

The Elementary Principles of Christ (4) – Baptisms

Hebrews 6:1-3

Introduction

1. Repentance and faith in relation to a life of devotion and service to God are fundamental. However, these without the following elementary principle listed by the Hebrew writer are insufficient.
 2. **"Repentance from dead works"** is necessary to serve a holy God. **"Faith toward God"** is necessary because without it, it is impossible to please Him – He wants our trust, and fidelity.
 3. However, **"the doctrine of baptisms"** is vital to understanding and growing in the faith of Christ because it marks a significant event without which would render repentance and faith incomplete and further affect all following matters negatively.
 4. The **"instruction about washings" (NASB)** is elementary and of great importance because repentance and faith by themselves do not cleanse, though they are related to cleansing.
 5. What is **"the doctrine of baptisms?"**
- I. What is the doctrine of baptisms?
- A. Terminology
 - a. *Baptismos* (plural) – "as a religious technical term related to ceremonial rites of purification by the use of water act of dipping, immersion" (ALGNT)
 - i. "a washing, purification effected by means of water" (THAYER)
 - b. Distinct from:
 - i. *Baptisma* – singular – **"one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5)**
 - ii. *Baptizō* – verb – the act of baptizing (Great commission)
 - c. Scriptural appearance (4x):
 - i. **Mark 7:4, 8** – ceremonial washing of utensils by Pharisaic tradition.
 - ii. **Hebrews 9:10** – **"various washings"** in connection with the ordinances of divine service in the earthly sanctuary (tabernacle, temple).
 - B. The Writer's Reference
 - a. The one baptism of the Christian faith?
 - i. **Ephesians 4:5** – **"one baptism"**
 - ii. **Acts 19:4-5** – baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus.
 - iii. The author of Hebrews simply references to the one baptism commanded under the New Covenant by using the plural?

- b. Several acts of baptism within the divine record?
 - i. **Acts 2:41, 47** – starting on Pentecost multiple baptisms ensued at the preaching of the gospel and continue.
 - ii. The Hebrew writer refers to **“the doctrine of baptisms,”** not simply the act itself occurring on multiple occasions.
- c. The baptisms directly under the reign and administration of Christ?
 - i. **Matthew 3:11** – John’s reference to Jesus as a baptizer in ways greater than his.
 - 1. **Holy Spirit** – **Acts 1:5; 11:15-16** – promised to the apostles for their ministry, given to Gentiles to confirm the gospel is of them as well.
 - a. If laying on of hands refers to the imparting of spiritual gifts in the infancy of the church as a means of revelation, then this is redundant.
 - 2. **Fire** – **Matthew 3:12** – reference to **“unquenchable fire”** or the eternal fire of judgment.
 - a. Why include this in his reference to **“the doctrine of baptisms”** if he was already including **“and of eternal judgment?”**
 - ii. **Acts 19:4-5** – baptism in the name of the Lord.
- d. **The various Jewish washings as shadows in the Old Testament culminating in the fulfillment of the cleansing of Jesus’ blood by the one baptism in His name?**
 - i. An objection – why would Jewish washings be ranked under Christian doctrine and described as **“elementary principles of Christ?”**
 - 1. This then demands the same question to be asked concerning the entire epistle of Hebrews, and any other Christ centered writings of the New Testament (all) which reference Old Testament passages and doctrines – especially regarding types and shadows.
 - 2. It ignores the very groundwork for Christianity that is the Old Covenant – **Romans 3:21, 31; Galatians 3:24; Hebrews 8:1-6**
 - 3. Would it not be an elementary principle for Jewish Christians to understand that all the washings of the Jewish economy were typical of that which is offered in Jesus’ blood through submission to His baptism?

ii. *Baptismos* in context of **Hebrews 9:10**

1. **Hebrews 9:6-10** – Earthly sanctuary pointing to the time of Christ – way into Holiest not made manifest, symbolic services that cannot perfect conscience, time of reformation.
2. **Hebrews 9:11-14** – Christ serves in true tabernacle, cleanses (washes) conscience by His blood, **“to serve the living God”** – i.e. make perfect to approach God in service (**vv. 8-9**).
3. **Hebrews 10:1-2, 19-22** – sacrifices under Old Covenant do not make the worshipers perfect, consciousness of sins, now boldly approach, blood of Jesus, conscience cleansed, bodies washed.
4. **Hebrews 9:10** – places *Baptismos* in context of all the fleshly ordinances pointing to Christ, including the purification by blood (**v. 22**).

II. The Doctrine of Baptisms

A. Baptisms for Purification

- a. The **“elementary principles”** seem to have a sequence to them, which gives insight to their individual meaning/important – repentance and faith have much to do with being purified by God, but are not indicative of the point at which one becomes purified – **“baptisms”** deals with this.
- b. **Hebrews 9:9-10** – part of what was symbolic and unable itself to make one **“perfect”** in purifying the conscience was **“various washings.”**
 - i. **Hebrews 9:13** – specifically references a type of **“washing”** that the Old Testament required that was symbolic of the actual washing in Christ’s blood through baptism – **“ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean...purifying of the flesh”**
- c. Instructions on the water of purification – **Numbers 19:2, 5, 9, 11-12, 17-18, 20** – red heifer burnt, ashes for water of purification, unclean purified with it, ashes and water combined and sprinkled, not purified then cut off.
- d. Ezekiel’s use of the water of purification – **Ezekiel 36:24-27** – this is a reference to the water of purification, and while having fulfillment in the return of the physical remnant, there is only entire fulfillment in reference to spiritual Israel.
- e. This water of purification is tied to the cleansing of the conscience by Jesus’ blood in the waters of baptism – **Hebrews 9:13-14; 10:19-22** –

ashes of heifer, sprinkling unclean, blood of Jesus, cleansed conscience, blood of Jesus, bodies washed with pure water.

- f. Baptism is where one is washed, or purified of sins – **Acts 22:16**

B. Baptisms for Consecration

- a. There is purification in baptism, but there is also consecration to God for service:

- i. ***“And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.” (John 17:19, RSV)***

- ii. **1 Corinthians 6:11, 19-20** – you were washed but also sanctified (same word as **John 17:19**) (set apart from sin, but also consecrated to God’s service) and purchased by God for His glory.

- b. Initial washing of priests in consecration to service – **Exodus 29:1, 4; Leviticus 8:6** – this was a whole body washing for consecration.

- i. Only other whole-body washing was for the Day of Atonement – **Leviticus 16:4**

- c. The purification in the washings of the priests was not an end in itself but was preparatory for service.

- d. The purification by Jesus blood in the washing for baptism also is preparatory for service – **Hebrews 9:13-14; 10:22** – ***“to serve the living God,” “let us draw near with a true heart...”***

- i. It is fundamentally imperative to understand that baptism is where one receives purification from sin, but also where one is dedicated or consecrated to a life of service before God!

- ii. **Romans 6:4** – newness of life.

- iii. **Colossians 3:1** – seeking things above.

- iv. **Ephesians 2:4-6, 10** – raised to life with Christ, created in Christ for good works.

C. Baptisms to Approach God in Service

- a. This further extends the point of consecration – consecrated to service, but then practically carrying out that service.

- b. The priests only had a full body washing for consecration initially, but every time they went to serve in the tabernacle/temple, they had to wash – **Exodus 30:17-21; 2 Chronicles 4:6** – instruction to wash hands and feet before serving in tabernacle, lavers and Sea for priests washing in the temple.

- i. ***“wash their hands and their feet”*** – such instruments for carrying out their service to God.

- ii. Their service in the tabernacle/temple is accepted only if they are washed.
- c. Even the washing of the animal of sacrifice itself is telling – **Leviticus 1:8-9** – the very offering itself, at times, was to be washed.
- d. Baptism in the name of the Lord is the washing that makes our service acceptable to God – **Hebrews 9:14; 10:22** – to serve the living God, able to draw near because you have been washed.
- e. In order for service to God to be accepted, one must be purified, consecrated to that service, and offer a pure offering (via washing):
 - i. The offering we give, as it has been washed, purified and consecrated, is ourselves – **Romans 12:1**
 - ii. The offerings of our inner man are acceptable because we have been baptized/washed/purified/consecrated – **Hebrews 13:12, 15-16** – sanctified with Jesus' blood and therefore making offerings to God.
 - 1. **1 Peter 2:5** – acceptable to God through Jesus.
- f. The **"doctrine of baptisms"** is elementary because it is the very foundation upon which any and all service to God is accepted.
 - i. Unless one is washed, he serves God in vain.
 - ii. All the Jewish washings are merely a shadow of the true washing in Jesus' blood through the baptism He commands.

Conclusion

1. The Bible, Old Testament to New, is filled with imagery of washing and purifying. All these point to the ultimate washing of Jesus' blood, but the cleansing of His blood is specifically connected to a certain washing under the New Covenant.
2. **"The doctrine of baptisms"** is important to understand to make sense of most of the New Testament, including more complex passages, as well as understanding the life we have in Christ moving forward.