
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **What is "baptismal regeneration"? Does the Bible teach this? Should Christians believe it?**

First, let's define what is meant by "*baptismal regeneration*." Here is what is written by F. W. Mattox in his church history book entitled, *The Eternal Kingdom*:

... The doctrine of original sin alone, however, would not have produced infant baptism. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration was also necessary. This view grew out of the Biblical teaching on baptism for the remission of sin, but went further and included the idea that baptism itself, apart from faith and repentance, removes sin. This view made baptism as valuable to the infant as to the adult.

F. W. Mattox, *The Eternal Kingdom*, pp. 118.

The Roman Catholic Church believes in this doctrine. They believe babies are born in sin. This is called "original sin" and it is the belief that babies inherit the sin of Adam. If this is true, then a baby needs forgiveness as soon as possible lest the baby dies in sin and is therefore lost eternally. Baptismal regeneration is the belief that baptism alone removes the sins of a baby (or an adult) without any belief in Christ, without any repentance, and without any confession of faith in Christ.

Q: Does the Bible teach this? Should Christians believe this doctrine?

Notice carefully the following Bible passages and in each case I ask you to notice two things. Notice that in each Bible passage:

- Baptism is essential for the forgiveness of sins.
- Baptism must be preceded by faith in Christ and repentance from sin.

Passage #1:

Mark 16:16

¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; ...

Do you see that baptism is essential for salvation here? Do you see that belief in Christ is required before one may be baptized?

This is what makes infant baptism so foolish. First, infants are not born in sin according to Jesus in Mt 19:14. Second, infants are incapable of believing in Christ. Therefore, to baptize an infant or to "christen" an infant is completely unknown in the NT scriptures. Infant christening is fabricated by uninspired men – it was never taught by Jesus or His apostles.

Passage #2:

Acts 2:38

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; ...

Do you see that baptism is essential for salvation here? Do you see that repentance from sins is required before one may be baptized?

Again, this makes infant baptism unscriptural. Infants cannot repent and therefore are not fit subjects of baptism.

These two passages alone are sufficient to prove the point being made. Baptism alone is not effective nor scriptural unless preceded by faith in Christ and repentance from sin.

Q: How, then, should we view baptism?

We should view baptism as essential for salvation because it is the point-in-time when God the Father takes the blood of His Son Jesus and washes away a person's sins. Let's apply this to a very real-life situation.

Suppose we meet a sinner who knows nothing about Christ. He is lost in his sins and he is willing to listen to us tell the story of Jesus.

- Upon hearing the story of Jesus, suppose the sinner now believes that Jesus is God's Son. Is that sinner saved at that very moment?

The answer is: No. There were many people who believed Jesus was God's Son, but they died lost in their sins, because belief alone is not able to save the sinner (Jn 12:42; Ja 2:24, 26).

- Suppose the sinner now repents of his sins and wants to trust Jesus as his own Savior. Is that sinner saved at that very moment?

The answer is: No. It takes the blood of Jesus to wash away a sinner's sins and the blood of Jesus is not applied at the very moment a sinner repents nor is the blood applied at the very moment a sinner desires to have Jesus as his Savior.

Q: At what point in time is the blood of the Lord applied to the sinner?

Acts 22:16

¹⁶ ... Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

According to this, baptism is how sinners "call on the name of the Lord." Furthermore, according to this passage, baptism is an act of obedience to the Lord's command. At that very moment in time, when the sinner is baptized in water, the blood of Christ is applied and removes his sins.

Q: What does this mean?

It means that all adults who have never been baptized in water for the purpose of washing away their sins, have never had the saving blood of Christ applied to their souls. They are not saved and will not be saved until they obey the command to be baptized.

Baptismal regeneration is not taught in the scriptures. But the scriptures do teach that baptism is essential for salvation.

In closing, remember this difference:

- Baptismal regeneration teaches baptism saves without faith and repentance.
- The Bible teaches one must believe in Christ, repent of sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and then baptism becomes the final act whereupon the blood of Christ is applied to the sinner and he is saved from his sins by the blood of the Lord.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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