

The Ordinance of Baptism

Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; & Romans 6:3-7

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Introduction: At the close of our service this morning we will have a baptism. We might ask: “Is baptism really important?” Or, “Is baptism required in order to go to heaven?” Other questions to be considered: “Does it matter how I am baptized, by what method? Who is to be baptized anyway?” I hope to answer these & other questions here this morning. By way of introduction, consider that the first thing Christ did before beginning His public ministry was to be baptized (see Matthew 3:13-17 & Luke 3:21-22). He was not baptized for the same reason believers are today, but His baptism does indicate the importance of baptism. [Note: Christ identified Himself with sinners. Though sinless, as a man He came to redeem men.] Our approach this morning will be to look at the **must** (or importance), the meaning (or identification), the motive (or incentive), & the mode (or illustration) of baptism.

I. The **must** (importance) of baptism

A. Indicated by exhortations:

1. Matthew 28:18-20 > It is commanded by Christ; we are to evangelize, baptize, & then catechize. (& compare Mark 16:15-16).
2. Acts 2:38 > It is commanded by Peter.

Note – the word “*for*” here means ‘as a result of’ & not ‘in order to obtain.’ “Water baptism is the outward sign of repentance & remission of sins. Forgiveness is through faith in Christ, not through the act of baptism (*for*’ may here mean ‘because of,’ as in Matthew 12:41)” (Ryrie). Consider that the word “*at*” is the same word translated “*for*” in Acts 2:38, meaning “on the basis of.”

B. Illustrated by examples:

1. Matthew 3:13-17 > We “follow the Lord in believers’ baptism.”
2. Acts 8:36-39 > Ethiopian eunuch is baptized (& see 16:33, Philippian jailer).
3. Acts 9:18 > Paul is baptized (& see Acts 22:16, Ananias commands Paul to be baptized.
Note – the phrase “*wash away thy sins*” is a “figurative expression that simply indicates that as water washes away something, so baptism in water *symbolizes* the sins of the person being washed away” [Anderson]).

II. The **meaning** (identification) of baptism (Romans 6:3-7)

A. It symbolizes the believer’s identification with the death of Christ:

1. The death, burial, & resurrection are pictured by immersion.
2. The believer shows his trust in the work of Christ to save him.

Summary: Colossians 2:12, “*Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.*”

B. It symbolizes the believer’s death to sin & pictures his new life in Christ.

1. The believer dies to his old way of life & “rises” to his new life.
2. The believer’s future resurrection is also pictured (cf. Col. 2:12 & Rom. 8:9-11).

Summary: Romans 6:4, “*Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*”

III. The **motive** (incentive) of baptism

A. Who should be baptized?

1. There are no instances in Scripture of infant baptism (though some use Acts 16:30-34).
2. Those who have put their faith in Christ are baptized (see Mt. 28:19; Acts 2:41; 8:12, 37; 16:14-15, 31-33).

B. How soon should one be baptized?

1. Believers were baptized soon after they were saved – Acts 2:41; 8:12, 30-34; 9:17-18; 10:44-48; 16:14-15, 30-34; & 18:8.
2. “Since baptism is a matter of obedience & is essential for complete obedience to God, then no believer, whether child or adult, should live in disobedience by not being baptized soon after he is saved” (Anderson).

IV. The **mode** (illustration) of baptism

A. The biblical meaning of baptism:

1. “*Baptizo*” means to dip, plunge, submerge or immerse,
2. “*Baptizo*” means the placing of one thing into another (dying of a garment; drawing water from a well).

B. The biblical method of baptism:

1. The practice of baptism:
 - a. Matthew 3:16, “*And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water...*”
 - b. John 3:23, “*And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there...*”
 - c. Acts 8:38-39, “*...and they went down both into the water, both Philip & the eunuch; & he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water...*”
2. The picture of baptism:
 - a. Christ’s death is pictured (standing in the water).
 - b. Christ’s burial is pictured (placed under the water).
 - c. Christ’s resurrection is pictured (coming up out of the water).

Conclusion: Baptism is the second of the two ordinances in the Biblical Distinctives of Baptists (the other being communion or the Lord’s Supper). Baptism is voluntary, but it is not optional for the believer. It is the start of our obedience to Christ. Consider the difference between your acceptance by God & your pleasing of God by your obedience. “Acceptance with God is based on the blood of Jesus. I cannot add to His sacrifice. Pleasing God involves obeying God as His revelation, called the Bible, shows us how. Baptism does not have anything to do with my acceptance with God, but it is the first step God wants me to take in pleasing Him” (Robert Barnett in “Baptism: Who needs it?”).

Have you publicly declared your oneness with Christ & your obedience to Christ? Are you walking in newness of life, as a new creature in Christ Jesus? Baptism is not for babies, but for believers (babes in Christ). It is not for those who simply “profess” salvation, but for those who “possess” salvation.

Are you saved? Have you trusted the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary? Do you know for sure that if you were to die today, that you would go to heaven? If not, why not come to Christ this morning & be saved? If you are a believer, have you been scripturally baptized? Have you obeyed the Lord’s command & identified publicly with Him? If not, why not make that decision today?