

IS BEING BAPTIZED AN ORDINARY ACT OF OBEDIENCE WHOSE ONLY BENEFIT IS SYMBOLISM?

OR

IS BAPTISM THE VERY POINT IN TIME WHEN GOD APPLIES THE SAVING GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST?

This is an important question that every Christian leader should be able to answer with understanding and conviction. When you read the book of Acts, you see that baptism was an important event every time someone accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour. However, when you read what Protestant theologians say about baptism, you get a different picture.

Almost every Protestant theologian bases his teaching about baptism on the conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and Martin Luther. They end up quoting John Calvin and Huldreich Zwingli for their conclusions on the topic. This is where the Restoration Movement and the Christian Churches in America have an advantage. We do not have a client to protect such as Martin Luther, John Calvin or Huldreich Zwingli. We do not start out with a prejudice such as *faith only*. We are only concerned with what the Bible says about baptism. We are only concerned with what Jesus and the Apostles said about baptism. The New Testament contains the only truth that can be trusted.

There is a book titled "Systematic Theology" prepared by Wayne Grudem, copyrighted in 1994 and published by Inter-Varsity Press. Several of you received a copy in the mini library sets given out by us and other Christian institutions in Africa. What Wayne Grudem teaches concerning baptism is typical of most Protestant theologians.

First of all he puts the topic of baptism in Part 6 of his book under the category of *Doctrine of the Church*. Part 5 of his book is on *Doctrine of the Application of Redemption*. In the mind of Wayne Grudem and other Protestant theologians, baptism has nothing to do with our redemption (salvation).

In chapter 49 titled *Baptism*, on page 967 he writes, *The position advocated in this book is that baptism is not a "major" doctrine that should be the basis of division among genuine Christians, but it is, nonetheless, a matter of importance for ordinary church life . . .* The rest of the chapter goes on to explain why he believes baptism is a minor doctrine and why being baptized is just an ordinary act of obedience.

Under the topic *The Effect of Baptism* on page 980, he claims that baptism has no more effect on our life than *the blessing of God's favor that comes with all obedience, as well as the joy that comes through publicly profession of one's faith. . .* In other words, he claims that being baptized has no more effect on our life than obeying any other command of God. The joy we should feel at baptism should be no more than the joy we feel anytime we witness for Christ. He says baptism is an ordinary event. He is saying that there is nothing special about baptism.

On page 981, he clearly states, *we should not say that baptism is **necessary** for salvation.* (Note: Wayne Grudem is the one who highlights the word *necessary* in his writings.) He goes on to write, *...baptism is not necessary for forgiveness of sins, or for the bestowal of new spiritual life.* On page 982 he claims that the solution to the many and varied controversies over the meaning and the purpose of baptism can be solved if everyone will admit that *baptism is not a major doctrine of the faith.*

I totally disagree, on a biblical basis, with every statement of Wayne Grudem quoted above. His theology on baptism is neither systematic nor logical. It is prejudice and it is typical Protestant teaching. If someone wants to systematically discover the truth, he first of all lists all the basic facts from the original source before considering any interpretation of what the facts mean. In this case, one would list all the scriptures on the topic of salvation and then see how they work together to make one story.

Mr. Grudem, and others, claim that ***faith alone*** saves us based on a few scriptures from the Apostle Paul about the Law of Moses and grace. Then they proceed to twist and turn the meaning of every scripture on baptism to fit their prejudice. Grudem takes the typical approach of claiming certain passages on the topic of baptism do not mean what they say simply because that would go