**Two Ordinances – Part Two**

**ELEMENTS OF SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM**

**INTRODUCTION:**

We have learned that the Bible teaches there are only two ordinances—baptism and the Lord’s Supper—which Christ gave to the church to observe until He returns. Today we will consider the ordinance of baptism. It is important that we understand this vital Baptist distinctive, as there are many deviations of it. Catholics, Lutherans, Episcopalians, and the Disciples of Christ hold to the heresy of baptismal regeneration, which teaches that baptism is a part of salvation and that without it no one is saved, nor can they be saved; that you need something more than Jesus’ sacrificial death. Infant baptism, as well as sprinkling or pouring rather than immersion, are other errors and are not based on Bible truth. This lesson will present the proper elements for true scriptural baptism.

1. **FOUR ELEMENTS TO A PROPER BAPTISM**
   1. **A scriptural candidate (subject)** – a born again individual
   2. **A scriptural method (mode)** – immersion
   3. **A scriptural motive (purpose)** – to picture Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection; to confess our discipleship
   4. **A scriptural authority (administrator)** – a New Testament church
2. **SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM – METHOD/MODE**
   1. **The Bible teaches that immersion is the only proper mode of baptism.** 
      1. New Testament examples show or imply immersion. This is the scriptural argument for immersion.
      2. *Matthew 3:6* John baptized “in” the river Jordan. This would be unnecessary if sprinkling or pouring were the mode, as a small quantity of water could be carried anywhere. Substituting the word “sprinkled” or “poured” for “baptized” in this Scripture passage would render it nonsensical.
      3. *Matthew 3:16* “*And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water…”* Jesus and John the Baptist had to have gone down into the water in order to come up out of the water.
   2. **The meaning of the word “baptize” is immerse.**
      1. The Greek lexicons show the primary meaning of “baptidzo” to be immersion. This is the etymological argument for immersion.
      2. There are in three separate Greek words expressing the various modes of baptism practiced in Christendom. They are not interchangeable for any reason.
         1. Baptidzo – to plunge, to dip, to immerse, or to submerge
         2. Rhantidzo – to sprinkle
         3. Cheo – to pour
      3. *Leviticus 4:6-7* illustrates the differences: “And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood… and shall pour all the blood of the bullock…”
   3. **That which baptism pictures requires immersion.** 
      1. This is the symbolic argument for immersion.
      2. Baptism is a burial—it symbolizes the burial of Christ. *Romans 6:4-5*
      3. A corpse is not laid out on the ground and sprinkled over with dirt; it is buried! Infant sprinkling does not picture the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection. Only immersion pictures burial.
      4. However, a symbol can never have any saving value.
   4. **History supports immersion.**
      1. This is the historical argument for immersion.
      2. Few theologians of paedobaptist (infant baptism) persuasion will deny the fact that the original mode of baptism was immersion. In fact, while serious errors relating to the meaning and purpose of baptism arose at a very early stage in Christian history, immersion continued to be practiced for many years.
      3. Bellarmine (Roman Catholic): “Ordinarily baptism is performed by immersion, and that to represent the burial of Christ.”
      4. Dollinger (Old Catholic): “Baptists are, however, from the Protestant point of view, unassailable, since for their demand of baptism by submersion they have the clear Bible text.”
3. **SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM – AUTHORITY/ADMINISTRATOR**
   1. **The ordinance of baptism was delivered to churches, not to Christians individually.** 
      1. The subject and mode of baptism have distinguished Baptists from other denominations from the beginning.
      2. However, the one aspect of baptism that divides Baptists is the question of authority.
   2. **Who has scriptural authority to baptize? This question has divided Baptists, particularly in the present day.** 
      1. Many Baptists see no importance in having the proper authority to baptize, and consequently will accept into membership anyone who has been immersed, regardless of who did the immersing.
      2. Some Baptists hold a strict view, believing that the authority to baptize lies within a New Testament church. Consequently, they will only receive into membership those who were baptized by a Baptist church of like faith and order.
      3. The fact that this is a major issue among 21st century Baptists is regrettable. It is not only confusing to many believers who cannot understand why their sincere baptism is “not good enough,” but it prevents many otherwise sound churches from fellowshipping.
      4. The New Testament teaches that the only divinely-approved administrator of baptism is a scriptural Baptist church.
   3. **What is the real issue?**
      1. The question of authority in baptism boils down to determining the answer to another question: “To whom was the Great Commission in *Matthew 28:19-20* given?” This is because the Lord’s commission contains the command (and therefore the authority) to baptize.
      2. In answer to this question, there can only be three possibilities:
         1. The Commission was specifically given to the apostles. If this were the case, then the command would no longer applies to anyone today because the apostles are long dead, and there is no such thing as “apostolic succession.”
         2. The commission was given to individual Christians. This is the prevailing view today, but it is absurd because of its impossibilities. This interpretation would mean that if a Christian won a soul to Christ, he may baptize that person, but he also must take the responsibility to teach to observe all things.
         3. The commission was given institutionally, not individually. This is the only practical answer, because it allows the work of the Lord to proceed in an orderly and unbroken basis.
   4. **Authority in baptism is important.** 
      1. Jesus implied this when He sought out John the Baptist to receive His baptism. He walked about 60 miles from Galilee to Jordan to get Baptist baptism. There were plenty of streams in Galilee, not to mention the Sea of Galilee itself, and there were plenty of believers there to perform it—if authority was unimportant.
      2. John the Baptist had heaven’s authority to baptize. He did not baptize with church authority, because Christ had not yet built His church. However, John did have divine authority in that he was sent by God. *John 1:6; 3:26-27; Mark 11:29-33*
      3. The first church had divine authority to baptize. The Lord Jesus authorized His disciples (church) to perform many baptisms on His behalf. *John 4:1-2*
      4. Philip baptized the Ethiopian man with Scriptural authority. It is often argued that Philip baptized the eunuch in an individual capacity. But did he? Philip was a member of the church at Jerusalem, serving as a deacon (*Acts 6:5*) and, later, as an evangelist. Both deacon and the evangelist are church-related servants, so it is not unrealistic to assume he had church authority to preach and baptize. He was careful to inform the church at Jerusalem of his ministry among the Samaritans.
      5. Ananias baptized Saul with scriptural authority, not on his own volition. There was a church in Damascus; Saul was going there to destroy it! (*Acts 9:2*) Ananias belonged to the church at Damascus (*Acts 9:10*). God commanded (authorized) Ananias directly (*Acts 9:15*). This is the normal practice; after a person is saved, they are baptized into the membership of a church.
      6. Peter baptized Cornelius with church authority. *Acts 10:20, 23, 28*
      7. Paul and Barnabas were sent with church authority. *Acts 13, 14:23*

**CONCLUSION:**

We must take this ordinance seriously and observe it in a way that pleases God. The Bible gives clear instruction for us to follow regarding the subject, mode, purpose, and authority for baptism.