

Lesson

2

WATER BAPTISM

Baptism In Water

Now you have committed your life to Jesus Christ, you should be eager to make it known to others. Such acknowledgment is always a sure sign of the sincerity of your decision:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16)

Water baptism is one divinely appointed way by which you may openly declare your commitment to the risen Saviour - by making a public declaration of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 6:1-11). In the early church, it was considered essential to repent, be water baptised for the forgiveness of sins, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit:

“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let each of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38)

Baptism comes from the Greek word *‘baptiso’* and was in fairly regular usage when the Gospels were written. The word refers to something that has been *completely immersed* and changed by that immersion.

A good example of this is the dyeing of cloth. When being dyed, cloth is completely immersed and its colour is permanently changed. The Greeks would say that the cloth was *‘baptised’* in the dye. So it is with believers.

In New Testament times, when a Gentile became a Jew, apart from male circumcision, which was a more private affair, he signified his transfer of allegiance to the God of Israel by submitting himself publicly to water baptism. Therefore it was understandable that when Jews or Gentiles became Christians they should want to submit themselves to the waters of baptism.

Identification

There are some important truths concerning water baptism which are explained in part in Romans 6:3-14. It becomes clear from this Bible passage that one of the primary purposes of water baptism is identification with Jesus through his death, burial and resurrection.

The crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus broke the power of sin and death. As we identify with this fact in baptism we recognise that sin’s power is no longer at work within us.

“And in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Col 2:10-12)

Water baptism is an act which depicts the burying of our old way of life and our rising to a new life in Christ. It is actually “*circumcision made without hands*” (Col 2:10-12), pointing backwards to the work of God and forwards to the life of faith. It provides an opportunity for a new believer to make a public statement that a deep inner change has taken place. A real impartation of faith and understanding from God for the person being baptised can be expected as they are ministered to through the laying on of hands after rising out of the water.

Acts 8:38,39; Acts 16:33,34; Acts 19:5,6

Obedience

Jesus was not baptised as an outward evidence of repentance, for He had no sin to repent of. He was baptised that He might fulfil (or complete) all righteousness. He deliberately set the example and pattern for baptism, and all Christian believers are expected to follow him (Matt 3:11-17).

Jesus was always perfectly righteous. His righteousness was an inward condition of heart, which he always possessed. In allowing Himself to be baptised, Jesus “fulfilled all righteousness” by an act of outward obedience to the will of His heavenly Father. After doing so, He entered into His active life of ministry by which He ultimately fulfilled the plan of God.

Baptism is both a sign and a seal of a spiritual transaction (Rom 4:11). In the Old Testament this was by circumcision, but in the New Testament it is through water baptism.

When man rebelled against God, he chose to live according to his own strength and power. This attitude is called ‘*the flesh*’ by Paul in his epistles.

Separation

In the Old Testament men, in order to enter into God’s covenant, had to be circumcised. The act of circumcision typified a putting away of the attitudes of the flesh; and was prophetic of the work of separation God was to do in our lives in separating fleshly attitudes from spiritual ones.

The circumcision of the New Testament, as previously stated, is found in our obedience to God in water baptism:

Rom 2:28,29; 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6 & 6:15

It is important to note, however, that outward signs are not enough in themselves. While the very act of baptism *can* bring an impartation of life, it does not change our heart. It is our obedience and continuing faith in what God has done, and will do, that gives this act real meaning.

In the New Testament people were invariably baptised the same day, or soon after, that they believed as seen in:

Acts 2:41; 8:12,37,38; 16:33; 18:8; 19:4,5

Examples from Scripture of how believers were baptised by immersion in water can be found in:

Acts 2:41; 8:12,13,38; 9:18; 10:47,48; 16:15,33; 18:8; 19:5

Ministering Water Baptism

Ministering water baptism is a relatively simple process. It can be administered in a river, in the ocean, a swimming pool or even a bath (if nothing else is available). The truly important aspect is the faith and heart attitude of the person being baptised.

If you've not yet been baptised let this study be an encouragement to you. If you have let it remind you that what has taken place has significance for you as a believer. Water baptism is not an **option** - it is a **command**!

We have learned about **identification**, **obedience** and **separation** from the world. These are important truths which must be adhered to throughout our walk if we are to see and experience God's best, and fulfil His divine purpose for our lives.

Three Good Reasons

We are water-baptised as believers for three very good reasons:

1. Jesus was baptised by John as our example: **(Matt 3:13-17)**
2. Jesus commanded we be baptised and baptise others also: **(1 Pet 3:21,22; Matt 28:18-20)**
3. It was the practice of the disciples and the early church: **(Acts 2:37,38; 10:48)**

The only qualification required to follow our Lord Jesus through the waters of baptism, is that you fully repent (Acts 2:38), having believed and been convicted that this step is of God and for you personally (Mark 16:16). The Bible states in Acts 2:41, *"they that gladly received his (Peter's) word were baptised and there were added about three thousand souls that day."*

"And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"" (Acts 2:38)

"And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptised shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned"" (Mark 16:15-16)

Christening

If you were christened as a baby, we encourage you to be baptised again as an adult believer, something you were not capable of being as an infant. Water baptism is for those who have repented of their sins, believed on the Lord Jesus, and been saved. Paul even commanded those who had been baptised under the baptism of John to be re-baptised (Acts 19:1-5).

Some things you should know

Jesus Himself Was Baptised In Water

Although Jesus had no need to repent of sin, He was nevertheless baptised in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. He set an example for us to follow.

"And it came about in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptised by John in the Jordan" (Mark 1:9)

Jesus Commanded His Disciples To Baptise People

Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world, preach the gospel, baptising people in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that He commanded them to do.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20)

The Early Believers Were Told . . . To Be Baptised

After Jesus had ascended to the Father, and the Holy Spirit had come down on the day of Pentecost, many people were drawn into the kingdom by the power of God and the witness of Jesus' disciples. Peter told them when they asked what they must do to be saved that they were to: "repent, be **water baptised**, and then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

The Disciples Practised Water Baptism

Throughout the book of Acts we see the disciples witnessing in the name of Jesus and under the anointing power of the Holy Spirit. Everywhere they went they practised water baptism and commanded all new believers to follow Jesus' example for the forgiveness of sin (Acts 8:12; Acts 10:47,48)

The Apostle Paul Was Water Baptised

As soon as Paul realised He had been persecuting the Church of God he repented of his sin, was water baptised, and received the infilling 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 9:18).

Qualifications for Baptism

There are two simple qualifications for a person to be water baptised:

- REPENTANCE AND FAITH -

REPENTANCE refers to an inward change necessary for baptism. Baptism is an outward act which represents and inward work of the Spirit. Without true repentance baptism is a hollow and offensive to God (Matthew 3:7,8).

REPENTANCE happens when a person, sorry for their sins and disagreements with God, completely changes within, stops making excuses, turns from their sins and becomes totally obedient to God. This is also often referred to as being 'converted', 'born again', or 'saved'.

FAITH is necessary for baptism because the process is carried out in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If a person does not have faith in Jesus then, again, their baptism is a meaningless ritual.

Children and Infant Baptism

As repentance and faith are necessary requirements for water baptism, it is not practical to baptise infants in the biblical sense. Children, who have not yet faced life issues requiring a choice for or against God; do not understand enough to hold faith in Jesus in their own right.

However, we should, and do, dedicate our children to God. In the baby dedication service we commit parents to bringing their children up in the "discipline and instruction of the Lord". Those churches who practice infant baptism are doing much the same thing, but it isn't believers' baptism, having more to do with church traditions, and should not be considered the same thing by Bible-believing Christians.

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4)