

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	50		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	Colossians 2:12; Hebrews 9:9-10		
Date:	September 13, 2015 a.m.		

Baptism (Part II)

26. Lord's Day

Question 70. What is it to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ?

Answer: It is to receive of God the remission of sins, freely, for the sake of Christ's blood, which he shed for us by his sacrifice upon the cross; (a) and also to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ, that so we may more and more die unto sin, and lead holy and unblamable lives. (b)

(a) Heb. 12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. 1 Pet. 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Rev. 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, Rev. 7:14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Zech. 13:1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. Ezek. 36:25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. (b) John 1:33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 1 Cor. 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Cor. 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. Rom. 6:4 Therefore 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. Col. 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

"One of the most remarkable things about Baptism, to the attentive reader of Scripture," comments R.L. Dabney, "is the absence of all set explanations of its meaning in the New Testament, and at the same time, of all appearance of surprize at its novelty."¹ Why is this? Because baptism was symbolized by the Hebrew concept of *purification* (cf. Leviticus 8:5, 6; 14:8, 9; and Psalm 51:1-2, 7-10), which included both cleansing and consecration. In the New Testament, this background formed the Christian understanding

of baptism, which symbolizes the two-fold application of Christ's satisfaction (called His blood) and the Holy Spirit, cleansing from guilt and depravity, and thus, as Dabney continues, "consecrating the cleansed person to the service of a holy God."²

It is important that we understand the *proper analogy* intended by baptism. What is symbolized by water? Does it point to burial? We have to remember that a Hebrew tomb (like Christ's) was not underground. The analogy intended by water is cleansing. With this in mind, we look now at the MODE of baptism.

I. THE TERM

The Greek work **BAPTIZŌ** in secular usage has the root meaning "to dip" and it *often* has this meaning in Scripture. But it also has the meaning "to wash, stain" (as in Revelation 19:13, a vesture stained with blood, cf. Luke 11:38; Mark 7:4; Daniel 4:33). In this regard, it is interesting that the noted Baptist scholar T.J. Conant is forced to acknowledge that the word does not carry with it the idea of "taking out of the water."³ In fact, in every example that he cites (in order to prove the Baptist position) the baptizing element or instrumentality is moved and put upon the person or thing baptized, never is the person put into the element! We conclude that the word **BAPTIZŌ** is not used as a modal term in Scripture. Rather, it denotes a condition or result (regardless of the mode or act).⁴

II. THE SIGN SIGNIFIED

There is a close analogy between baptism (cleansing, purification) and the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:38). How is this pictured in Scripture? Typical Baptist terminology is never used in the New Testament (e.g., I will immerse, or dip, or plunge you in the Spirit!)

A. The Old Testament Description

1. THE CONCEPT OF POURING. "I will *pour* water upon him that is thirsty; I will *pour* my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring" (Isaiah 44:3). "I will *pour out* my Spirit upon all flesh. In those days will I pour out my Spirit" (Joel 2:28, 29).
2. THE CONCEPT OF SPRINKLING. "Then will I *sprinkle clean water* upon you, and ye shall be clean - and I will put my Spirit within you" (Ezekiel 36:25-27). "He (Christ) will be *like rain falling* on a mown field, *like showers watering* the earth."

B. The New Testament Description

In the following texts we find the Spirit of God always represented as descending upon persons (not people being dipped or immersed into the Spirit).

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Descending, John 1:32 | 6. Anointing, Acts 10:38 |
| 2. Pouring, Acts 2:17 | 7. Giving to, Acts 15:8 |
| 3. Shedding forth, Acts 2:33 | 8. Sealing, Ephesians 1:13 |
| 4. Falling, Acts 11:15 | 9. Sent from on high, Luke 24:49 |
| 5. Coming upon, Acts 1:8 | 10. Received, John 7:39 |

NOTE: In Matthew 3:11, we are told that John the Baptist baptized with water unto repentance, but Christ "shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (cf. also Acts 1:4, 5). When we come to the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), how is the baptism of the Spirit pictured? We find terms like "sat upon" (Acts 2:3), "poured out" (Acts 2:17), and "shed forth" (Acts 2:33).

III. PROBLEMS WITH THE CONCEPT OF IMMERSION

A. Acts 2:41.

Three thousand are baptized in one day. Note that: (1) This took place in Jerusalem. Where could these people be baptized by immersion? (2) Who baptized (by immersion) all

these people? If only the twelve apostles, then each apostle would have to baptize 50 persons an hour for 12 straight hours! (3) What did the people wear who were baptized? (They did not have baptismal robes.) Were they baptized in their clothes? Without their clothes? I submit that baptism by immersion was not only improper but impossible! If, however, the mode was *sprinkling* or *pouring*, then all these difficulties disappear.

IV. FIGURATIVE EXPRESSIONS

Two passages, Romans 6:3, 4 and Colossians 2:12, use the expression *buried with Him in baptism*. Baptists say this proves immersion. But this interpretation is very problematic.

A. The Custom of Burial.

The Romans did not bury, but burned, their dead (as did the Greeks). More importantly, the Jews did not bury their dead the way that we do. How could the Apostle Paul have "burial" in the modern concept in mind? A careful analysis, notes John Murray, "will show that there is no necessary allusion to the mode of baptism."⁵ Baptism signifies union with Christ in His redemptive work, renewal by the Holy Spirit and entry into the Kingdom of God.⁶ Paul's point is that union has to do with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. It is very easy to point to the expression "buried with Him" (Romans 6:4) and insist that only Baptism by immersion is what is meant, but note also the expressions "planted together" (united, NIV, Romans 6:5) and "crucified with Him" (Romans 6:6). These expressions likewise indicate the union with Christ which is symbolized and sealed by baptism - and they do not bear any analogy to immersion. "The fact is," concludes John Murray, "there are many aspects to our union with Christ. It is arbitrary to select one aspect and find in the language used to set it forth the essences of the mode of baptism."⁷

CONCLUSION: The mode of baptism is not a concern of Scripture. The effects of and responsibility arising from union with Christ and renewal by the Holy Spirit - these are the major points of baptism. Those who make baptism by immersion the only mode of baptism have missed the point. Immersion is an entirely proper mode of baptism - but so is sprinkling and pouring - and given the language used in texts like Hebrews 9:13, 14, 22, 10:22, 12:24; I Peter 1:2, I close with this observation of Doug Wilson on Romans 6: "The fact that our union with Christ is stated in Romans as a burial cannot dictate to us what immersion is the *sine qua non* of baptism. Elsewhere Paul makes the same point about our union with Christ, and our baptism, but uses a completely different figure, that of putting on an article of clothing. 'For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have *put on* Christ' (Galatians 3:27). So we must be careful not to impose certain choreography on baptism. The ordinance is not to be considered as a replication, or a dramatic reenactment, of Christ's sufferings. The key thought is union with Christ, and identification with Him. This can be done equally well through pouring, immersion, or sprinkling. Provided that baptism with water is administered in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and administered within the boundaries of the Christian faith, there is ample scriptural grounds for accepting all these modes as valid biblical forms of baptism."⁸

¹ R.L. Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, rpt., 1975), p. 759.

² Ibid.

³ T.J. Conant, *The Meaning and Use of Baptizien* (Kregel, rpt., 1977), pp. 88ff.

⁴ The earliest Latin translation of the New Testament, dating back to the second century, simply translate the word by its Latin form BAPTIZŌ and it is never translated by IMMERO or the like (the Latin word for "immersion"). Given the fact that these men were fluent in both languages this is significant.

⁵ John Murray, *Christian Baptism* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977), pp. 29ff.

⁶ This three-point emphasis is noted by the Baptist scholar G.R. Beasley-Murray in his article, "Baptism" in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. S.B. Ferguson, D.F. Wright and J.I. Packer (InterVarsity, 1988), p. 70.

⁷ John Murray, op. cit., p. 31.

⁸ Doug Wilson, *To A Thousand Generations: Infant Baptism, Covenant Mercy for the People of God* (Canon Press, 1996), p. 108. The Presbyterian W.A. MacKay is somewhat more forceful. He writes: "The Scriptural mode of baptism is such as can be practiced in all seasons, in all climates, in all countries, on all persons, at all times, in all places, in all conditions, and under all circumstances. But this cannot be said of immersion. Which is often impracticable, indecent, dangerous, and impossible. It cannot therefore be the Scriptural mode of baptism." *Immersion and Immersionists: A Refutation* (American Presbyterian Press, rpt., n.d.), p. 35.