

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

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Evidently we have reached the point as a great brotherhood of believers where due to powerful influences coming to bear on the subject of baptism to deny its efficacy that the need exists to teach again the first principles of the doctrine of Christ on this basic Bible subject. When a major school affiliated with churches of Christ advances a man known far and wide for his views in opposition to the truth of God on key subjects like the one body being the church of Christ and advancement and endorsement of his position on Baptist baptism, the need to prove again to honest hearts the rightful place of baptism in God's plan of salvation is urgent. The school is Oklahoma Christian University. The man is Max Lucado. The paper published by OCU is *The Christian Chronicle* (59:7, July 2002, p. 20). The circulation size is "more than 103,000 homes and churches each month" (*ibid.*, p. 22).

Lucado said, "I strongly resist any effort to trust the act of baptism to save" (*ibid.*, p. 20). He does not simply disagree; he resists. He does not only resist; he strongly resists "any effort to trust the act of baptism to save." The reason anyone ever trusted the act of baptism to save is because the Lord Jesus Christ said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). The apostles understood the connection of baptism with salvation because one of them wrote, "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" (I Pet. 3:21). Failure to "trust the act of baptism to save" manifests failure to trust the Lord Jesus Christ to save because he is the one who gave the instruction to do it. Jesus said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

Lucado's statement, "My only contribution to my salvation is my own sin," thrusts him into the arena of the universalist who believes everyone will be saved regardless of what he knows or does not know, believes or does not believe. He resists baptism so strongly that he casts out everything the Bible has to say about the subject and takes up the position of the Unitarian/universalist.

The Bible says baptism saves from past sins. Acts 2:38 reads, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ

for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” See also Acts 22:16; Colossians 2:13; Titus 3:5; Revelation 1:5.

The Bible says baptism destroys the old man of sin. Romans 6:6 reads, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

The Bible says baptism brings about a new life in Christ. Romans 6:4 reads, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” The apostle John wrote, “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:3-5).

The Bible says baptism brings the believer into Christ. Romans 6:3 reads, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” Galatians 3:27 also shows that baptism brings the believer into Christ, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

The Bible says baptism brings the hope of a triumphant resurrection from the dead. Romans 6:5 reads, “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”

The Bible says baptism severs service from sin. Romans 6:6 reads, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

The Bible says baptism expresses faith in the operation of God who raised Jesus Christ up from the dead to raise up the believer cleansed from past sins. Colossians 2:12-13 reads, “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”

The Bible says baptism shows obedience to the form of doctrine delivered by Christ and the apostles, which marks the point at which the obedient believer becomes free from sin and becomes a servant of righteousness. Romans 6:16-18 reads, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his

servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”

The Bible says baptism is the point at which the Lord adds the obedient believer to the church. Acts 2:47 reads, “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

The storm of digression into denominationalism is raging. The ones who are remaining faithful to the cause of Christ must place emphasis on preaching and teaching the fundamentals of the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints (cf. Jude 3).