Where Are Christians Found?

The controversy over baptism should be no controversy at all. The only reason there is controversy over this important subject is because there are too many people listening to man instead of the inspired word of God. God's word is clear. Baptism is essential. The purpose of baptism is in order to have one's sins forgiven (Acts 2:38). It is when a person is baptized that God performs a spiritual operation involving, figuratively speaking, the cutting away of sin. Paul refers to this and compares it to circumcision in Colossians 2:11-12. Paul tells us that in baptism we are putting off the body of the flesh, or as the NIV says, "the sinful nature." Does that not emphasize the necessity of baptism. Furthermore, baptism puts us into Christ (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4). Take note of the language found in Romans 6:4. Paul tells us again what baptism does. He wrote, "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Why must a person be baptized? Inspiration tells us...in order that he may live a new life. Without being baptized a person can't live a new life because his sins have not been forgiven. Now, no one believes that there is something magical about water. No, the water can't touch the soul. However, baptism is a God-given command that must be followed in order to enter into a right relationship with God. Why? It is so because God said it. Period! Don't try to read God's mind and determine why He has set forth such a command. That's none of our business. God has the sovereign right to command, and when He does, our only duty is to obey. Since He commands a person to be baptized, one must comply in order to be saved. We have an example of this in the physical realm regarding the leprosy of Namaan (2 Kings 5:1-14). God, through the prophet Elisha, arranged for Namaan to be cleansed from leprosy by simply dipping into the Jordan River seven times. Namaan, being a Syrian, didn't want to dip into the Jordan but preferred to dip into one of the rivers of Damascus. Of course, not being obedient to the instructions of God, he would remain a leper. In the end he conceded and dipped into the Jordan and was cleansed. Now, was their magic in the water? No! Another leper could have jumped into the Jordan, and he would have remained a leper. The power belonged to God, and Namaan was cleansed by God's mercy and his final willingness to comply to God's divine instruction. Spiritually, this is exactly why a person's sins are forgiven when he is baptized. It is not because there is magic in the water. He is forgiven by God's mercy and his willingness to do what God says.

There is, however, such a thing as unscriptural baptism. While baptism is essential, it is important to realize that it must be done for the right reason and in the right way, that is, the mode of the baptism is important. Many have been baptized over the years, that is, they have gone down into some water, but their baptism has missed the mark because they were baptized for the wrong reason or in the wrong way. Then, of course, there are those who were baptized at the wrong time, that is, they were baptized as infants and infant baptism is really no baptism at all. More importantly than being at the wrong time, it involves the wrong person, that is, one who doesn't even have the ability to believe in and accept Jesus Christ, both of which are prerequisites for baptism (Mark 16:16).

What is the right reason for being baptized? One is baptized to have his sins forgiven and to become a child of God. Peter specifically said that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). Baptism IS NOT an outward sign of an inward grace. That is denominational language not found in God's sacred Book. Baptism is not something done to people who are saved, baptism is done to those who are outside of Christ for the express purpose of being added to the body of Christ (John 3:3-5; Acts 2:47; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13). Baptism, then, is not something you do to stay saved; baptism is something you do to be saved. If you were baptized at a denominational church, you were probably baptized wrong since almost none of them teach baptism for the remission of sins. How can a person be taught wrong but baptized right? While not impossible, it is highly unlikely.

Furthermore, the symbolism and the express language used in the commandment of baptism makes it clear that baptism is a burial, not a sprinkling. The word baptize is from the Greek word baptizō and means "to immerse or submerge" (Strong). It is derived from the Greek word baptō which means "to cover wholly with a fluid" (Strong). So we are not surprised that when Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch the Bible says that they both went down into the water (Acts 8:38). Nor are we surprised when we read of Paul referring to the act of baptism as a burial (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12) and describes it as one being planted (Romans 6:5).

Make no mistake about it—baptism is absolutely necessary for one to become a child of God and be saved. Peter said, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). How can one argue against baptism in light of such clear and plain revelation? Let's not forget, however, that one must not only be baptized, he must be baptized for the right reason (for the forgiveness of sins) and in the right manner (buried in the water) or else it is not scriptural in nature. Of course in order for baptism to be valid, it must also involve the right candidate, that is, a person who has to ability to believe (John 8:24), repent (Luke 13:3) and confess Christ (Matthew 10:32-33). Baptism for any other reason, in any other manner and upon any other type of person, is unscriptural baptism. Have you been scripturally baptized? The importance of your answer should not be underestimated. Your soul depends on it.

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