

Holy Baptism: 1st Its Nature

What is Baptism?

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included is God's command and combined with God's Word.

Which is that Word of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

Baptism is the Word of God applied to water. Water without the Word is merely water, useful for drinking, cooking, bathing, etc. But how should the water be applied to the baptized? There are three methods or modes of Baptism: immersion, pouring, and sprinkling. Over the years, different Christians have preferred different modes, and some have even fought about it, saying, "We're right and you're wrong", not accepting one or the other as valid.

The ***Didache***, or ***Teaching of the Twelve Apostles***, an ancient Christian document talks about this question. In chapter VII, we read: *Concerning Baptism, baptize in this way. Having first rehearsed all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, in living water. But if you have not living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst not in cold, in warm. If you have neither, pour water thrice on the head in the name, etc.*

Notice, the preferred method was immersion in running water, such as a river or stream. Next would be a pond or lake. If you had to use a baptistry, Okay, and if you didn't have that, you could pour. By the way, Martin Luther preferred immersion. And some Lutheran churches are going back to that mode of Baptism.

The thing is, they each have meaning. Sprinkling harkens back to Old Testament times, when the high priest would sprinkle the people with blood using a hyssop branch to cleanse them. Sprinkling symbolizes *cleansing*.

Pouring, points to Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Pouring symbolizes the work of the *Holy Spirit* in our lives.

Immersion points to the death and resurrection of Jesus. Immersion symbolizes our *dying and rising with Christ*, the new life we have in Him. All three of these things take place at our Baptism, so all three are valid.

The mode of Baptism is a matter of adiaphora. Being neither commanded nor condemned in Scripture, it is left up to congregational preference. The thing that Matters is the Word added to the water, to be baptized into the name of the Triune God, as Jesus commands in ***Matthew 28***.