

A Divine Connection or a Divine Rejection

The struggle with accepting the essentiality of baptism isn't a new problem. Luke records the woes of John's ministry to the Pharisees, who were apparently pretty attentive until it came to being baptized. Jesus pointed out the rebellion involved in rejecting baptism when He exonerated John the Immerser to John's disciples, saying, "*blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me*" (Luke 7:23).

Luke contrasts two groups of people in the following verses. "*And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him*" (Luke 7:29-30). Notice what Luke teaches:

[1] There are only two sides to godly issues: right and wrong. There is no middle ground where the apathetic, arrogant agnostic or semi-sincere, self-serving slacker can straddle the fence. You're either for Him or against Him (Luke 11:23).

[2] Personal obedience carries with it a sense of personal confidence. These obedient disciples of John didn't justify God in the sense that God needs humanity to justify them, but rather they understood that their obedience confirmed the truth of God's word.

[3] Anyone who rejects God is his or her own worst enemy. When God gives directives, it is for and to our benefit to obey, because "*the way of the unfaithful is hard*" (Proverbs 13:15).

Theologically hydrophobic seekers (PC for "religious folks who are afraid of water baptism") are a real mystery to me. There was nothing complicated about John's baptism. He baptized "*in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there*" (John 3:23). He was specific as far as purpose in stating: "*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance*" (Matthew 3:11). And, since one could not be right in God's eyes without it, even the sinless Son of God was baptized "*to fulfil all righteousness*" (Matthew 3:15).

Jesus was just as clear about the baptism He instituted. It obviously involves enough water for two guys to go "*down both into the water*" where the baptism takes place (Acts 8:38). The specific reason was stated by His apostle Peter, who tells us to "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38). And, one cannot be saved if one is not baptized since Jesus clearly stated, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). In fact, after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, even those who had been baptized into John's baptism, "*When they heard this, were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*" (Acts 19:5).

It's really simple: there are only two sides and you can only stand on one or the other. You can justify God in obedience or you can reject the counsel of God against yourself. Jesus made it plain, "*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*" (John 12:48). Baptism is simply the difference between a Divine connection and a Divine rejection.