

# Why be **REBAPTIZED?**



by Mark W. Fenison, ThM.

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Mark W. Fenison, ThM.

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3 Alpine Court  
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## Why be Re-baptized?

Have you been asked to be re-baptized? Did that offend you? May I ask you a very simple question? How do you know if what you received was actually scriptural baptism?

Here is the thing to keep in mind when you consider baptism. ***Scriptural baptism is baptism that meets the requirements of the scriptures. If it fails to meet the requirements of the scriptures then it is no baptism at all, but just another form of getting wet.*** So the real issue is, did you just get wet or were you baptized in keeping with what the Scriptures require to be baptism? Do you know what the Scriptures require?

What many call baptism and administer under the name of baptism is something other than what the Scriptures call baptism.

One reason we are called “Baptists” is because we insist that nothing be called or accepted as real baptism unless it meets the scriptural requirements. If it does not meet the scriptural requirements then we deny baptism was administered, but that person merely got religiously wet.

Again, may I ask you, “*How do you know that you were baptized according to the Scriptures?*” There are three basic reasons why Landmark Baptists refuse to accept what many call baptism:

**1. General Biblical Requirements for Baptism:** We believe that anything called baptism must conform to at least four basic demands by Scripture in order to be recognized as

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scriptural baptism. If any of these requirements is missing then that person merely got wet and was not really baptized. These four Biblical requirements are:

**a. Right Candidate:** We believe that the only scriptural candidate for baptism is a professed born again believer in the true gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41; 8:35-37). There is no such thing as infant baptism in the scriptures or baptism for unregenerate persons. Baptism is for believers only.

**b. Right Motive:** We believe that the scriptural motive for baptism is public identity with Jesus Christ. It is a public symbolic profession of the gospel (Rom. 6:5-6). It saves and washes away sin symbolically but not literally (1 Pet. 3:21). Hence, if you were baptized in order to be literally saved, literally regenerated or to have your sins literally removed then you just got wet and are still unbaptized. Baptism identifies you with Christ; (1) The gospel of Christ, (2) The church of Christ; (3) The doctrine of Christ.

**c. Right Mode:** We believe that the scriptural mode for baptism is immersion only (Rom. 6:5; Col. 2:12 “buried”). The Greek language has words for “pouring” (*epicheo*) and for sprinkling (*rantizo*) but these terms are never ever used for this ordinance. If you were poured or sprinkled you merely got wet and you were not baptized scripturally.

**d. Right Administrator:** We believe that the scriptural administrator for baptism is an ordained man authorized by a New Testament Church (Mt. 18:17-18; 28:19-20). We will speak more about this in

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the next two reasons for rejecting baptism administered by other denominations.

**2. Baptism administered by a church of like faith and order:** The authority to administer baptism is given in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20). But who is it that Christ is authorizing to baptize in the Great Commission?

Let me give you an analogy. All who are legally born citizens in this country are Americans by birth. Americans have the privilege of obtaining a driver license. However, just because you are an American does not mean you can issue a driver's license to yourself or anyone else. No, there is an authorized agent by the U.S. Government that must be sought out to obtain a legal driver's license. You or some other American, or some other agency could reproduce and issue a driver's license that looks identical to the one issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles and licensing. However, it would not be recognized as a valid license. Why? Your license would not be recognized because you have not been authorized by our Government to produce or issue driver's licenses.

All true believers in Christ are Christians, but Christ did not authorize all Christians to administer baptism. He authorized His "*disciples*" to administer baptism (Mt. 28:16-20).

- a. **What is a Disciple?** A disciple is a "follower" or "learner" who adopts or conforms to the teachings and practices of their professed Master. Matthew 28:19-20 gives instruction on how to make disciples. Indeed, the word "*teach*" in verse 19 literally means "*make disciples*." Matthew 28:19-20 defines what a "disciple" is and how they are made, and who is

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authorized to make disciples. Disciples are made by going to the lost with the gospel (Mk. 16:15) then baptizing those that receive the gospel by repentance and faith. These are the “them” of the Great Commission which are the proper subjects for baptizing and then teaching to observe all things Christ commanded. In other words a disciple is one who is qualified to not merely share the gospel and administer baptism but is one that has already been through this process (“*have commanded you*”) and is able to teach others how to observe all things Christ commanded because he has already been taught these things.

In essence, this is a commission to reproduce after their own kind or make disciples of like faith and order. A “disciple” of Christ would not be one who preached “*another gospel*” (Gal. 1:8-9) or administered another kind of baptism (Lk. 7:29-30) or taught another faith and practice (1 Tim. 4:1; Rom. 16:17). The only ones Christ authorized to administer baptism are “disciples” or those who are like faith and order with Christ. However, not all professed churches of Christ and/or professed disciples of Christ have embraced the same gospel Christ preached or even have been baptized at all. Nor have they been taught how to observe all things Christ commanded. Baptism administered by those who are not like faith and order with Christ is merely a religious wetting.

**b. What is a heretic?** A heretic is a person who departs from the pattern of like faith and order given by Christ in the Great Commission (Acts

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20:29-31).<sup>1</sup> A heretic may be a saved “brother” who departs from the apostolic pattern of like faith and order provided by Christ in the Great Commission (2 Thes. 2:15; 3:6, 14). Churches/ministers that preach “another gospel” are to be regarded by New Testament churches as “accursed” (Gal. 1:8-9). Those who reject the baptism that Christ submitted to Himself and administered and commissioned in the Great Commission are said to have rejected the counsel of God against themselves (Jn. 4:1-2; Lk. 7:29-30). Those who depart from the faith and order given by Christ in the Great Commission are said to have departed from “the faith once delivered” (1 Tim. 4:1; Rom. 16:17; 2 Thes. 3:6). Such are to be considered “heretical” rather than proper administrators of baptism. The baptism administered by “heretics” is merely a religious wetting.

**3. Baptism is designed to publicly identify you with the doctrine and practice of the administrator:** Christ did not authorize just anyone to administer baptism in the Great Commission. He authorized only those who were like faith and order with him. This is not only the Biblical practice but the logical practice of nearly all denominations. For example, if you chose to submit to a Methodist Minister for baptism and invited all your friends to come watch, and at the conclusion of the baptism, you turned around and declared to your friends, “*Rejoice with me for I am now a Roman*

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<sup>1</sup> “**Heretic**” – The Greek term translated “heretic” refers to an opinionated or self-willed person that promotes a schism. Such are people that depart from the faith as those described in Acts 20:29-30.

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*Catholic*” what would they think? They would think you were crazy. If you submitted to a Methodist minister they would view you as a Methodist, not a Roman Catholic, or else you would have chosen to be baptized by a Roman Catholic Priest. If you submit to a Mormon elder for baptism, then those observing it, view you as a Mormon and not a Seventh Day Adventist. Your baptism publicly identifies you with the doctrine and practice of the administrator. Likewise, the same ones Christ authorized to administer baptism are the same ones authorized by Christ to “*teach you to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded.*” In Acts 2:41 all those who submitted for baptism were also taught the doctrine and practice of the administrator of their baptism (Acts 2:42). Christ has intentionally authorized only those who are like faith and order with “*whatsoever I have commanded.*” Why? Christ does not want any of His followers to publicly identify with anyone who preaches “*another gospel*” or administers another kind of baptism or teaches another faith and practice than “*whatsoever I have commanded you.*” The Greek word *bapto* was originally used in the dyeing industry. They would take a piece of cloth and dip it into the dye until it **identified with** the color of the dye. Of course *bapto* is the root of *baptizo* or the term translated “*baptize.*” Baptism is designed by Christ to publicly the candidate with Christ: (1) Christ’s gospel; (2) Christ’s doctrine and practice; (3) Christ’s churches.

**Closing Analogy:** In the NBA (National Basket Ball Association) often a member of one team is traded and they become a member of a new team. For example, Shaquille O’Neil was traded from the Los Angeles Lakers to the Miami Heat. When he joined the membership of the Miami Heat he could no longer wear the uniform of the Lakers. He had to publicly identify with his new team. He had to put on their

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uniform. Baptism is scripturally designed to publicly identify you with Christ:

1. **The gospel of Jesus Christ;**
2. **The doctrine and practice of Jesus Christ;**
3. **The churches of Jesus Christ.**
4. **The baptism of Christ.**

If you previously submitted to an administrator that preaches “*another gospel*” then you just got wet. If you previously submitted to an administrator that teaches another faith and practice (Acts 20:29-31; I Tim. 4:1) other than Christ commanded, then, you just got wet. If you previously submitted to an administrator of a “church” that does not possess the essential scriptural marks of a true New Testament church then you just got wet. If you previously submitted to an ordinance that lacks one of the four scriptural essentials for baptism to be baptism, then, you just got wet.

Historically, Baptists have been called “Ana-Baptists” or “re-baptizers” by our religious opponents. Even in the United States, Baptists were called “Ana-Baptists” in early America when there were but 13 colonies.

However, the Reformation Ana-Baptists replied to this charge as have all Baptists since the New Testament times:

*“To call these people **Anabaptists**, that is rebaptizers, was to malign them, because they denied that baptism was repeated, inasmuch as infant baptism is no baptism at all. They called themselves simply **Baptists**.”* – Rolland Bainton, **The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century**,

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(Boston, Beacon Press, 1956) p. 99 – emphasis mine

Not only did ancient Baptists refuse to acknowledge that water applied to infants was baptism, but they rejected the baptism administered by other evangelical's. Reformer Henry Bullinger said of them:

*“The Anabaptists think themselves to be the only true church of Christ, and acceptable to God; and teach that they, who by baptism are received into their churches, ought not to have communion [fellowship] with [those called] evangelical, or any other whatsoever; for that our [i.e., evangelical Protestant, or Reformed] churches are not true churches, any more than the churches of the Papists.”* – J.R. Graves, **Old Landmarkism, What Is It?** (Reprint by Calvary Baptist Church Book Shop, Ashland, KY) p. 115

It is true that Landmark Baptist churches will not accept previous baptisms administered by other denominations or other kinds of Baptist denominations. This is offensive to many Christians and many question the Biblical basis for such a demand.

***Scriptural baptism is baptism that meets the requirements of the scriptures. If it fails to meet the requirements of the scriptures then it is no baptism at all, but just another form of getting wet.***