

## **What Is Baptism? (2nd)**

(This episode continues our study on the mode of baptism. We see the importance of following the details of the inspired Word of God. Equally, it asserts that immersion, sprinkling, and pouring are not synonymous and gives a simple illustration to prove this.)

In our last study, we began to study the mode of baptism. There we saw that Calvin admitted that immersion of the whole body in water is what the believers of New Testament and the early saints believed and practiced. He further asserted that since some immersed once and others three times they had “different rites,” and because of this “there is no call for us to be too particular about things that are not so necessary.” He continued by saying that it justified changing from immersion to sprinkling. This change he said was a “trifling difference in the ceremony” and that it “ought not to mean so much to us.”

The thing that Calvin failed to note is that immersing three times or one time did not change the mode. It was still immersion and this (as he called it) “different rites” did not in any way suggest a consideration of sprinkling with the early believers. What would cause Calvin to say, “Moreover, it is a matter of no importance whether we baptise by entirely immersing the person baptised in the water, or only by sprinkling water upon him, according to the diversity of countries, this should remain free to the churches?” We can believe that the only reason he, or anyone else, would suggest sprinkling in the place of immersion was because this is what the Catholics practiced and he wanted to hold to his preconceived idea and practice as performed by the religion he was trying to reform.

We also saw in our previous study that the Greek word βαπτίζω means to dip or immerse and that this meaning is affirmed by all Greek scholars, both sacred and secular, around the world. Let us consider this word somewhat in more detail. As we stated in our previous broadcast, “Since the Lord used the Greek word βαπτίζω for baptize and not use any other word why should we think we would have the option to change the practice to a different form? If the truth about baptism is essential to authenticating the church or congregation of God, why put that in jeopardy by changing the form of how baptism is to be performed? Since baptism is a command and not an option (cf. Acts 10:48, where Peter commanded the believers in Cornelius’ house to be baptized), why run the risk of violating a command of the Lord by following convenience or personal preference?”

God, by inspiration, used words to convey His thoughts to us. He made it clear that vital truths and doctrines are defined and given to us by the use of the very tense of a word. In Galatians 3:16, God said, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” Since God is so specific and emphasized that the Scriptures in Genesis 15:6 said “seed” (singular) and not “seeds” (plural), we believe when He used the Greek word βαπτίζω He did not intend to mean anything else than what that particular Greek word meant. To substitute sprinkling or pouring for immersion is a violation of the Word of God.

(Allow me to digress somewhat here. So far I have not mentioned pouring for baptism. Time will not allow for a detailed study on the subject of pouring. Since we are not doing a detailed study of baptism and sprinkling either, but we are only attempting to answer some of the basic principles which also will apply to pouring. However, I want to show that some do try to make a case for pouring. Several years ago, Jay Adams wrote a little book entitled *Meaning & Mode of Baptism*. In it he stated “If Jesus was immersed, He was not the ‘Christ’ or ‘Messiah’ . . . .,” p. 20. Further in the book while discussing what took place in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, he tried to show that there were two kinds of baptism—real baptism (Spirit baptism) and ritual baptism (water baptism). [We may consider the subject of “spirit baptism” sometime later, but we do not have time to do so here.] He further said that “the ritual [or as he believes “water”—JKB] must symbolize the real [or as he

affirms “spirit” —JKB], or it is no symbol at all, and has no point,” p. 22. On p. 23, he wrote, “Not only does Acts 2 not teach baptism by immersion, but no passage of Scripture more clearly describes the mode by which a baptism was performed (as a pouring). . . . There is nothing in the text to make one conclude that the Pentecostal baptism way by immersion; everything gives evidence that it was by affusion.” Affusion is the act of baptizing by pouring.

I hope this brief side note will give you some indication as to why some endeavor to believe that pouring is a form or mode of baptism. Again, I remind you that more arguments could be given to support pouring as a mode of baptism, but we are trying not to be exhaustive. We are only seeking to give broad overviews in our studies. We are not trying to denigrate those who practice sprinkling and/or pouring. We are trying to support the Baptist positions and show why we cannot follow the teachings of the reformers regarding these ordinances.)

Our plans are to look at these three modes—immersion, sprinkling, pouring—and the corresponding Greek words in more detail later. Time will not allow us to begin this study today. However, I want to give a simple illustration to show the confusion of using these three English words as meaning the same thing.

If two or more words are synonymous then they can be substituted into a sentence and not change the meaning. For example, if I say “The dog was chasing a rabbit.” or “The hound was chasing a rabbit.” or “The beagle was chasing a rabbit,” the meaning of the sentence is not changed. The only difference in the illustration is that the type of dog is more descriptive in the last sentence, but the meaning is the same throughout. If we apply this same principle to Mark 1:5 with our three words of immersion, sprinkling, and pouring being synonymous, we would not change the meaning of the verse. The verse reads “And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.” Now let’s see what happens when we substitute “baptized” with our three English words. First, “And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all immersed of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.” Second, “And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all sprinkled of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.” And lastly, “And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all poured of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.” Did you catch the difference? To be immersed or dipped of or by John in the river does not change the meaning. However, to be sprinkled of or by John in the river, one would have to be ground to a power to be sprinkled of John in the river. Likewise, to be poured of or by John in the river, one would have to be melted or changed into a liquid to be poured of John in the river of Jordan. Therefore, these three English words—pouring, sprinkling, and immersion—are not synonyms. Thus we see that to be poured in the river is not the same as to be sprinkled in the river and these two are not the same as being immersed in the river. They do not mean the same thing; therefore, they cannot teach the same doctrine our Lord intends us to know and practice when performing this ordinance.

Hopefully, this simple illustration will help you to better understand baptism. Also, as you discuss this subject with someone who does not care about the meaning of Greek words and other details, this illustration will show him that the three English words cannot mean or teach the same thing. There is a difference and that difference must be maintained in following the command of our Lord.

We will, the Lord willing, continue our study of the mode of baptism in our next podcast.