

Baptism Is the Hinge

Baptism is the hinge in this part of Romans. Not only that; baptism is the crucial turning point in the believer's experience of redemption. It must be. After all, this is precisely the point Paul himself made. He clearly directed his readers to the importance of baptism:

Don't you know that all of us who were *baptised* into Christ Jesus were *baptised* into his death? 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.

Baptism is the key, baptism is the vital step in the way a sinner is delivered from his ruin in Adam, and comes into all the good of the redemption accomplished by Christ in the new covenant. By our baptism we are united to Christ: in our baptism we die with Christ to sin, and in our baptism we are raised with Christ to everlasting life. Baptism is the crux, baptism is the hinge, baptism is the pivot, baptism is the biting point in spiritual experience. Without baptism we are still in Adam, still in the flesh, still in our sins, still under the wrath of God. With baptism, as a result of baptism, by baptism, we are in Christ, we are liberated from sin, death and law, and we are put beyond condemnation, possessed by the Spirit, having his witness with our spirit, freed from fear, made to be sons of God and made to feel it, and be certain of everlasting glory without any fear of separation from Christ. In saying this, all I have done is to paraphrase Romans 6 – 8. With baptism we are in Romans 6 – 8; without baptism we are still in Romans 1:18 – 3:20, we are still in our sins, under the wrath of God. Baptism, clearly, is the hinge upon which all turns. So said the apostle.

But what – or which – baptism are we talking about?

This is the great question! What baptism are we talking about? Do not, I plead with you, take this for granted. Do not say: 'Baptism means baptism!' – that is, it must be water baptism (even, for millions, it must be baby sprinkling). To go down that road is to read the Bible wearing the glasses of Christendom. The Bible

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shows us plainly that ‘baptism’ can mean something other than plunging in water (it never – never – means sprinkling with water). I remind you of some of the various ways in which Scripture speaks of baptism:

Jesus answered and said: ‘You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be *baptised* with the *baptism* that I am *baptised* with?’ They said to him: ‘We are able’. So he said to them: ‘You will indeed drink my cup, and be *baptised* with the *baptism* that I am *baptised* with; but to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by my Father’ (Matt. 20:22-23; Mark 10:38-39, NKJV).

I have a *baptism* to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! (Luke 12:50).

They were all *baptised* into Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. 10:2).

None of these speak of water baptism, and yet ‘baptism’ is the word used.

Getting back to Romans 6: with this baptism – the baptism Paul spoke of – having had this baptism, all is well; without this baptism, all could not be more unwell. If I may take the words of Christ in John 3:3-8 and accommodate them (but it’s not really an accommodation, as I will show):

I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is *baptised*... I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is *baptised*. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying: ‘You must be *baptised*’. The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone *baptised*.

The question is: which baptism are we talking about? I say ‘which’, because there are two candidates – two baptisms which are suggested as the key step in the believer’s experience of redemption. These two baptisms are water baptism and spiritual baptism. Both are spoken of in Scripture.

Let us look at them.