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Baptism is a biblical subject about which many people have questions, like: "What exactly is baptism?" "Who is a proper subject of baptism?" And, "Why should one be baptized?" The proper answers to these questions can only come from the Scriptures.

It is important to understand what the action of baptism is. Does it involve sprinkling, pouring, or immersion? The word "baptism" in our bibles come from the Greek word "*baptizo*" which means, "to dip, to immerse, submerge" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament). When people were coming to John to be baptized, the Scriptures tell us that he "was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there" (Jn. 3:23). The apostle Paul described baptism as a "burial" saying, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death..." (Rom. 6:3-4). The examples we have of the action of baptism suggest the same, as the subjects "went down into the water" and then "came up out of the water" (cf. Ac. 8: 38-39; Mt. 3:16). Thus, the action of baptism is to be immersed in water.

We also may ask who should be baptized, and why? Jesus commanded His apostles before He ascended, "Go teach all nations, baptizing them..." Jesus implied that the subjects of baptism were those who would be taught the gospel. Jesus also declared, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). The gospel is designed

to save "everyone that believeth" (Ro. 1:16). Belief must proceed baptism. Thus, the subjects of baptism are to be believers in Christ. According to the inspired apostle Peter, repentance and baptism is "for the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 2:38). Saul was baptized to wash away his sin (Ac. 22:16). In Acts 8:12 we find that it was "men and women" who were being baptized at their belief of the gospel. Therefore, the subjects of baptism must be men or women who have become believers in Christ who are in need of having their sins forgiven. Infants are not subjects for baptism. They cannot be taught the gospel, they cannot believe, nor do infants have sin of which to be forgiven (cf. Mk. 10:14-15).

As sinners we must come in contact with the blood of Christ for salvation. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). Of course, we cannot contact the actual physical blood of Jesus, but we must contact his blood to be saved. Jesus shed His blood in His death on the cross and apostle Paul explains that baptism is the means by which we are buried into His death. Thus, he states it is through baptism we begin a new life (i.e. we are born again). "We are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:-4).

Are you in need of being baptized into Christ?

Paul Smithson

