

What's News at Cornerstone?

I guess it was about a year or so ago, when I was still just the intern here, that I got a call from a gentleman who said that he was looking for a new church, had discovered our web-site, read through the doctrinal statement that we have on-line, and had a question about it. "Why," he asked, "do you insist on baptism by immersion as a qualification for membership?"

To be perfectly honest, I was a little surprised by the question. After more than seven years of Bible College and Seminary, I had learned about most of the common questions I could expect – and had even been warned about a few that were more "off the wall" – but no one had ever mentioned this one. Having attended evangelical churches my whole adult life, I had never given it much thought. I took it for granted; that's just what we do.

But it's a fair question. Whenever we do something automatically or blindly without thinking about it, we run the risk of establishing a human tradition that may or may not have anything to do with Biblical truth. Some traditions that people have followed "religiously" for years probably had really good reasons once upon a time, but even the people following them can't remember what they are anymore.

So, I asked the gentleman if I could get back to him at a later time and I started to do some research. I found four solid, Biblical reasons for baptism by immersion as a requirement for church membership. Here they are in reverse order of importance:

Reason #4: The word *baptize* comes from the Greek *baptizo* which literally translates as immerse, plunge, or even bury. It always carries the meaning of complete submersion and would never be used to describe merely sprinkling, dipping, or pouring.

Reason #3: Baptism by immersion is the only method that accurately pictures the symbolism behind baptism in that we are identifying ourselves with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21)

Reason #2: The early church set the pattern. You may have noticed through our study of Acts that virtually every time someone gets saved, almost immediately they are baptized by immersion. Even Christ Himself was baptized in this manner by John the Baptist at the start of His ministry. (Matt. 3:13-16; Acts 2:38-41, 8:5-12, 26-40; 9:18, etc.)

Reason #1: More important than these other reasons is that Christ commanded it. In fact, it was so important to Him, that He made it one of the last things He said before He ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father. For us to do otherwise would be to disobey His direct orders. (Matt. 28:18; Mark 16:15-16)

Today, after the service, we will have the opportunity to rejoice with several in our number who wish to follow the Lord in obedience to this command. Please plan to come to witness and celebrate with them this exciting step in their Christian walk. (And, while you're at it, enjoy some great food and fellowship!)

Pastor Sean



***A new church,
An ancient message,
Contemporary relevance!***

Perspectives on the Cross

Luke 23

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