

Sprinkling, Pouring, Or Immersion?

INTRODUCTION

1. In the preaching and teaching of the apostles, we saw that baptism is essential to:
 - a. Salvation — Mk **16:16**; Ac **2:38**; **22:16**
 - b. Becoming disciples of Christ - Mt **28:19—20**; Ga **3:27**
2. But even when the necessity of baptism has been established, questions often remain:
 - a. Is baptism to be immersion, pouring, or sprinkling?
 - b. Should infants be baptized?
 - c. Is there every any reason to be “re—baptized?”

[This lesson examines the first of these questions: “**Is baptism to be sprinkling, pouring or immersion?**” Let’s begin by examining...]

I. THE GREEK WORDS FOR “BAPTIZE” AND “BAPTISM”

A. THE WORDS ~RE “BAPTIZO” AND “BAPTISMA”...

1. Note that the words “baptize” and “baptism” are not actually TRANSLATIONS of the Greek words
2. They are TBANSLITERATIONS (where Greek letters in a word are simply given their English equivalentS)
3. To confirm the actual meaning, we must go to authorities on the Greek language

B. THE FOLLOWING GREEK LEXICONS DEFINE “BAPTIZE” AS “TO IMMERSE, TO PLUNGE, TO DIP”...

1. Greek-English Lexicon Of The N.T. (THAYER)
2. Greek-English Lexicon, 7th Edition (LIDDEL & SCOTT)
3. Greek Lexicon Of The Roman And Byzantine Periods (SOPHOCLES)
4. Biblio—Theological Lexicon Of N.T. Words (CREMER)
5. To quote VINE’S EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF N.T. WORDS: “baptism, **consisting of the processes of immersion, submersion and emergence**”

C. NOT ONE STANDARD GREEK LEXICON DEFINES “BAPTIZO” AS “SPRINKLE” OR “POUR”...

1. In fact, there are completely different words in Greek for “pouring” (CI-IENO) and “sprinkling” (RAINO)
2. It is important to keep in mind concerning “baptize” and “baptism”:
 - a. That they are simply “transliterationS”
 - b. That they were transliterated instead of translated in our Bibles to avoid offending those who practice pouring or sprinkling
 - c. But when translated into English, they can only mean “to immerse” and “immersion”!

D. WHAT ABOUT MODERN ENGLISH DICTIO~ThRIES?

1. It is true that they define baptism as sprinkling, pouring, or immersion
2. But their definitions reflect common usage of words by people

TODAY

3. To know exactly what was meant by Jesus and His apostles, we must consult authorities who define how words were used IN BIBLICAL TIMES!

[That of course is where Greek lexicons like those referenced to above are helpful. They define words according to their meaning at the time used by the New Testament writers. Now let's consider...]

II. FIGURES OF SPEECH USED TO DESCRIBE BAPTISM

A. BY PAUL IN ROMANS...

1. In baptism, we are "buried with Him... into death" - **Ro 6:3-4**
2. Baptism is a "likeness of his death" — **Ro 6:5**

B. BY PAUL IN COLOSSI-ANS...

1. In baptism, we are "buried with Him"
2. "in which, you were also raised with Him" - **Co 2:12**

C. WHICH ACTION (IMMERSION, POURING, SPRINKLING) IS:

1. A "burial?"
 2. A "likeness of His death?"
 3. A "likeness of His resurrection?"
- Only immersion (followed by an emersion) fits Paul's description of baptism

[Paul's use of such figures of speech would make no sense if baptism

were either pouring or sprinkling. It is also interesting to note...]

III. THE TESTIMONY OF VARIOUS SCHOLARS

A. WHOSE DENOMINATIONS PRACTICE POURING OR SPRINKLING...

1. EPISCOPALIAN
 - a. **"This passage (Ro 6:4) cannot be understood unless it be borne in mind that the primitive baptism was by immersion"**
- CONYBEARE & HOWSON (Life And Epistles Of St. Paul)
 - b. **"Baptism means immersion; and it was immersion. . . Unless it had been so, Paul's analogical argument about our being buried with Christ in baptism would have had no meaning. Nothing could have been simpler than baptism in its first form. When a convert declared his faith in Christ, he was taken at once to the nearest pool or stream of water and plunged into it, and henceforward he was recognized as one of the Christian community."** - CUNNINGHAM (The Growth Of The Church)
 - c. **"Baptism is the grave of the old man and the birth of the new. As he sinks beneath the baptismal waters, the believer buries there all his corrupt affections and past sins; as he emerges thence he rises regenerate, quickened to new hopes and a new life. This baptism is an image of his participation both in**

the **death and resurrection of Christ.**” - BISHOP LIGHTFOOT (Commentary)

2. METHODIST

- a. “Alluding to the ‘immersion’ practiced in the case of ‘adults,’ wherein the person appeared to be buried under the water, as Christ was buried in the heart of the earth; His rising again the third day, and their emerging from the water, was an emblem of the resurrection of the body.”

- ADAM CLARKE (Commentary on Colossiafla 2:12)

- b. **“We are buried with him.’ Alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion.”** - JOHN WESLEY (Notes)

3. LUTHERAN

- a. **“The sacrament of baptism was administered in this century (the first) without the public assemblies, in places appointed and prepared for that purpose, and was performed by an immersion of the whole body in the baptismal font.”**

- MOSHEIM (Mosheim’s Church History)

- b. **“For the explanation of this figurative description of the baptismal rite, it is necessary to call attention to the well—known circumstance that in the early days of the church, persons, when baptized, were first plunged below and then raised above the water.”** - THOLUCK (Commentary on Romans)

B. HOW DO THEY RECONCILE WITH THEIR DENOMINATIONS’ PRACTICE?

1. Since these scholars (and many others) admit and affirm that immersion is the only “form” of baptism taught in the Bible, are they to be charged with dishonesty and insincerity because they practiced “sprinkling” or “pouring”?
2. Not necessarily; rather, they fell into the fallacy of assuming:
 - a. Apostolic commands and examples are not binding
 - b. Human wisdom may alter specific Bible teaching in what they call “rites” or “customs”
3. But Jesus condemned the religious leaders of His day for making the same mistake! — **Mt 15:1—9; Mk 7:1-13**
 - a. Laying aside the commandments of God, they were keeping traditions of men
 - b. By keeping certain traditions, they were not keeping the commandments of God!
4. When one practices pouring or sprinkling...
 - a. They are keeping traditions of men, not the commandments of God
 - b. They render the commandment of God to be immersed (baptized) of no effect!
5. Though sincere, one is not necessarily right; we are right only when we do the Father’s will! - **Mt 7:21—23**
 - a. Love for Jesus will be manifested by keeping His commandments — **Jn 14:15; 15:10,14**
 - b. Love for God is manifested the same way — **1 Jn 5:3**

CONCLUSION

1. What have we learned?
 - a. That the Greek words mean “immersion”
 - b. That “sprinkling” or “pouring” is inconsistent with the FIGURES OF SPEECH used in the Bible to describe baptism

- c. That there is no question “immersion” was the mode of baptism in the Bible and the early church
- 2. As a final confirmation, consider the account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch - **Ac 8:35-39**
 - a. **“both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water”**

 - b. **“he baptized (immersed) him”**
 - c. **“they came up out of the water”**
- 3. What of yourself?
 - a. Was your baptism like that described in **Ac 8:38—39**?
 - b. If you were sprinkled or had water poured upon you...
 - 1) You were keeping a tradition of man
 - 2) You have not yet kept the commandment of God!
- 4. If you have not been baptized (immersed) as commanded by Jesus and His apostles...
 - a. You are still in your sins! - **Ac 2:38; 22:16**
 - b. You have not yet put on Christ and become His disciple! — **Ga 3:27; Mt 28:1820**

‘And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.’ (Acts 22:16)