

DOES BAPTISM SANCTIFY AN ADULTEROUS RELATIONSHIP?

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. By “sanctify” we mean: Does it make an adulterous marriage or an adulterous relationship sacred or holy?; Specifically, does baptism make it free from sin? Does it purify the relationship? Does it give sanction to the relationship or make it right in God’s sight?
2. To set the stage for the study of this question, we offer this scenario: A man and a woman marry (neither having been married before). Neither one is a Christian; neither one knows what the Bible teaches about being a Christian or what it teaches about marriage, divorce and remarriage. After several years, the same man and woman, by mutual consent, decide to divorce (with no fornication involved as the reason for obtaining the divorce).

By divorcing they have clearly sinned in violation of such passages as Mt.5:32; Mt.19:3-6; Lk.16:18; 1Cor.7:1-5,10,11b.

Now suppose the man marries again, or marries another woman; unbeknown to him, he is living in adultery in an adulterous marriage, in an adulterous relationship, in violation of such passages as Mt.19:9; Rom.7:1-3; 1Cor.7:10,11; Cf. Mk. 6:17,18; Heb.13:4; Note Col.3:5-8

While living in this adulterous relationship Christ and the gospel is preached to him; he learns the truth about how to become a Christian. He therefore, while still continuing to live with his second wife in an adulterous relationship, is baptized as Mk.16:15,16 and Ac.2:38 require.

Question: Did his baptism sanctify his sinful relationship with his second wife? That is, did it make his old adulterous relationship with his second wife right in God’s sight? Did it purify it and make it free from the sin of adultery?

3. There are many, even among brethren in Christ, who say, “Yes! it does!”
 - a. They say this because their thought is that since baptism is said to wash away sin, that the one who is baptized for the remission of sin has the sin of their previous sinful,

- unlawful, unscriptural divorce(s) and adulterous remarriage(s) washed away.
- b. They then assert that the marriage which was formerly sinfully adulterous is now, as a result of his baptism, sanctified by God; it is now pure and holy in God's sight.
 - c. Basically, the logic of their teaching is that one could marry, divorce, and marry unscripturally (one time or many times), be baptized and then be holy or set right in the sight of God, with either their current spouse, or if currently unmarried, be free to marry again.
4. However, the Scriptures do not so teach. Therefore, in considering the question: Does baptism sanctify an adulterous relationship? consider the following:

II. DISCUSSION

A. FIRST, SCRIPTURAL PROOF THAT BAPTISM DOES NOT MAKE A SINFUL ACT A RIGHTEOUS ACT.

1. If one makes his living by the sin of thievery before he is baptized, and continues to make his living by stealing after he is baptized, his stealing is still sinful.
 - a. His being baptized doesn't sanctify, purify or make his continued thievery right, either in the sight of God or man, so that he may continue the practice with impunity after being baptized.
 - b. Who would doubt this? Cf. Eph.4:28
2. The same is true of making and selling intoxicating beverages for a living before one is baptized.
 - a. If it is sinful to do so before being baptized, it's still sinful to do so after being baptized.
 - b. Being baptized doesn't purify the practice or make it right in God's sight so that one may continue to do it after being baptized with impunity.
3. So it is with adulterous marriages, or adulterous relationships. If he was guilty of adultery or of the sin of living in an adulterous relationship before he was baptized, and he continues living with that same spouse after he is baptized, then he is still in an adulterous relationship after being baptized; for being baptized doesn't change the nature of his adulterous relationship, or

sanctify or make it holy in God's sight so that the relationship is no longer sinful.

4. Sinful practices and sinful relationships must be changed or ceased before one can be scripturally baptized for remission of sins and change his relationship to God, and that is done by repentance preceding baptism.
 - a. Repentance is a change of mind wrought by godly sorrow resulting in a reformation of life, which, of course, means one by repentance ceases the practice of sin.
 - b. Then and only then can one receive forgiveness of sins, whether an alien or an erring child of God.

B. SECOND, FURTHER SCRIPTURAL PROOF THAT BAPTISM NEVER SANCTIFIES, PURIFIES, OR MAKES EITHER A SINFUL ACT RIGHTEOUS, NOR AN UNSCRIPTURAL RELATIONSHIP OF ANY KIND HOLY.

1. As an example, suppose one, before learning the truth about the one God of the Bible and Christianity, is a practitioner in an idolatrous religion, or approves of and practices plural marriage (has two or more wives).
 - a. Then that one learns the truth about God and Christianity and is baptized.
 - b. Question: Does baptism sanctify either the relationship of idolatry or plural marriage and allow him to continue to keep his plural wives and to continue to practice idolatry along with Christianity?
 - c. Who would answer in the affirmative?
2. Suppose two men or two women are living together in a homosexual relationship and maybe even married under some of the present-day civil laws allowing such.
 - a. They hear the gospel and are baptized continuing in their homosexual relationship.
 - b. Question: Would their baptism make their homosexual relationship pure and holy in God's sight?
 - c. Would their being baptized mean they can now continue in their homosexual relationship with God's blessings?
3. If one can understand why baptism doesn't make such sinful acts righteous, nor sanctify, purify, or make such unscriptural relationships scriptural, why can't one understand why baptism

does not sanctify, purify a marriage relationship that is adulterous?

III. CONCLUSION

1. “Yes,” in answer to the question some raise and even deny, “one can live in the sin of fornication and adultery.” Cf. Col.3:5-7; Mt.19:9 – tense of the verb “commit”.
2. And, yes, sin before baptism is still sin after baptism. This is the vital principle involved in the question of our topic.
3. In any study such as this, the question often arises: “Can one who is in an unscriptural marriage relationship not obtain forgiveness for his sins?”
 - a. Answer: Without question, “Yes, he can!”
 - b. He can by submitting to God’s will and God’s terms of forgiveness which involve repentance before his baptism for remission of sins.
 - c. This means he has a change of mind – meaning changing “one’s mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one’s past sins” (Thayer).
 - d. In other words, when one repents, he decides that he will not continue in sin and/or any sinful relationship. This change of mind is produced by godly sorrow for sin, resulting in a change of one’s life, a cessation of sin and a turning to God.
 - e. See Mt.21:28,29; 2Cor.7:10,11; Lk.13:3; Mt.3:7,8; Ac.26:19,20.