

This is a hard message. Please study this subject for yourself in the Scripture and pray on it before allowing yourself to be offended or casually dismissing the message.

## **Baptized or Inoculated?**

I recently attended a Baptism service at a local Church that profoundly disturbed me. Immediately before someone descended into the water to be baptized, the Senior Pastor would ask them a few questions regarding why they wanted to be Baptized. So far, so good. Asking such questions is a terrific idea, and illustrates to those watching that the participant understands the meaning and significance of the event. But now we get to the disturbing part. The responses some of the participants gave to these questions raised serious questions as to whether they knew what salvation is, let alone the significance of Baptism. Here is an illustration of one of these dialogues. This particular participant was a young boy, and I will do my best to write it as close to verbatim as I am able to recall...

**Pastor:** "Please tell us why you want to be baptized today."

**Boy:** "Because I want everybody to know that I want to follow Jesus."

(This sounds like a good start, but unfortunately it was what every participant said, almost word-for-word, making me suspect the response probably came from a baptism class, not the heart.)

**Pastor:** "So, is Jesus your personal Savior?"

**Boy:** "Yes."

**Pastor:** "Can you tell us about how He became your Savior?"

**Boy:** "I asked my Mommy what people meant when they said they are "saved." She told me it meant they were going to Heaven and that everyone will be happy there forever. She asked me if I wanted to go to Heaven and I said yes, so then I asked Jesus into my heart."

The Pastor then proceeded with the baptism. At this my heart sank. No mention of Sin, no mention of repentance. No mention of the Lordship of Christ, no mention of the inevitable cleansing and fruit following salvation as proof of its' legitimacy. No mention of Jesus' death in payment for sins he had committed because of the Holiness of the just Lord. Not one sign that the boy understood the true Gospel of salvation at any level. Is this too much to expect from a little boy? Well, probably. But let me suggest that that is the wrong way to look at it and the wrong question to ask. Let us instead ask ourselves this...is it possible for someone, anyone, to be saved without understanding these things? Not a deep understanding complete with large theological terms, but basic comprehension of sin, guilt and a just judge. A simple understanding of repentance (ceasing from doing wrong and instead doing what is right), and an understanding that God is now the Boss rather than self. In short, is it possible to have saving faith when we don't know whom we have faith in or why we need to be saved in the first place?

The Bible clearly states that these are the very things at the heart of genuine conversion.  
Look at these verses:

- **John 17:3**            **And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.** (The original word used here for “know” could never be applied to a casual acquaintance. It indicated a deep, thorough, abiding relationship)
  
- **Colossians 1:5-6**    **...of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.**
  
- **Romans 10:14**       **How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?** (“Heard” hear implies understanding, and the Greek dictionary even defines the original Greek word as “Having come to the ears; reported with understanding”)

Now please allow me to digress for a moment; am I suggesting that all children, including infants, who die before reaching an age comprehension and responsibility go to Hell? Well, we could address that, but that would lead into the hotly debated areas of predestination, original sin, and the sovereignty of God. In turn this would become an extremely large article indeed, if not a book. And since there are already many, many books on these subjects, we shall stick to the topic immediately at hand, that being; What part does comprehension and understanding have in the saving faith necessary for salvation (and subsequently baptism)? I am willing to trust in the Judge of the universe to do right, and I hope that you are as well. This may sound evasive, but it is often profitable to stay focused on one topic in hopes of fully understanding it before trying to grasp all the other areas that connect in to it. So, back to topic...

The first and primary point we need to understand is that Salvation as described in the Bible cannot occur if a person does not understand the key (even if simplified) concepts such as Faith, Sin, Justice, Repentance and Lordship. If someone does not understand and embrace these concepts then that person has not entered into the plan of Biblical salvation, and should by no means be baptized. In the case of a child, if the child is too young to comprehend and be accountable, then continue to bring them up for the Lord. Lay the foundation by teaching what the Law is, and who the Holy God is that decreed it. Teach who Jesus is, and what he was doing on the Cross. Explain what becoming a “new creation” means, and how to examine yourself to see if this has occurred. Instill in them a fear of God and a love and reverence for His written Word. Be patient and pray. We serve a living God who is more patient and merciful than we will ever comprehend. Preach the Gospel to your children often, and allow the Holy Spirit to use this message to bring about the fruit of genuine conversion when it is ripe.

The second point we need to consider is not officially involved in the Baptism ceremony, but is often informally brought up during the proceedings. Nowhere in Scripture is it stated we are to “ask Jesus into our heart.” It is true that His Spirit resides in our heart after repentance & salvation (Acts 2:38) but it is not what accomplishes Salvation. His Holy Spirit is given as a guarantee or proof of Salvation (1 Corinthians 1:22). Christians are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16). When we become soundly saved (true Christians) we are declared before God to be justified. This happens when He leads us to repent and trust in the Blood of Christ (His blood alone, totally apart from any deeds we might do) as having paid the penalty for our sins. It is only then, after having been purified through His blood (His blood is the sacrifice, see Romans 3:25) that the His Spirit will come and live inside us. To ask for His indwelling first is to put the cart before the horse, and to suggest a Holy God can live in an unholy house. To go along with this modern cultural notion of “asking Jesus into your heart” is to demonstrate a complete lack of understanding concerning the Holiness of God and the path of true Salvation. Is communicating this lack of understanding and false doctrine to someone else harmless? Absolutely not! It is not just a modern-day harmless phrase!

### **What Comes from all This?**

So what is the net result of someone being baptized before having any idea of what salvation truly is? What is the effect of being told that they are saved before they even know what they are saved from? What can we expect to see after telling someone they are saved because they “asked Jesus into their heart” without having a clue who Jesus really is or why He is important, and then being told they can never lose their salvation? Well, consider this:

In the Bible, baptism is a symbol and an outward profession of dying to self and sin. It is a rebirth as a regenerate child of God with His Spirit dwelling inside the “new creature.” It is a washing away of sin and self. In similar manner, the baptism of a false convert (what else could they be called?) is a picture of death and re-birth. The young person who was open, curious and posing questions about the things of God, who could be taught about sin and repentance until reaching an age capable of full comprehension... well... that young person died in the baptismal tank. The new creature that emerged was someone who was still clueless about the things of God, still had no understanding of what Salvation is, but was fully assured they had grasped eternal life, and could by no means lose it. Their curiosity was filled and abated, by a well-intentioned false Gospel. Behold...the birth of a cultural Christian!

This other Gospel (those claiming conversion without saving faith) and false assurance of Salvation is not providing any benefit to the recipient as so often believed. Just the opposite! It is cursing them with a false sense of security! When they hear the true Gospel they attack it as legalism, not seeing it for the incredible good news that it truly is.

Later in life when approached by someone presenting the true Gospel of repentance and salvation, they will feel as they have no need to hear it. In their mind they are already saved and this Gospel they are hearing (the Gospel of the Bible) sounds like fanatical legalistic bondage. By then they will have a deeply rooted but distorted view of what salvation by grace really means. They will look at repentance as a work instead of believing the Bible's teaching that it is a gift given by the grace of God. They will see all this "Be perfect, for I am perfect" talk as being works-based law (never mind who said it! (See Matthew 5:48)). They will never see the irony that it is they who are actually counting on works for salvation. Works?!? Yes! What else could one call the utterance of certain words after a preacher or parent (sinners prayer) and then getting dipped in some water while not understanding any of it? This is a textbook example of legalism and is on par with the Pharisees of Jesus' day. Genuine faith in Jesus Christ's work on the cross plays no part in their religion. Nor does repentance, nor searching for evidences of conversion. With no comprehension how can faith even exist? They were not saved and then baptized; instead they were given a false assurance and inoculated against the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. They are immunized to the message of truth.

God gives salvation to those who repent of their sins, ask forgiveness for their deeds, and believe in the life and death of Jesus Christ to atone for their sins. The sign of true conversion having occurred is that Holiness rather than sin now trademarks the life of the believer. These things must be understood at some level in order to be embraced with a saving faith.

This practice of casual Baptism is an offense to God. It takes someone open to God and closes them to the true message of the Gospel. Why will they, later in life, want to follow a Christ who says, "To be my disciple it will cost you everything you own" (Luke 14:33) when they are already "saved" and experiencing no sacrifice or moral obligations whatsoever. When their own happiness can still be the primary focus of their lives, (contrast with 1 Corinthians 6:20) and the only person they take orders from is themselves? How is it that this practice of casual baptism (Gospel inoculation) has come about in the same buildings that hold so many Bibles speaking against it? It is an integral part of Cultural Christianity, having the appearance of Godliness but with none of the saving power of God (See 2 Timothy 3:5). The casual baptism of those without repentance and saving faith must be abandoned.

Please search the Word for yourself before embracing this teaching it, or angrily discarding it. Pray that God would bring the Church into full obedience regarding the sacrament of Baptism.

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