

Rebaptism

People will desire to be rebaptised for various reasons. For most, the reason seems to be that they regard their original baptism as lacking in some way, such as the belief that they should have been baptised by immersion, or that they must repent and make a public confession with their own mouths as adults. Some are re-baptised because they want to make a confession of faith as an adult, and declare with their own lips what was spoken by others at their baptism. Some believe that another washing will gain for them a newness and renewal in the Holy Spirit which would otherwise be lacking. Some do not see this as another baptism but more of a confirmation of their baptism, even though they go through the act of baptism again. Still others are not sure whether or not they really were baptised as children (no record of their baptism, parent's dead, etc.).

But what does the Bible say about 'rebaptism'?

After Christ's resurrection and ascension, there is only one baptism with water spoken of in the Bible. Ephesians 4:5 speaks of "one baptism." This is the "*washing of water by the Word*" (Titus 3:3-8) which brings forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit with it (Acts 2:38-39).

Where there is doubt about whether or not one has been baptised as a child, or where one has been baptised in a non-Christian cult, or where a baptism, so-called, has been incorrectly administered or is in doubt, then a person is baptised again, or properly speaking, baptised for the first time, since the validity of the earlier washing is in doubt.

It should be noted that when one doubts whether they had faith at their baptism, or does not remember it, as in the case of infant baptism, this does not make the original baptism invalid, for what has God's Word and command has God's promised treasure. Such a person should believe God and accept the treasure which has been placed there for him or her. Even when people are insincere and faithless, God is faithful and cannot deny Himself. (2 Timothy 2:13).

Usually the desire for rebaptism rests on the false notion that Baptism is something which **we** must do rather than something **God** does to us. if **I** make baptism primarily **my** act of commitment, **my** act of dedication, **my** act of repentance and **my** act of obedience, then I am forgetting the main actor in baptism – God. When God baptises He does a great thing. My act in going to the baptismal font is the lesser thing. God gives me a blessed washing of water by the Word, while I can only accept what He is doing. That is faith – trusting what God promises and does, and even that is a work of God in my heart (John 3:5-6, Titus 3:5, Acts 5:31).

However, many have felt that they have fallen away from their baptism. They feel their own unworthiness and need for renewal. The place for such Christians is to go back to their original baptism, the original covenant made by God with them. God is faithful as cannot deny Himself even if we have drifted away. He is like the father of the prodigal son. The father was waiting for his son to return. When the son did return, he did not have to be adopted into his father's family. The father had never forgotten him. He had always been waiting. God waits for the wandering child to come

back to the family and take up his place again. Return to the baptismal covenant again, not to some other covenant or to a repeat performance of a sacrament which is unrepeatable. It has always been valid, for what has been lacking in the drifting Christian is not God's valid baptism but rather repentance on the part of the wandering Christian.

We must never despise God's action in our own original baptism by trying to replace it with our action, our repentance, our commitment, or our obedience. All of these can only be our loving responses to God's saving work through Christ on the cross which is applied to us in baptism.