

JUST ADD WATER: A Question About Baptism

Ted Wise 9/1/99

Dear Ted,

I appreciate this entire site. It has enriched my insight into the word of God. I have taken the liberty to use many of Ray Stedman's lessons in my own preaching. I teach at a small non-denominational congregation in Texas. I agree with most of my brother Ray's conclusions except one and I deem it important.

The subject is baptism. I mean plain old water baptism. The older I get, I am now 57, the more I have begun to see the simplicity of God's Word. I also see how hard it is to overcome the past when it comes to Biblical interpretation. We are all so prone to accept what we were taught, without questioning the accuracy of our particular tradition's interpretation.

The Jews on Pentecost asked, "What must we do?" I know for a fact that Ray said you can "DO" something and for that I am thankful. It seems that Peter knew the correct answer as well, "And Peter said to them, Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38).

Ray said that the "mode of baptism" is not important. When did it become not important, before or after men introduced sprinkling? Before sprinkling was introduced, was it important? How long was immersion practiced before sprinkling was introduced, 100 years, 500 years or one thousand years? More nearly the latter when it finally was accepted into the church. A good Bible language scholar knows how to interpret "baptizo." It has always meant immersion in the Greek language.

In closing let me say that I submit these thoughts for honest and critical review. I have no tradition to uphold. As a preacher, I am not governed by any hierarchy. I am at liberty to express my beliefs in the congregation where I preach. Neither is any teaching handed down to me as from the chair. My prayer is that I am not ruled by any past bias or slant on the scriptures. Thanks for giving me this opportunity.

GM.

Rockyplace, TX. USA

Editor's note: GM had some other things to say about his method of study that were omitted so Ted could comment on the Biblical mode of baptism.

Ted's answer to GM:

Brother GM,

I just happened to reread your comments today and I remembered something that the Lord taught me in the early days of my conversion about baptism and the "means" one uses.

Not far from our Christian commune there was a lovely lake surrounded by cat tail reeds and other lush growth. From a few feet away it seemed almost cultivated and not wild at all. A young woman who had been a Christian for several years requested that I baptize her in this pastoral setting. She was from Tennessee and was enamored with all things Californian so naturally this small reservoir appealed to her by offering a less "square" means of being baptized than the baptistery behind the pulpit in the American Baptist Church that a number of us had been attending, (They believe that one is baptized into church membership).

So early one morning while a low mist hung around the shore of the lake, we stood on the bank praying for the young woman and what we were about to do. As I raised my head it became apparent that we would need to slosh out through the reeds and shallow water for about a hundred yards before it would be deep enough to immerse her. We trudged on until it was deep enough and I baptized her in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It was very lovely but not very public. I had wanted to baptize her in a unusually deep fish pond on the San Francisco State University campus.

We prayed for her, turned around and sloshed and shivered our way back toward the edge of the lake. As we trudged back through our now rather mucky route, the Lord taught me something about baptism and its means. Earlier that morning I had been complaining to the Lord about our unpredictable financial circumstances. He used my grumbling to point out to me that had we been dressed in expensive clothing we wouldn't be out sloshing through the mud. In fact, if we had been adorned in purple robes we would not have been out here in the lake at all and we might even have been sprinkling this young woman instead of immersing her. The amount of water involved in baptism is apparently directly proportional to the finery that one is wearing. As usual, flesh is behind most error.

Ted Wise

GM answered:

Ted

Thanks for the message. I continue to profit very much from the material on your site and use it every week in my personal studies. Presently, I am preaching through Romans in our Sunday evening meetings. I really love this book the more I read and study. Ray's material has been particularly helpful. Keep up the good work. I am paying attention and trying to grow.

In Christ

GM.

Recent email from GM:

Dear Ted,

I just read your response to the brother in Australia who wrote concerning the selection of a marriage partner. You addressed the "Unequally Yoked" question. Thanks brother, you strengthened my faith. We preacher types need to do more living and preaching on the subject of covetousness. I have longed believed it to be idolatry. I have also read your material on "miracles" and the "tongues" question. I have come to the same conclusions.

Thanks again.

In Christ,

GM

Reference: [The Meaning of Baptism](#), by Ray C. Stedman

Added September 6, 1999

[Back to Ted Wise's Library](#)