

Baptism in its Proper Setting

Intro: Many things seem strange when they are not in their proper setting. Imagine for example that someone had never seen a jigsaw puzzle and they come upon a piece of a puzzle lying on the floor. It would appear strange by itself; but be perfectly normal in its appropriate setting.

Imagine that you were walking through the mall and suddenly heard a cymbal crash. It would surely be strange by itself; but put that cymbal crash in its proper setting, at the crescendo of Stars and Stripes Forever and it fits perfectly.

So it also is in the spiritual world. Many things that we do may see strange to others when not viewed in their proper setting. Imagine how someone might react who saw us for the first time gather and each of us take a small piece of bread and fruit of the vine and eat it in quietness. Strange! Or imagine what it might be like to have never heard of baptism and suddenly come upon someone who is carefully lowering another person into a pool of water. Strange! But each of these is beautiful in its own setting. Let's take baptism as an example.

Baptism in Its Proper Setting

Though baptism might appear strange to the person who did not know its setting, it makes perfectly good sense when seen in its proper setting.

What is above baptism?

The authority of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (Matthew 28:19)

What is under baptism? What supports it and gives it value?

The death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord

And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 3:21)

What before baptism?

Faith

“He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. (Mark 16:16)

Repentance

And Peter said to them, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

What follows baptism?

Salvation

“He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. (Mark 16:16)

Sins washed away

'And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.' (Acts 22:16)

Union with Christ

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13)

Sadly popular doctrines have destroyed every one of these relationships.

What is above baptism is replaced by denominational authority!

The authority of the Lord is removed and church hierarchy takes its place.

What supports baptism is removed and baptism is altered from a burial with Christ to sprinkling.

The symbolism of likeness between Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection is lost and the action of Jesus' command to "immerse" is altered to "sprinkling" or "pouring".

What precedes baptism is moved to follow it!

Infants and children are "baptized" on the basis of their parent's faith and then urged to "accept" the baptism as their own at confirmation.

What follows baptism is moved before it!

Evangelical crusaders tell people to receive Christ in the sinner's prayer to be saved and then get baptized later.

Today there is a need to restore baptism to its proper setting!

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, (Romans 6:3-5)

When it is preceded by teaching, faith and repentance, it becomes a beautiful symbol of a person dying to the old way of life and seeking a new one.

When the blessings of baptism are stressed, then it becomes a means to reaching out for the grace and mercy of God.

When Christ is placed over it, then it is seen as an act of obedience that acknowledges the Lordship and Redemption of Jesus Christ.

And when the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are taught in connection with it, then it is seen as a reenactment of what Jesus did for us and an expression of faith in His sacrifice.

Conclusion: What men often see is not the beauty God designed, but what men have created. The religious world needs to restore baptism to its proper place.

Have you given baptism its proper place in your life?