

Water Baptism

Note: God will empower every person who is obedient to an ordinance that He has established. In the ordinance of baptism He has promised to deliver you, to save you. You experience this *soteria* as you recognize your complete identification with Him. It is no wonder then that the devil has attempted to destroy this ordinance, make it unimportant in some denominations, or give an erroneous representation of this ordinance.

I. Water Baptism: It's meaning

1. Greek: Baptizo - to plunge under, dip, or immerse.

a. Some churches teach a sprinkle of water. This is not true to the meaning of the word.

b. Two Greek words translated "sprinkle" are *RANTIZO* and *ECHEO*. Neither word is found in the Bible in relation to baptism.

2. Matt. 3:13-17; ***Acts 8:36-39***

a. Matt. 3:16 tells us Jesus "*went up straightway OUT OF the water.*" This does not sound like a sprinkling.

b. Jesus is our example in ALL things. We should get baptized since He was baptized. We should also be baptized the way He was baptized.

c. Notice that Jesus Himself did not even go to war and experience victory over the devil and temptation until He first obeyed the father by receiving baptism.

II. Water Baptism - Identification With Christ

1. We acknowledge our total identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

a. Rom. 6:1-7; Col. 2:12-13

b. Jesus was not sprinkled with dirt when He was buried and neither was a bowl of dirt poured over His head. he was actually buried full body. How dare we make baptism a sprinkling or a pouring when such does not even represent what the Bible says or teaches.

2. You and I were in Christ when He was laid on the cross. He died our death for us. He was buried and went to hell for us. He rose again for us. He did all of this so we would not have to though we deserve it and He did not. When we are baptized we are by faith and public confession declaring that we believe and accept all of this.

III. Baptism and salvation

1. Baptism can be the means for SALVATION (deliverance)

a. Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:20-21

b. Greek: *Soteria* - deliverance, preservation, soundness, healing.

2. When we teach that baptism is a means for salvation, realize that we are not talking about getting into heaven. There are many sinners who have been baptized are in hell today. There are some who have never been baptized but are in heaven.

a. Luke 23:39-43

b. Salvation implies much more than escape from hell. There are many who have testified to healing and bondages broken after being baptized. Faith exercised in baptism brings salvation from many of lifes negatives because you are identifying yourself with Christ.

IV. Controversial questions answered.

1. Can babies be baptized?

a. No. One must be able to believe and repent of their sins. Babies do not have this capability.

b. Luke 3:7, 8; Mark 16:16; Acts 8:35-38

2. There are two baptismal formulas mentioned in the Bible: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19) and in Jesus' Name (Acts 2:38; 10:48). Which formula is correct?

a. If you use the formula in Matt. 28:19, you still cover Jesus. If you use the formula in Acts you still cover the Godhead (Col. 2:9). The formula is not the issue. The meaning of baptism and it's effects upon you is what is important.

CONCLUSION: If you have received Jesus Christ as Lord but you have not yet been baptized we suggest you do so immediately. It is not that the lack of it would keep you out of heaven but it be obeying what God has clearly commanded us.

When you are baptized imagine your sin nature, the sickness on your body, and all of your problems being buried. When you come up from the water imagine yourself as a brand new person. What you desire from God could manifest at this time if you apply faith.

Lastly, if you are basing your eternal salvation off of the fact that you were baptized at one time or that you were sprinkled on the head with water by a priest you are living in danger. Reevaluate your standing with God. If you do not recall ever giving your life to the Lord then do so at this time and then be re-baptized.

Appendix: Errors of Augustine

St. Augustine is reputed to have had more influence on Western theology than any other man since Paul. He is even credited to be one of the church's first great systematic theologians. Unfortunately, it is due to Augustine's influence on Western theology that we have so many problems in the church today concerning water baptism. The fact that he is nearly idolized by both Protestants (especially those in the Reformed camp) as well as Roman Catholics in spite of so much unbiblical teaching is astounding to say the least. To demonstrate how horrible Augustine's teaching is, I want to cite several of his doctrinal errors.

1. Teaching literal Biblical truth as allegory - Augustine adopted an unbiblical hermeneutic for Bible interpretation called the allegorical method which allowed him to reinterpret any passage of Scripture that did not fit his system of theology.

2. The sinlessness and perpetual virginity of Mary - Around 390 AD, St. Augustine writes: "Every personal sin must be excluded from the Blessed Virgin Mary for the sake of the honor of God." He also writes, "Heretics called Antidicomarites are those who contradict the perpetual virginity of Mary and affirm that after Christ was born she was joined as one with her husband" (Heresies 56).

3. Denial of free-will – Augustine was the first to promote some of the doctrines known today as "Calvinism." He taught man's total depravity and that man lacked the will to make true and genuine choices. This was due to a debate between him and a man named Pelagius. Pelagius supposedly emphasized an extreme view of free-will that asserted that man could live above sin apart from any divine assistance. This may or may not be true since Pelagius' writings are unavailable to us. The only word we have to go on is that of his detractors which are many. Because of Pelagius' supposedly extreme views on free-will, Augustine went to the extreme opposite to deny that man's will is free, or at least placed limitations on the freedom of man's will that are unsupported by Biblical revelation. He would go to the extreme and deny that man's will was free and that man could not even choose Christ apart from an "irresistible grace."

4. Predestination – Of course, denial of free will led to the erroneous doctrine that God predestines select individuals for salvation while predestining others for damnation. As one person noted, Augustine held that the predestined were fixed, and that their "number is so certain that one can neither be added to them nor taken from them" (Corr Grat, 39). The Bible does not teach that the death of Christ is limited to a selected few, but is available to all in this world and that every man has the ability to accept or reject this salvation. While men are indeed blinded by Satan and need the Holy Spirit's conviction, He does not force anyone's acceptance of Christ and they are able to resist Him.

5. Views on marriage and sex – Augustine taught that the original sin in the garden of Eden was sex. Of course no one will find a hint of this teaching when they read Gen. 3. Before his alleged conversion, Augustine led a sexually sinful life. After being converted, he went to an opposite extreme. Instead of simply acknowledging the Biblical truth concerning sex (that it is a wonderful practice between a husband and a wife (1 Cor. 7; Heb. 13), Augustine limited the idea of sex to procreation only and made many feel very guilty about engaging in the practice for any other reason. Thankfully, while many of the

Reformers such as Luther held to much of Augustine's doctrines, he rejected his teachings on sex.

6. Baby baptism – As one person noted, since Augustine believed that the sexual act is mingled with evil, inasmuch as it is the means by which an evil, Adam's guilt, is transmitted to those born by such generation. He taught that it was for this reason that children are regenerated in baptism [Cf. *Contra Jul. III, vii 15 709*]. Augustine further stated, "If you wish to be a Christian, do not believe, nor say, nor teach, that infants who die before baptism can obtain the remission of original sin." (*De Genesi Ad Literam, X:39*). This also insinuates an erroneous and unbiblical belief that water baptism itself regenerates and that babies who die in their infancy without having received water baptism go to hell. Many extremists in the reformed camp today do not hesitate to teach the horrible doctrine of little babies roasting in hell.

7. Baptismal regeneration and salvation through sacraments - Of course, if one believes in baby baptism, one believes that *anyone* who fails to be baptized will go to hell: "[According to] Apostolic Tradition . . . the Churches of Christ hold inherently that without baptism and participation at the table of the Lord it is impossible for any man to attain either to the kingdom of God or to salvation and life eternal. This is the witness of Scripture too" (*Forgiveness and the Just Deserts of Sin, and the Baptism of Infants 1:24:34 [A.D. 412]*). It is no wonder that Roman Catholics are led to believe that their salvation consists of going to church and participating in the sacraments.

8. Sprinkling versus immersion – Augustine was not the first to teach infant baptism or baptismal regeneration. These teachings began in the 2nd century by such church leaders as Hippolytus, Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Origen although it did not become common practice in the church until the fifth century. Around this same time, sprinkling was introduced. There are no direct statements by Augustine advocating sprinkling, but if he embraced these other errors, especially the baby baptism, what else could he have taught and practiced since few people would *immerse an infant*.

9. Physical Persecution of those who disagreed with him – This was done to the Bible believing Donatists who rejected Augustine's unbiblical teachings on water baptism: "Augustine of Hippo did not shrink from giving a dogmatic basis to what had come to be the practice of the church, and even professed to find warrant for it in Scripture. 'It is, indeed, better that men should be brought to serve God by instruction than by fear of punishment, or by pain. But because the former means are better, the latter must not therefore be neglected. Many must often be brought back to their Lord, like wicked servants, by the rod of temporal suffering, before they attain the highest grade of religious development. . . . The Lord himself orders that guests be first invited, then compelled, to his great supper.' And Augustine argues that if the State has not the power to punish religious error, neither should it punish a crime like murder. Rightly did Neander say of Augustine's teaching, that it 'contains the germ of the whole system of spiritual despotism, intolerance, and persecution, even to the court of the Inquisition.' Nor was it long before the final step was taken in the church doctrine of persecution. Leo the Great, the first of the popes, in a strict sense of that term, drew the logical inference from the premises already provided for him by the Fathers of the church, when he declared that death is the appropriate penalty for heresy" (*Vedder, Our New Testament, pp. 97,98*).