

Water Baptism

I. The Baptism of Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:13-17)

A. The Simplicity of the Baptism (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9)

NOTE: This description of the baptism of Jesus is very simple. There is no real argument about the mode of baptism. He was dunked in the water. That is, He was fully immersed. Baptism means placing somebody or something entirely into some other medium—nothing else. That is the meaning of baptism throughout scripture. This passage states that Jesus came up “straightway out of the water.” Sprinkling would not explain this statement. Neither would pouring. John took Jesus, put Him down into the water, and He came up straightway out of the water.

B. The Controversy of the Mode (Matthew 3:13-17; John 3:23)

NOTE: Some say that John just poured a little water on Jesus’ head. You may have seen a popular painting of John pouring water on Jesus. They are standing about knee deep in the Jordon River and John the Baptist is pouring a little water from a pitcher on His head. Now, start with the view of that picture in your mind and imagine Jesus Christ coming up “straightway out of the water.” He is only knee deep in the water and now he comes up straightway. That would require Him to float up into the air. But that is not how it happened. When you walk up the bank out of a river, you do not come up straightway. But when you put somebody in about waist deep and you dunk them under the water, they come up straightway out of the water. That is scriptural baptism.

II. Three Elements of Baptism

A. The Three Parts of Baptism

NOTE: There are three main parts of any baptism. These are often called the elements of baptism. Here they are:

1. Administrator: He is the one doing the baptism. He is called the Administrator because he is the one administering the Baptism.
2. Subject: The Subject the person getting baptized.
3. Medium: The Medium is what the Subject is being baptized into. There is no baptism unless there is a Medium into which the Administrator baptizes the Subject.

NOTE: In the baptism of Jesus by John, John was the Administrator, Jesus was the Subject and the Medium was water. Pay close attention to this relationship because it is the pattern by which all baptisms can be understood. In baptism, there is always an Administrator who baptizes the Subject into the Medium. Always look for these elements when you consider anything called a baptism in scripture.

B. The Example for Us to Follow (Matthew 3:13-17; Acts 8:26-39, esp. 36-39; Acts 16:27-34, esp. 33-34)

NOTE: Generally speaking, the way John baptized Jesus is how we baptize believers in water today. It is not John baptizing Jesus, but it is one man, usually a preacher, who as the Administrator takes the person who has come to be baptized, the Subject, and puts them into the water, the Medium (Acts 8:38-39). You have the Administrator, the Subject and the Medium. That is still our basic form of baptism as to external physical form. But more important, that is the form of all baptisms. An Administrator takes a Subject and puts that Subject into some sort of a Medium.

- David F. Reagan