

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Sprinkling or Dunking

The Bible makes it very clear that baptism is essential to obtain salvation and become a disciple of Jesus Christ (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Matt. 28:19-20; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21). Therefore, it is necessary for us to determine the proper mode of baptism, especially since various religious bodies in Christendom define baptism in different ways. Some pour or sprinkle water on people's heads and say they've baptized them; others completely immerse them in water and define that as baptism. Which of these is correct? Or, are both of them correct? Does it really matter?

God told us in his Word that ***"every word of God is tested..."*** (Prov. 30:5), and we are not to add to or take away from his Word (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; 1 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 22:18-19). Therefore, determining the proper definition of baptism is just as important as recognizing that it is

scripturally necessary for salvation and forgiveness of sins. After all, if God told us to baptize with a specific act in mind and we do something different, we have not actually obeyed him and thus our eternal salvation is in jeopardy (Heb. 5:9; Matt. 7:21-23).

With this in mind, we must remember that in the first century AD when the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the New Testament (2 Pet. 1:20-21; Eph. 3:1-5; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 14:37), their words were written in Greek. The Greek words they used which in English we read as "baptize" and "baptism" are *baptizo* and *baptisma*. Note the similarities between these Greek words and the English words "baptize" and "baptism." These similarities exist because "baptize" and "baptism" are not actually TRANSLATIONS of the Greek words, but instead are TRANSLITERATIONS (where Greek

letters in a word are simply given their English equivalents.) To confirm the actual meanings of *baptizo* and *baptisma*, we must go to authorities on the Greek language.

Greek linguistic authorities such as Thayer, Liddel & Scott, Sophocles, Cremer, and Vine all define "baptize" (*baptizo*) and "baptism" (*baptisma*) as "to immerse, to plunge, to dip," "...consisting of the processes of immersion, submersion and emergence." Not one standard Greek lexicon defines *baptizo* as "to sprinkle" or "to pour." In fact, there are completely different Greek words for "pouring" (*ekcheo*) and "sprinkling" (*rhantizo*). No, the proper definition of baptism is immersion. When we understand this, it makes the biblical figures of speech used to describe baptism much clearer. When Paul says that we are "**buried**" with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12), that imagery makes more sense when correlated with actually burying someone in water via immersion rather than sprinkling them with water. How many of us would sprinkle some dirt over someone's coffin and conclude that we've buried them?

Furthermore, understanding baptism to be immersion in water also gives logic to the actions committed by those who baptized others in the Bible. For example, John the Baptizer (Immerser) chose to baptize at Aenon near Salim...why? The Scriptures specifically give the

reason: "**...because water was plentiful there...**" (John 3:23). If baptism is sprinkling a few drops of water over someone's head, why would John need to go where there was a lot of water? A single glass of water would be sufficient to sprinkle at least one hundred people. However, one would need a lot of water in order to dip someone's entire body into it, especially if you needed to do so with hundreds of people.

In addition, consider the actions of Philip and the Ethiopian when Philip baptized him. The Bible says that upon finding water and confessing his faith in Christ, the Ethiopian "**commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away...**" (Acts 8:38-39). If baptism is defined as Philip sprinkling a few drops of water over the eunuch's head, why would both of them go down into the water and come back out of the water? Why would even one of them need to go down into the water? They both could have stood on the shore while Philip reached down and got his hands sufficiently wet enough to sprinkle some water on the eunuch's head. In fact, why would the Ethiopian even need to leave the chariot? Philip could have left the chariot, come back with a handful or cupful of water from the oasis, and sprinkled some drops on the eunuch's head right there in the chariot. However, since

baptism required Philip to fully immerse the Ethiopian's body in water, it makes sense that they would both leave the chariot, go down into the water before baptism, and come up out of the water after baptism. With this in mind, note that Jesus, upon being baptized by John, was also said to come up out of the water (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:9-10), thus showing that our Lord himself was immersed in water when he was baptized.

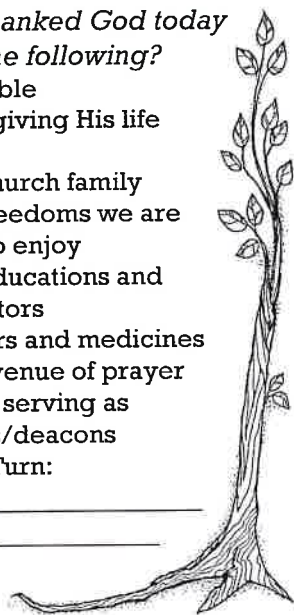
Therefore, we must remember whenever we read in our English Bibles the words "baptize" and "baptism" that we are read transliterations of the original Greek words rather than the actual translations which only mean "to immerse" and "immersion," transliterations that were made most likely to avoid offending those in the religious world who practice pouring or sprinkling instead of immersion. However, the priority of true followers of Christ is to avoid offending God rather than men (Gal. 1:10). To know exactly what his will is, we must use the actual definitions of the words the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the New Testament to use. May we set aside our fallible human wisdom which puts the actual commandments of God on the back burner in favor of keeping the traditions of men (Matt. 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13)! Instead, let us keep the actual commandments of God and thereby prove our love for him is true (John 14:15; 15:10, 14; 1 John 5:3).

Jon Mitchell

**DEAR GOD,
I WANNA TAKE A
MINUTE, NOT TO ASK
FOR ANYTHING FROM
YOU, BUT SIMPLY TO
SAY THANK YOU,
FOR ALL I HAVE.**

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- The freedoms we are able to enjoy
- Our educations and educators
- Doctors and medicines
- The avenue of prayer
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



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Monthly Challenges

DIRECTIONS: *Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.*

1) ENCOURAGE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

1 Thess. 5:11 *"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."*

A vital work that Christians are to be engaged in is strengthening each other. This month, our challenge will be to take the initiative and do something to build up someone in our congregation. Some of the ways we can all be encouragers are:

- a) read the prayer list in the bulletin and visit someone
- b) if you can't visit, give them a phone call
- c) or send them a card to brighten their day
- d) take time before and after services to get to know the brethren
- e) say something positive about their work in the church
- f) tell others about a Bible verse or passage that encourages you
- g) offer hospitality and help if you can, and do so with love

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Acts 17:24-31

24 "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, **25** nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. **26** And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, **27** that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, **28** for

"In him we live and move and have our being";

as even some of your own poets have said,

"For we are indeed his offspring."

29 Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. **30** The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, **31** because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."