

UNDERSTANDING WATER BAPTISM

Baptism is not just a ritual, or a meaningless ceremony. It is an important part of the Christian walk because it sends a message to the world, the church and the spiritual realm that Jesus is now Lord of your life. Baptism shows that you have separated yourself from sin and your past, and that you have committed yourself to Christ.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, *baptising* them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit....” Matthew 28:19

The word “baptism” means to dip or wet through. From the Bible we see that God intended for all believers to be baptised.

THE BIBLE REFERS TO THREE PRIMARY BAPTISMS

1. Baptism into Christ – salvation:

“For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27)

2. Baptism in water – given by Christ:

“But when they believed... the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptised” (Acts 8:12)

3. Baptism in the Holy Spirit – infilling of God’s Spirit:

“He (Jesus) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:16)

WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTISED?

“Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” (Acts 2:38)

Only if you have genuinely repented of your sins and given your life to Christ, should you be baptised in water. Both repentance and baptism are based on personal decisions which no one else can make for us.

As a new Christian we should look to be baptized:

1. To obey Christ's instruction.

Baptism is part of the Great Commission:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.....” (Matthew 28:19)

2. To demonstrate your decision to follow Christ.

Baptism is symbolic of our decision to leave a sinful life behind and to serve Christ. As Paul was told shortly after his conversion:

“Arise and be baptised, and (symbolically) wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16)

Furthermore, it is symbolic of the truth that we have been united with Jesus in his death, burial and resurrection from the dead:

“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4)

3. To follow Christ's example.

While on earth Jesus identified himself with sinful human beings and obeyed his Father's will. He chose to be baptised publicly, and this was pleasing to God his Father.

“When He had been baptised, Jesus came up immediately from the water... And suddenly a voice came from heaven saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” (Matthew 3:16-17)

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE BAPTISM?

Each step of the baptism is a powerful picture of what Christ has done for you, and therefore, what has happened to you when you placed faith in Christ.

Immersion: This represents Christ's death. When you enter the water, it shows that you have become part of God's family (the Body of Christ) by repenting and dying to sin, in Christ. (You must be born again to be baptised).

Submersion: During submersion you are dipped underneath the water. This is a picture of Christ's burial. By being baptised you are therefore showing that in Christ you have buried your old life and old nature.

Emergence: As you leave the water, you present a picture of Christ's resurrection. This part of baptism shows that you have been raised to a new life of holiness in Christ.

One of the most important reasons for baptism is the fact that you identify yourself with Christ. You are saying publicly that you understand and have accepted the work of Jesus on the Cross. It is also important because it shows that you have actively decided to commit your life to the Lord. Baptism is God's idea, so it carries His blessing and anointing.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Do I need to be baptised in order to be saved?

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The act of baptism does not bring salvation. Salvation is only possible because Christ sacrificed Himself on Calvary. Baptism is then the act of obedience you perform after you accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord

When should a believer be baptised?

“See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptised?’ Then Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’” (Acts 8:36-37)

“Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptised.” (Acts 16:32-33)

Many examples from the Bible show that believers were baptised in water soon after their salvation. You too should try as soon as possible to express your salvation and change of heart through baptism. Even if you have been a Christian for a while, but have never been baptised, you should do so because God requires it.

I was baptised many years ago. Do I need to get re-baptised?

No, you don't need to be re-baptised so long as the first time round you knew Jesus Christ as Saviour and understood what baptism signifies.

How should I be baptised?

“Now John also was baptising in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptised.” (John 3:23)

“And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and (Philip) baptised him.” (Acts 8:38)

“When He had been baptised, Jesus came up immediately from the water...” (Matthew 3:16)

From the pattern of scripture we understand baptism to be by full emersion.

EXERCISE: MY 1 MINUTE BAPTISM TESTIMONY

1. BEFORE – Before I came to know Christ my life was characterized by...

(Examples: hopelessness, fear, anxiety, confusion, lack of understanding of what my life was about, unable to find truth etc.)

2. WHEN? - I put my faith in Jesus on 1. (date: _____); or 2. I can't recall the exact day I came to believe in Christ but it was sometime last summer; ... when I realized that Jesus was what my life was missing.

I prayed saying... *(Examples: Forgive me and make me a new person, to come into my life, I repent, I believe, I want to follow you, only you can change my heart etc.)*

3. NOW? - Now my life is different. I still have struggles, but the ... (share how the issues in part one have been/are being answered)

4. A favorite verse from God's word is... (could just be a part of a verse)