

Baptism and Remission of Sins

There is little debate (although there is much disagreement over definitions) over the importance of faith, confession and repentance in salvation from sin. There has long been much debate over the role of baptism. According to much of the religious world baptism is merely an outward sign of an inward grace; a symbol of salvation which has already been attained either by faith alone, or by grace alone, depending upon whether the disputant has been influenced more by Martin Luther or John Calvin. This view has caused contradictory teachings which acknowledge baptism as a command, but deny its necessity by reducing it to a useless work of human merit, concluding that obedience to a divine command is not necessary to salvation. Let us understand that one who refuses a command of Christ is not His friend (Jn. 14:15), does not love Him (Jn. 14:15, 23-24), and will be judged by Him (Jn. 12:48). What does the Bible teach regarding baptism?

The forerunner of the Christ, John the Immerser, taught and administered "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3). In both Mark's and Luke's record, baptism and remission of sins are connected by the Greek preposition *eis*, meaning, "into, unto, to, towards, for, among," depending upon its context, requiring that repentance and baptism precede the remission of sins. John's practice was twice acknowledged by Paul (Acts 13:24; 19:4). Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Peter preached the same solution for sins (Acts 2:38), adding that repentance and baptism are requirements for every person who would enjoy remission of sins and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that both were in the name of (by the authority of) Jesus Christ. The same Greek preposition used by Mark and Luke, *eis*, connects baptism and the remission of sins, making it impossible for remission of sins to occur before baptism. Additionally, the commands of repentance and baptism are connected by the Greek conjunction *kai*, meaning, "and, also, but, even; that is, namely; . . .both. . .and, not only. . .but also," depending upon its context. Clearly, the Bible teaches that, regarding the remission of sins, repentance must precede baptism for either to be valid, and that repentance and baptism precede the remission of sins. It takes a gross distortion of the words of the Lord to be able to conclude otherwise.

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