

Episode #701 Baptism 5: The Reality of Baptism

I. We are taking a break from our studies of the book of Matthew to consider the very important topic of baptism brought up by John's baptism in Matthew 3.

II. We have studied the meaning of the Greek word *baptizo*. We discovered it means "to dip," "to dye," "to overwhelm," and, most importantly, "to identify," with that identification establishing a relationship and resulting in a merger. We considered last time the important topic of the baptism or identification with the Holy Spirit. Today we are going to consider the ritual versus the reality of baptism and what the important "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5 really is.

III. Identification with Jesus Christ.

- A. Romans 6:3. The most important baptism in Scripture. Paul and many others were identified with Jesus Christ. Matthew 10:32. "Avow" implies open and emphatic declaration even in the face of opposition.
- B. Paul before the Damascus road disavowed any relationship to Jesus. Acts 26:9-12. This was not a ceremony; it was a way of life. After the Lord appeared to him, this way of life changed. No one knew until God revealed it to Ananias. Acts 9:10-16. This started Paul's public identification.
- C. Many insist there was a ritual connected with Paul's identification. This was probably true. Note: the one who performed this was deputized by Christ to do it. This made him a mediator between God and Paul. Because he had been identified, even merged, with Christ, Paul could speak of this in Romans 6:3. This is the paramount baptism of Scripture, the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5.
- D. We must determine the difference between ritual baptism and real baptism to discover what carries through (Phil. 1:10) to today. In practice, most exalt the ritual and ignore the reality.
- E. There was a God-given ritual called identifying, "baptizing" in Koine Greek. John, commissioned by God, performed a ritual identification of those who avowed submissiveness to God. Serious consequences if they did not follow through.
- F. Romans 6:3, Galatians 3:27, "baptized into Christ." Far more exalted than the ritual, this is a blessed reality. Similar to the ritual of circumcision and the reality of circumcision, Deut. 30:6, Jer. 4:4, Deut. 10:16, Romans 2:28,29.
- G. The same was true of baptism during God's work with Israel. When God speaks of it, we must determine if he speaks of ritual or reality.
- H. The context helps. Acts 2:38: not the ritual. Acts 2:23: they had been charged with the murder of the Lord Jesus. A water ritual would do less than nothing for this. They needed to be identified with Christ for the remission of their sins. We identify ourselves with a grocery store (as a customer), with money in hand, in order to buy milk. A sinner must identify himself with the Savior of sinners to obtain the forgiveness he needs. Keep water out of Acts 2:38!
- I. The marriage ceremony can never produce the reality of marriage. The ritual baptism of John identified them with the submissive in Israel. This was a significant step. If they turned back, they were out of the kingdom. Luke 9:62.
- J. We have no interest in being identified with the submissive in Israel. We are interested in identification with Jesus Christ. Colossians (1:2) was written to believers in Jesus Christ. They became this by hearing the truth (1:5,9). They were "complete

in Him” and “buried with Him in baptism” (2:10,12). This is the baptism we want and need.

K. Romans 6:3: as many as ARE identified with Jesus Christ ARE identified with His death. I Corinthians 15:3,4. We are identified with His burial and resurrection as well. Our “Certificate of Baptism” is God’s Word.

IV. Conclusion: There was a water ritual in the Bible called baptism; however, there was also a reality of identification with Jesus Christ. This reality is far more important than any ritual. When we believe in Jesus Christ through faith in the gospel, we are identified with Him and put on Him. Let us never be guilty of exalting the ritual and ignoring the reality. Identification with Christ is what truly makes a difference in our lives!