

‘Baptizo’ Means ‘To Immerse’



Foundations (Day 115)
by Derek Prince

This Greek verb baptizo, with which we are dealing, is of a special, characteristic form of which there are a good many other examples in the Greek language. The characteristic feature of this verbal form is the insertion of the two letters –‘iz’ into a more simple, basic root. Thus, the basic root is bapto. The insertion into this root of the two extra letters ‘iz’ produces the compound form – baptizo. The insertion of the additional syllable –‘iz’ into any Greek verb produces a verb that has a special, causative meaning. That is to say, the compound verb thus formed always has the sense of causing something to be or to happen. The precise nature of that which is thus caused to be or to happen is decided by the meaning of the simple root verb, out of which the compound, causative form has been built up.

With this in mind, we can now form a clear and accurate picture of the Greek verb baptizo. This is a compound, causative form, built up out of the simple root form bapto. Obviously, therefore, to get a proper understanding of baptizo, we need to ascertain the meaning of bapto.

This simple root form bapto occurs three times in the Greek text of the New Testament which formed the basis of the English King James Version. In every one of these three instances the original Greek verb bapto is translated by the same English verb “to dip.”

The three New Testament passages in which bapto occurs are as follows. First, Luke 16:24. Here the rich man, in the torments of hell fire, cries out to Abraham:

> “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue.”

Second, John 13:26. Here, at the Last Supper, Jesus identifies the traitor who is to betray Him by giving His disciples a distinguishing mark.

> “It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.”

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Third, Revelation 19:13. Here John describes the Lord Jesus Christ as he sees Him coming in glory, leading the avenging armies of heaven.

> "He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood."

In all three passages both the English word used by the translators and also the context of each passage make it clear that the Greek verb bapto means "to dip something into a fluid and then take it out again."

We also find in the New Testament a compound version of the verb bapto, formed by prefixing the Greek preposition 'en'-, or 'em'-, meaning "in." This gives the compound form embapto. This compound form, embapto, also occurs three times in the Greek text of the New Testament. The three passages are Matthew 26:23, Mark 14:20 and John 13:26. Any student who cares to check for himself will quickly discover that in all three passages this compound form embapto is translated (just like the simple form bapto) by the English verb "to dip."

The Greek verb bapto – either in its simple form or with the prefix 'em'- meaning "in" – occurs six times in the Greek text of the New Testament, and in every instance in the King James Version it is translated "to dip." In every instance, also, the context plainly indicates that the action described by this verb is that of dipping something into a fluid and then taking it out again.

If bapto means "to dip something into a fluid and then take it out again," then baptizo can have only one possible literal meaning. Logically, it must mean "to cause something to be dipped into a fluid and then taken out again." More briefly, baptizo – from which we get the English word baptise – means "to cause something to be dipped."

Devotional

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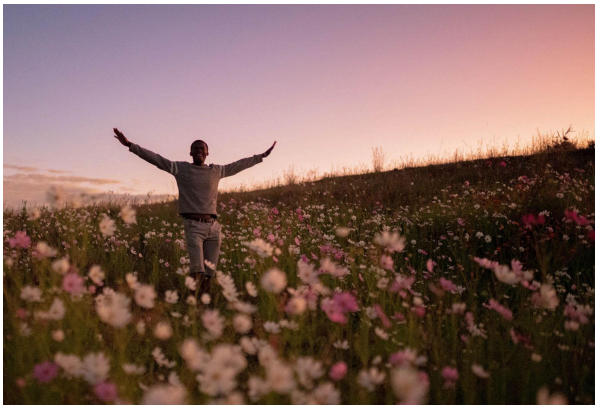

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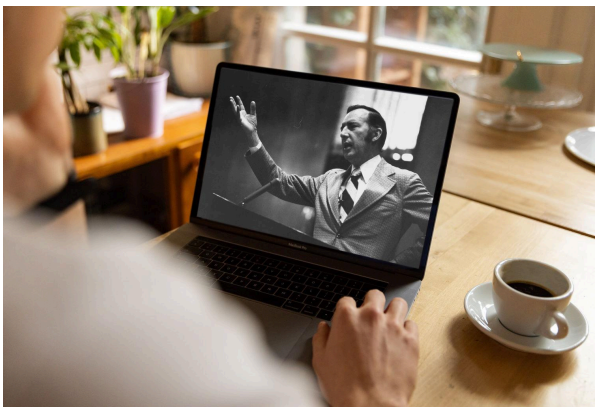

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