

## “Born of Water” **IS** Baptism

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by Bill Crews

Baptism or immersion in water in the Scriptures is a command of Christ (Acts 10:47-48). To be acceptable to God it must be preceded by teaching, faith, repentance and confession of Jesus as Lord (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-38; Rom. 10:9-10). It is not for infants or for those who have already become children of God. It is not an ordinance of the Law of Moses. It was not devised by men. It is not a work of man's own righteousness. Water can not and does not remove sin. Compliance with this command of Christ earns or merits for the compliant nothing whatever — we do not and can not merit spiritual blessings. Yet, baptism is essential to man's salvation. It stands between a sinner and discipleship (Matt. 28:19), salvation (Mk. 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21), remission of sins (Acts 2:38), washing away of sins (Acts 22:16), putting on and entering Christ (Gal. 3:27), entering the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), entering the death of Christ and effecting death to sin (Rom. 6:3-4), and entering the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3, 5).

Most preachers in most denominations, for reasons which I have never been able to comprehend, are bitterly opposed to the truth that baptism in water is essential to man's salvation. These preachers are fond of using John 3:3 and 5 and emphasizing the necessity of being born again. At the same time, they are greatly upset by the declaration that “*to be born of water*” (Jn. 3:5) is to be baptized in water and the affirmation that water baptism is an integral part of the new birth. So they have come up with and embraced various new twists of the passage in an effort to escape its real force. Some have argued that “*water*” in John 3:5 really means “*the Spirit*” (“*Except one be born of water (the Spirit) and the Spirit,*”) — this renders it redundant and ridiculous. Some have contended that “*and*” should be rendered “*even*” (“*Except one be born of water, even the Spirit,*”) — this is contrary to the rules that govern the Greek conjunction for “*and*” (**KAI**). Have you ever read a translation that renders it “*even*” in John 3:5? Some have maintained that “*to be born of water*” refers to physical birth (“*Except one be born of water (physical birth) and the Spirit (spiritual birth),*”) — this makes it nonsensical, for Jesus was enlarging upon the statement made in verse 3 and speaking of only one birth, not two. The new birth is a birth of water and the Spirit, one birth. Men are continually seeking ways to evade the obvious force of New Testament statements. These ideas on John 3:3 and 5 are relatively new, as the following words from the pen of Ralph Williams will show:

“Folks are sometimes impressed with what the scholars say on a certain verse. Of course anything they offer must conform with other and all truth on the same subject. It is said that Dr. Wall, a highly recognized historian in this field searched the positions of the scholars on this question. His conclusion was: ‘**ALL** the primitive fathers understood the rule of our Savior “except a man be born of **WATER** and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God” to mean **WATER** baptism, and so did **ALL THE WRITERS OF THE FIRST 400 YEARS, NOT ONE MAN EXCEPTED.**’ (p. 69-70). Further, “There is not **ONE CHRISTIAN** writer, of **ANY** antiquity, in **ANY** language, but what understands John 3:5 to mean **BAPTISM**, and if it be not so understood, it is difficult to give an account how a person is born of water any more than born of wood.’ (*Wall's History of Infant Baptism*, Vol. I, p. 147).

“Another scholar of Baptist persuasion wrote, “The consensus of all scholars. in all ages, establishes the fact that baptism is the act referred to by the phrase “born of water” in John 3:5.’ (“Tennessee Baptist,” May 17, 1884) Mr. J. R. Graves, another notable Baptist, also wrote in the same paper, Oct. 30, 1886: ‘If Brother Vaughn convinced us that “born of water” refers to anything but the baptism of one previously begotten of the Spirit we never knew it... It means **NOTHING ELSE** and **NO BAPTIST** we ever heard or read of ever believed otherwise until A. Campbell frightened them away from an interpretation that is sustained by the consensus of **ALL** scholars, in **ALL** denominations, in **ALL** ages.’ (These excellent quotes are from the library of our late brother Paul Foutz.) (Paul Foutz was the father-in-law of Ralph Williams -BC)

“Instead of seeking to deny the obvious by wresting the ‘water’ out of John 3 :5, men need to remove their denominational prejudices and take an honest look at the new birth. Water baptism at the direction of the Holy Spirit fits perfectly with what Jesus taught in Mark 16:15-16 and with what His apostles preached in converting men throughout the book of Acts.” Thank you, brother Williams.

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