

Baptism 411

HEARING

Before any steps can be taken, we have to make sure people hear the true Word of God.
(Romans 10:17, Luke 11:27-28, Romans 10:14)

BELIEF

Often there is controversy about which is the true way to salvation: belief or baptism. The answer is BOTH. You can't have one without the other, and one was never meant to go without the other. Some churches overplay faith, claiming that baptism isn't necessary for salvation and is, rather, merely an act of obedience. This isn't Biblical. Other churches teach that baptism can come without faith. This is often the case with infant baptisms. Infants are incapable of faith, and yet they are still baptized. This, too, is not Biblical. In the Bible, faith and baptism go hand in hand. We mustn't rely ONLY on faith, but we mustn't overplay baptism and forget faith either. Faith is as important as baptism.
(John 8:24, John 11:25, John 20:31, Romans 10:9-11)

REPENTANCE

After deciding that what you have heard is truth and that you do, indeed, believe Jesus is the resurrected Christ, the Son of the living God, you must repent of your sins. This means you must stop doing whatever sinful things you are doing. To repent means to do an about-face with your life; turn around; go the other way. Does it mean you will never sin again? No. But does it mean you will, from now on, be aware of your sin, make a conscious effort to avoid it, and ask forgiveness with sincerity when you slip up? Yes.
(Matthew 4:17, Mark 6:12, Luke 13:3, Acts 2:38, Acts 17:30)

CONFESSION

Once you have decided Jesus is your savior and have decided to repent of your sins, you must announce those decisions. Confess your faith before men.
(Romans 10:9-11, Matthew 10:32, I John 4:15, Romans 10:13)

BAPTISM AS SALVATION

This is where some churches stop. You have to do everything up to this point to be saved, but you don't have to be baptized. Here, we will show you all the reasons why that is not Biblically accurate. Baptism IS necessary to salvation. Romans 10:13 says we must call on the name of the Lord to be saved. But how do we call on the name of the Lord? Baptism.
(Acts 22:16)

Baptism was always meant as an important part of salvation.
(Mark 16:16, I Peter 3:18-21)

BAPTISM FOR FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Baptism washes away our sins. Until we are baptized we are still carrying our sins around with us. We must be baptized to receive the forgiveness of those sins, sins which will keep us out of heaven and away

from God.
(Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16)

BAPTISM TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

(Acts 2:38, Acts 11:16)

BAPTISM AS REBIRTH

Jesus doesn't just say someone must be born of the Spirit. No, He says someone must be born of WATER and the Spirit. How are they born of water? By being baptized.
(John 3:3-6)

BAPTISM AS RESURRECTION

Baptism is necessary for salvation because through it we die to our old sinful selves, are buried beneath a watery grave, and are raised to a new life. Baptism isn't merely an arbitrary act chosen randomly by God. No, it is a symbolic reminder of His Son's priceless gift, and through it we symbolically take on Christ's death so that we might live as He does. Sin cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. And because all of us have sinned at least once in our lives, all of us deserve spiritual death. But God, knowing we couldn't be perfect, knowing that each and every one of us would sin in this life, no matter how small that sin might be, looked down from His throne in Heaven and came up with a game plan to save us. He would give His life for ours. This is why Jesus, the sinless One, came to the earth, lived a sinless life, and died sinless. Because He was sinless, He could die for our sins instead of His own. He died a spiritual (and physical) death so that we would not have to die a spiritual death. This is why we are baptized. It is an expression of that spiritual death. We are alive in our sins, knowing that those sins will keep us out of Heaven. So what do we do? We die to those sins. We kill them through repentance. Then we bury them along with ourselves through baptism. Being lowered beneath the water is a visual image of someone being lowered into a grave. Then we are raised out of the water (out of the grave) as new creatures, with our old sinfulness destroyed. As seen earlier, we cannot enter Heaven with our sins intact. We must get rid of them. We get rid of them by washing them away through baptism. If we haven't been baptized, have we really washed them away?

(Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Colossians 2:9-14, Romans 6:1-6)

BAPTISM CLOTHES YOU WITH CHRIST

(Galatians 3:27)

BAPTISM IS COMMANDED IN THE GREAT COMMISSION

(Matthew 28:18-20)

BAPTISM VS. FAITH

Often, it seems, churches try to pit baptism and faith against one another. Either you have to believe and don't have to be baptized (simply say a sinner's prayer or ask Jesus into your heart)...or you have to be baptized without needing to be old enough to believe (sprinkling infants). And what we end up with is a messy confusion of right or wrong, this or that, one or the other, all of which result in nothing more than fighting, fighting, and more...(you guessed it)...fighting. Why is it we try to tear the Word of God apart? Instead of yanking out one passage and holding it up or yanking out a different one and making it stand alone, we should leave it as its intended, unified, congruous whole. Instead of asking, "Faith or

Baptism?" we should be declaring, "Faith AND Baptism!" Baptism and faith are meant to be equal parts of salvation, both together, neither without the other. All along, Jesus intended there to be one Lord, one faith, on baptism. Here at Buffalo Christian Church, we are adamant about God's Word. No passage is ever meant to be torn out without regard to the rest of the Bible. Salvation, like everything else in the Bible, is a patchwork of verses and steps, commands and decisions. Sound complicated? It's not. Belief, repentance, confession, and baptism all take place within a matter of minutes. It is not a long and complicated process; in fact, it is a rather short process, based on a decision that will last a lifetime. (Ephesians 4:5)

BAPTISM IS IMMEDIATE

Notice in scripture that baptism isn't something that is scheduled for the next Sunday or five months from now or at a communal baptismal ceremony. It is IMMEDIATELY following the confession of faith. Notice that in the narrative of Lydia, Lydia invited Paul and Luke to stay at her house after she was baptized. That meant she was baptized the very same day they came to her and spoke to her the Word of God. Then there is Paul (Saul) himself. After being struck blind on the road to Damascus, Saul (Paul) had gone three days without food. He had spent those three days praying to God. When Ananias came and restored his sight and talked to him about Jesus, Paul immediately arose and was baptized. Notice: he was baptized even before he ate, and this was after going three days without food. That should tell us how necessary baptism was to the first century apostles.

(Acts 22:16, Acts 2:41, Acts 8:36-38, Acts 8:12-13, Acts 18:8, Acts 16:30-33, Acts 16:14-15, Acts 9:17-19)

BAPTISM AS IMMERSION

What about the controversy over whether baptism signifies sprinkling, pouring, dunking or all of the above?? The answer is all Greek to us. Seriously. The New Testament was originally written in Greek. That was the language Paul, Luke, Matthew, John, etc. used when penning the New Testament. So in order to understand the answer to this question, we will have to look at the original Greek. In the Greek language, there are three words we want to focus on, each with a different meaning. Just as we have different words meaning different things, so did the Greeks. In English, "sprinkle" does not mean "pour," and "pour" does not mean "dunk." Likewise, in Greek, "rhantizo" does not mean "katacheo," and "katacheo" does not mean "baptizo." Rhantizo=sprinkle. Katacheo=pour over. Baptizo=immerse, dunk, or plunge. Every single time baptism is mentioned in the Bible, the original Greek word used is baptizo, meaning to immerse, dunk, or plunge. Never are the words rhantizo or cheo used to denote baptism. Never. Rhantizo is only used four times in the New Testament, all in two chapters of the book of Hebrews. It refers to the sprinkling of blood in the Old Testament. (Hebrews 9:13-14, Hebrews 9:19, Hebrews 9:21, Hebrews 10:22)

When Hebrews 10:22 says "wash," the Greek word is "louo" meaning "bathe."

Likewise, when the New Testament writers used the word katacheo (to pour over), it never referred to baptism. One example of katacheo being used is in the story of the woman who poured her perfume over Jesus' head.

(Matthew 26:7)

CHRISTENING AND INFANT BAPTISM

Men and women were baptized. Not children. NOWHERE in scripture (we repeat, NOWHERE) does it give an example of a child being baptized. Baptism is only for believers...ONLY. What might prevent someone from being baptized? A lack of belief. In the narrative of Philip and the eunuch, Philip clearly said baptism was for those who were able to believe, not merely the act of getting someone wet, but a part of an intimate and important process. Children, infants, are incapable of belief. Therefore, we should see them as being incapable of being baptized. Baptism was always intended for those of an age in which belief and choice are possible. So what happens to children when they die? Do they go to

Heaven? Yes. Children are innocent in the eyes of God because they lack the ability to distinguish right, wrong, and sin.

(Acts 8:12-13, Acts 8:36-38, Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:14-15)

RE-BAPTISM

Is there ever a need to be re-baptized? That depends. If you were knowingly immersed after believing in and confessing Jesus Christ, and you slip back into sin, the answer is no. If you were fully and willingly immersed the first time, all you need to do is confess your sins, repent, and you will be forgiven. If, however, you feel there was something lacking with your initial baptism (your heart wasn't in it, it was just a dunking, you felt forced, you didn't really understand what you were doing), then, while the decision is up to you, we would strongly encourage you to be re-baptized. The point of baptism is to understand the commitment we are making and to obey the commands of God to the best of our ability. If you feel that your baptism wasn't obedient to the best of your ability, you may want to consider doing it again. In order to become a member of Buffalo Christian Church, will you need to be re-baptized if you were baptized in another church? If you were fully and willingly immersed underwater, the answer is no. You merely have to place your membership. We will ask you to repeat your confession of faith, confirming that you still believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, but you will not need to be re-baptized. If, however, you were sprinkled or if a member of the clergy poured water over you, then the answer is yes. In order to become a member here at Buffalo, we will ask you to be baptized according to Biblical principles. Buffalo Christian Church is not an exclusive club requiring certain initiation rights; it is merely a small community in the much larger Kingdom of God, and since willing, faithful, Biblical baptism through immersion is necessary for admission into the Kingdom of God, we here at Buffalo, as a satellite of the Kingdom, adhere to Kingdom requirements.

ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED?

Once you are baptized, are you covered for life? Yes and no. Once you are saved, nothing and no one (neither angels, nor demons, nor friends, nor enemies, nor family, nor bosses, nor governments, nor churches, nor militaries, nor Satan himself), let us repeat, NO ONE, can take your salvation away from you...except yourself. Once you choose to follow Jesus Christ, you have to live out that decision for the rest of your life. No one can take your salvation away from you, but through willful disobedience and/or a habitually sinful life, you can forfeit your salvation. The choice is entirely up to you. The Bible says if we live a devoted life, our names will not be erased from the Book of Life. If it were not possible for a name to be erased from the Book of Life, Jesus would not have said "will not." He would have, instead, said "cannot." Obviously a name can be erased from the Book of Life if that person, whose name was once in the book, abandons the Christ he once confessed. The decision to follow Christ should be a lifechanging decision and should not be entered into lightly. Being baptized isn't a free pass to continue sinning. It is the emphatic statement that you love the Lord your God and you will serve Him for the rest of your life.

(Revelation 3:5, I Corinthians 9:27, I Corinthians 10:11-12, Hebrews 2:1-3, Hebrews 3:12-13, Luke 9:23)