

“BAPTISMAL REGENERATION” MAKES WATER A CO-SAVIOR

Definition: “Baptismal regeneration is the belief that [baptism is necessary for salvation](#), or, more precisely, that regeneration does not occur until a person is [water baptized](#).” (Gotquesitons.org)

Wikipedia says: “**Baptismal regeneration** is the name given to doctrines held by major Christian denominations which maintain that salvation is intimately linked to the act of **baptism**, and that salvation is impossible apart from it.”

“No doctrine has been more instrumental in persuading lost people that they are really saved than the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Here, Rome has taken the lead, but many Protestant churches have followed that lead using ‘covenant theology’ as their justification for doing so.” – **John Phillips**

Ecumenism has greatly affected the whole of evangelicalism. Few today seem to think that it is even worth contending about the issue of **baptismal regeneration**. Few address this issue, showing that it doesn’t really matter much to them. The BLOOD of Jesus is no longer very PRECIOUS to many professing Christians! In reality this is a commentary on how little they value the blood of Jesus and the gospel of God’s GRACE!

Either one is saved by FAITH IN CHRIST ALONE, or one is saved by FAITH PLUS BAPTISM. It can’t be both! In 1527 Martin Luther wrote in regard to Anabaptists: “*Let everyone believe what he likes. If he is wrong, he will have punishment enough in hell fire.*”

There are various stripes of baptismal regeneration error represented across the spectrum of the big umbrella of Christendom. There are those who are OVERT (i.e., Roman Catholicism; Lutheranism; Church of Christ); those who are more COVERT (i.e., The Christian Church/Disciples of Christ of the Stone-Campbell movement); and those who are “FUZZY” (i.e., covenant theologians).

“If salvation is by faith alone, it seems to be double-speak to say that a sacrament, a physical ritual, is part of the process. These tensions within the Reformed doctrine of infant baptism result from the fact that Reformed theologians view baptism as a covenant ‘seal.’”

– **Daniel C. Lane** in Bib Sac/April-June 2008, p. 177.

Wherever infant baptism is found it invariably is linked with heresy!

The error of baptismal regeneration was introduced early in the Church Age. It is true that the New Testament Scriptures closely associate salvation with baptism, and it is true that in the New Testament Church era there is no example of unbaptized believers. It was expected that if one was truly believing, they would identify with Christ in baptism.

“Believe and be baptized” is the New Testament emphasis. While there are a few unclear texts (all with reasonable explanations), sound hermeneutics says that a clear text always takes precedence over an unclear text. Thus, the NT is replete with CLEAR Scriptures that emphatically refute baptismal regeneration.

FIVE AIRTIGHT TEXTS REFUTING BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

- 1) ***1 Corinthians 1:17***: In 1 Cor. 1:17 Paul makes a clear DISTINCTION between baptism and the gospel saying, “*Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel*”. The gospel is the good news to be believed and it ALONE is “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).
- 2) ***The Gospel of John***: John is the gospel of BELIEF. He mentions some form of “believe” 98 times. His whole purpose in writing is so we might BELIEVE (Jn. 20:31). John, although writing late in the apostolic era (c. 90 A.D.) never mentions NT church baptism. It is not the issue in how one gets saved!
- 3) ***1 Corinthians 15:3-4***: Paul summarizes the GOSPEL saying it is according to the OT Scriptures. Baptism is NOT part of this gospel found in the OT. The gospel is solely the message about Christ which when one believes they are saved (cf. 1 Cor. 15:11).
- 4) ***Luke 23:42-43***: The thief on the cross could do nothing other than look to Jesus in faith, and when he did, Christ INSTANTLY forgave him and promised him Paradise.

God shows “no partiality” and is totally consistent in how He saves people (cf. Acts 10:34-35; Hebrews 11). The thief on the cross is the RULE, not the exception. All who are ever saved are saved on the basis of God’s GRACE through FAITH!

- 5) ***Romans 4***: Abraham is the premier example of saving faith in all the Bible. The testimony of Scripture is that Abraham, “*believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness*.” (Gen. 15:6; cf.

Rom. 4:3, 9, 22; Gal. 3:6; Ja. 2:23). Often circumcision is thought to correspond to baptism in that both are outward signs of being in covenant relationship with God. However, Paul emphasized that righteousness was accounted to Abraham on the basis of FAITH ALONE before he was circumcised (Rom. 4:9-12). Paul emphasizes that *“to him who does NOT WORK but BELIEVES on Him who justifies the ungodly, his FAITH is accounted for righteousness”* (Rom. 4:5 – emphasis mine; cf. Gal. 6:15; Phil. 3:3, 7-9).

“What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!” Jesus ALONE is Savior! Believe it!

Baptism indicated IDENTIFICATION with the Person and Work of Christ. It didn't save but rather served as an outward expression that a faith commitment to Christ had been made.

Following the obedience of faith, baptism is to be the outward initial fruit of obedience that testifies to an inward saving faith. If one is unwilling to be obedient to this most basic command, it is questionable as to whether saving faith has taken place.

Faith that is saving faith desires to obey and initially demonstrates this in the act of water baptism.