

Questions about Your Baptism

There are three important questions that need to be answered about our baptism to be sure it was valid.

(1) Was the action of my baptism proper; that is, was I buried in and raised up from a watery grave (see Acts 8:36-38; John 3:5)?

(2) Was I a proper subject or candidate for baptism, that is, had I been taught the gospel and was I a penitent believer in Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19,20; Mk. 16:15,16; Acts 2:38)?

(3) And, did I understand that I was being baptized as a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 6:3,4,17,18) and for the purpose of the remission of all of my past sins (Acts 2:38 Mk. 16:16) and into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13)?

If one can answer all these questions in the affirmative then he can be sure his baptism was valid.

It is possible for a person's baptism not to be valid. Paul baptized twelve men who had been immersed previously (see Acts 19:1-7) because they had not been properly taught and did not understand the purpose of their baptism. I have re-baptized some folks who, having been baptized while young, came to feel their understanding of the purpose of baptism at the time was inadequate. I have also baptized some who had only been sprinkled earlier, and others who had only been babies when they were "baptized."

There are several things a person does not need to be concerned about, though, with regard to the validity of his baptism. It makes no difference whether a person was baptized: in the ocean, a river, pond or tank; in either running or still water. If a person is immersed in water the action of his baptism is scriptural. I've known of some to be baptized in a bathtub when better facilities were unavailable. If the person was immersed in water, the action of his baptism is valid.

Another aspect of being baptized is a concern to some, but it is really of no consequence. It makes no difference who baptized you! My dad, a faithful gospel preacher baptized me and I'm glad of that, but it would still have been valid if I had been baptized by anyone else, even if it were not by a faithful Christian.

Who baptizes us cannot be important because we cannot know the heart of another (as to whether he is a faithful Christian) and we cannot know whether the person who baptized him was faithful. If who baptizes us is important (that is, if he must be a faithful Christian), we would have to be able to trace an unbroken line of faithful "baptizers" all the way back to the first century. If just one person in the "line" were not faithful, then everyone baptized afterwards would not have a valid baptism. Obviously, no one can do this, and the Lord does not require the impossible of us in obeying Him.

If one "obeys Christ" in being baptized, the one who does the baptizing is of no consequence to its validity.

- by Ben Shropshire

A Hairy Reminder

A person between the ages of 20—30 has about 615 hair follicles per square centimeter. A person 50 years of age has around 485 hair follicles per square centimeter. Typically, most people have somewhere between 100,000—150,000 hairs on their head. By the way, the average hair loss for an individual is 50—100 hairs per day. As a result, there is no way you can tell accurately how many hairs you have (in fact, unless you are going bald, most of us don't really care). But God knows.

Jesus said: *"Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows"* (Matt. 10:29-31). This passage reveals three interesting truths.

First, God knows more about us than we know about us. That is a humbling thought. When we sometimes feel like no one understands us or grasps our situation, we forget that God does. God knows your personality. God knows your strengths. God knows what motivates you. God

knows when you stumble. God knows the real you. Therefore, when God declares something worthwhile, He knows what He is talking about. When God warns about danger, He knows what He is talking about. When God tells us that we should do something, we need to do it, because He knows us better than we know ourselves.

God is a God of detail. How insignificant are hairs and sparrows to us. Yet God is aware of them. He is a God of details. The motives, attitudes, and heart behind our actions are as important to Him as the actions themselves. It does little good to give, if you have left out the detail of being a cheerful. Singing fails if we neglect thankfulness in our heart. Let us be a people of details, as God is.

God cares about you. This is why Jesus referred to sparrows and hair. Christ was not sent to save the whales, the environment, or the endangered species, but mankind. Stress and worry often make us wonder if God cares. These two simple illustrations remind us that He does.

- by Roger Shouse

Help, Don't Hinder

What do you do when you see a fellow Christian make a mistake? It may be a simple error of judgment, or it could be a more serious blunder – a sin that can potentially send his soul into eternal hell. What will you do?

Actually there are several options open to you. You could ignore the situation totally. Or you might, in your own mind, ridicule his foolishness. If you're a little bolder, you could gossip with others about his error -- belittling him as you do so. You see, there are a number of things you could do.

But, of course, there is only one thing you should do -- there is only one God-ordained course of action. "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20). "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

The fact is that we all need the help, encouragement and strengthening that comes from our brethren. Sadly, too often we do things that hinder rather than help our brother when he is down.

The next time you are confronted with such a situation, remember that -- if you want to please God -- your choice is already made. If your brother has made a mistake, there can be no ignoring of the problem, no backbiting gossip, no thoughts of ridicule or humiliation. Go to your brother with the help he needs. Don't forget that you are certain to need this kind of help in the future, too!

- by Greg Gwin