

But I've Already Been Baptized (3)

Scripture: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38 NKJV).

Yesterday's devotional discussed "infant baptism," concluding that infants are not proper subjects of baptism, even if it is correctly administered as immersion. Now consider the vital question of motive as it relates to valid baptism.

God's word teaches that baptism is "for the remission (forgiveness) of sins" (Acts 2:38). It is to "wash away" sins" (Acts 22:16). It is to receive salvation (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism puts one "into Christ" (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27), where salvation is (2 Timothy 2:10).

Despite such plain statements, many professing Christians deny the necessity of baptism to receive salvation from sin. When these sincere folks say, "But I've already been baptized," they may well believe that they were saved prior to their baptism, and that baptism's purpose was to declare their salvation.

One prominent denomination's web site states: "All who repent and believe on Christ as Savior and Lord are to be baptized. Thus they declare to the world that they have died with Christ and that they also have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life." According to this statement, dying with Christ and being raised to a new life occur "before" baptism. Paul, however, teaches in Romans 6:3-4 that they occur "at" baptism.

Is a person obeying the command to "be baptized . . . for the remission of sins" if he believes his sins are already forgiven before and without baptism? Consider four alternatives for anything we do, including baptism:

- 1) We can do a wrong thing for a wrong reason.
- 2) We can do a wrong thing for a right reason.
- 3) We can do a right thing for a wrong reason.
- 4) We can do a right thing for a right reason.

Baptism is the right thing to do. Being baptized to declare that one is already saved is doing the right thing for the wrong reason. God's word instructs is not only what to do, but why to do it. Don't you want to obey God for the right reason? "Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

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