoever to Your mandate!"

What loyal Christian would ever wish to enter into such unseemly controversy with his Lord?

Yet Jesus has given more—much more—than an imperial mandate for baptism. As if to lift this question right outside the realm of controversy, **He has reinforced His mandate with His own example!**

Matt. 3 : 13-17: "Thus it becometh us."

What more evidence of the importance of baptism could a conscientious Christian ask? If we had been living in Jesus' day, and had actually **witnessed His baptism**, and heard His command; could we have any further doubts about its importance?

2.—THE METHOD OF BAPTISM

(See Chart No. 46—Christian Baptism)

According to the New Testament, the Divinely-appointed **method** of baptism is as clear as the **mandate**. Three lines of evidence prove that the Apostolic method was by "total immersion" in water.

(a) **The Original Meaning of the Word "Baptise"**

The Greek word, "BAPTIZO", means to dip or plunge an object in water, so that the whole article is immersed, in the same fashion as a piece of cloth is completely immersed in a vat of dye.

(b) **The New Testament Descriptions of the Baptismal Ceremony**

All of these descriptions clearly picture immersion:

Mark 1 : 5, 9: "Baptised in the river Jordan." The Greek preposition used here is "EIS", which means "into".

John 3 : 23: "There was much water there."

Matt. 3 : 16: "Jesus went up straightway out of the water."

Acts 8 : 36: "They came to a certain water."