

First Things First

A First Step Programme to help
you Grow in Christ

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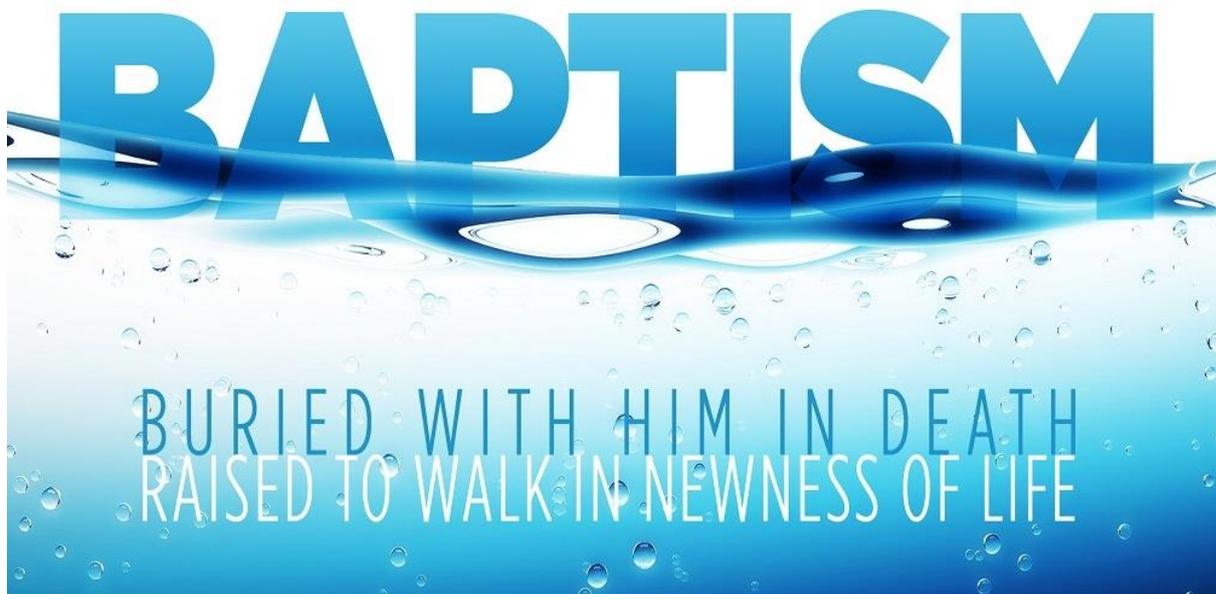
Lesson 7 – Water Baptism

Making disciples who make disciples

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WATER BAPTISM



When people become born again (saved, begin to follow Jesus) soon someone says: *"We are going to have a baptismal service. You need to be baptised"*. It is my observation that many people get baptised for the wrong reasons. Your friend asked you to and you didn't want to hurt their feelings. Some get baptised because someone says it's the next step, and they feel obligated to the person to do so. It's easier to go with the flow and be pleasing to people.

But the truth is there can often be many unspoken questions and thoughts in the minds of people when they are presented with the challenge of being baptised in water.

Such as:

- ▶ Do I really have to be baptised?
- ▶ What difference does it make anyway?
- ▶ Just as I thought, rules and regulations!
- ▶ I don't know if I really want to.
- ▶ Do I feel anything?
- ▶ My parents had me christened. Do I have to be baptised?

- ▶ It's so old-fashioned.
- ▶ I'm not ready; give me time.
- ▶ I'm following the Lord ok, why do I need to be baptised?
- ▶ I'm too young.
- ▶ I'm too old.
- ▶ I don't know enough about the Bible.
- ▶ Do I have to wear funny clothes?
- ▶ It will be so embarrassing. Etc, etc, etc.

We need to clearly understand that every time we make a decision to move ahead in God, we can expect opposition. It should not surprise us when we encounter obstacles and difficulties. From Jesus' own mouth:

John 10:10

'The thief's purpose is to steal, kill and to destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.'

Therefore, it doesn't take much discernment to realise that satan tries very, very hard to persuade us to not enter into the things that God has prepared for our good, like Water Baptism.

WHAT IS WATER BAPTISM?

Water Baptism is for all who choose to follow Jesus. It is a physical act expressing a spiritual truth. It is the full immersion in water after a person chooses to believe and receive Jesus Christ into their lives.

WHAT DOES THE WORD 'BAPTISM' MEAN?

The literal meaning of the Greek word "Baptizo" from which we get the English term "to baptise" is to dip, to plunge, to immerse. It was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of wine by dipping the cup into the bowl.

By definition the word means:

To put into or under water, to entirely immerse or submerge.

DOES BAPTISM SAVE ME?

The answer is **NO!**

The Bible declares:

Ephesians 2:8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. **9** Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. (NLT)

Faith in what Jesus did on our behalf saves us – not water baptism.

WHY SHOULD A PERSON BE WATER BAPTISED?

1. IT IS A COMMAND OF JESUS

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Matthew 28:19

2. BECAUSE JESUS HIMSELF WAS BAPTISED (Matthew 3:13-17)

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.

Matthew 3:16,17

3. IT WAS A FOUNDATIONAL TEACHING OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

Acts 2:41 And those who believed Peter were baptised - about 3,000 in all.

Acts 16:33 ... then immediately he and all his family were baptised.

The normal pattern in the New Testament was Baptism took place as soon as possible after a person received Christ as Saviour and Lord. In many instances Baptism was entered into *immediately* after somebody believed.

4. WATER BAPTISM SYMBOLISES WASHING OR CLEANSING

Acts 22:16 And now, why delay? Go and be baptised, and be cleansed from your sins, calling on the Name of the Lord

This is only a symbol. We are already washed clean by the blood of Jesus (Revelation 1:5) and we are cleansed by the Word of God (John 15:3).

5. IT IS AN OUTWARD CONFESSION OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED WITHIN.

It expresses our willingness to identify with Jesus. (Romans 6:1-11)

THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF WATER BAPTISM

When a person is being baptised, they are identifying with Christ's **death, burial and resurrection**. Baptism is an outward demonstration of what has already taken place inwardly.

KEYS: IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST
SEPARATION FROM MY OLD SELF-CENTRED LIFE

Baptism is a picture of what happens as a result of the Christian's union with Christ. Through **faith** and **obedience** we are **UNITED** with Christ.

- ▶ When you go into the water..... it symbolises Jesus on the cross
- ▶ When you go under the water..... it symbolises Jesus' death on the cross
- ▶ When you come up out of the water..... it symbolises Jesus' resurrected life

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Baptism is like a burial

When Christ died on the Cross, our old nature died, or was crucified with Him, and we, through the new birth, are given a new life and nature. God therefore buries the old nature as we go through the waters of baptism and we come out of the waters with a new power in our spirit to live a life of righteousness unto God.

You now walk in newness of life. The old life has been left behind as you rise from the waters of baptism.

Romans 6:11

Now you live as God intended, through the resurrection power of God in us.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT BAPTISM

ROMANS 6:2-10

verse 2 *“Of course not! Should we keep on sinning when we don’t have it?*

verse 3 *For sin’s power over us was broken when we became Christians and were baptised to become a part of Jesus Christ through his death the power of your sinful nature was shattered*

verse 4 *Your old sin-loving nature was buried with him by baptism when he died, and when God the Father with glorious power, brought him back to life again, you were given his wonderful new life to enjoy.*

verse 5 *For you have become a part of him, and so you died with him, so to speak, when he died; and now you share his new life, and shall rise as he did.*

verse 6 *Your old evil desires were nailed to the cross with him; that part of you that loves to sin was crushed and fatally wounded, so that your sin-loving body is no longer under sin’s control, no longer needs to be a slave to sin;*

verse 7 *for when you are deadened to sin you are freed from all it’s allure and it’s power over you.*

verse 8 *And since your old sin-loving nature 'died' with Christ, we know that you will share his new life.*

verse 9 *Christ rose from the dead and will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him.*

verse 10 *He died once for all to end sin's power, but now he lives forever in unbroken fellowship with God"*

If we think of our old sinful life as dead and buried, we have a powerful motive to resist sin. Not wanting the ugly old life to come back to power again, we can consciously choose to treat it as if it were dead. We can enjoy our new life in Christ because we have joined him in this death and resurrection. Our evil desires and bondages to sin and our love of sin died with him

Romans 6:11 *"So look upon your old sin nature as dead and unresponsive to sin. Instead be alive to God, alert to him through Christ Jesus our Lord"*

ANOTHER PICTURE OF BAPTISM

Reference story found in EXODUS 14: 5-31

Another beautiful picture of water baptism is found in an Old Testament story. The Israelites had been held in bondage in Egypt far many years. They had been enslaved to Pharaoh, the cruel king.

When the Lord brought them forth from bondage in the Exodus, He parted the Red Sea before them. The water was like a wall on either side of them as the Israelites passed through to the other side. Pharaoh and his armies, who were pursuing Israel, followed them into the water. The Lord, however, caused the water to roll back, together cutting the Egyptians off and causing them to drown.

The ones who held Israel in bondage and slavery in Egypt who were pursuing her in her new relationship with God, were buried in the waters of the Red Sea. Israel

was left alone on the other side of the water, free from slavery, free to be servants of their God. If the sea had not buried the Egyptians, the threat of slavery would have followed them into the promised land. Not only would Israel have had to fight her enemies in the promised land, but she would have had to fight the one who was trying to bring her back into bondage.

So too, Christ's death – was the death of our old life in Egypt, where we were slaves to sin. His burial was just like the burying of the Egyptian soldiers in the red sea. As we go down into the waters of Baptism, we are reminding ourselves that Jesus defeated death and sin when his body was buried and entombed. Finally, when we rise out of the water, we are reminding ourselves we are free from our enemies because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our enemies cannot follow us because they are drowned and dead and buried behind us. We can now march on into the promised land that Jesus has prepared for our lives.

WHO MAY BE BAPTISED?

- ▶ Only those who sincerely **BELIEVE** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
(Mark 16:15-16)

- ▶ Only those who have truly **REPENTED** of their sin and turned in faith to Jesus Christ, receiving Him as personal Saviour. (Acts 2:37-38)

- ▶ Only those who are sincerely **WILLING TO BECOME HIS DISCIPLES**, that is, willing to obey His commandments, and acknowledge that He really is Lord of their lives. (Luke 9:23)

WHAT ABOUT INFANT BAPTISM / SPRINKLING?

An infant cannot meet any of the requirements for baptism:

- to believe
- to repent
- to become a disciple
- to answer God with a good conscience.

Parents desire their child acknowledged by God. What do we do?

CHILD DEDICATION

We believe the scriptural pattern in the New Testament is to do for your child what the parents of Jesus did for him. They did not have him baptised but brought him to the house of the Lord and they presented him to the Lord. When the mothers of Israel brought their children to Jesus and wanted the blessing of God upon their children, Jesus did not baptise those children. He took them up in His arms and blessed them.

CONCLUSION

Water baptism is not just a form of meaningless religious ceremony. It is tremendously powerful and something every believer needs to submit to. We see that Jesus did not tell his disciples to make members - he told them to make disciples.

He told them that once a person came to the place where they were willing to submit to discipleship the outward act that demonstrates that inward willingness - **THE SEAL** of his or her faith, would be baptism in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **THE OUTWARD EVIDENCE OF DISCIPLESHIP TO FOLLOWING JESUS ... IS BAPTISM.**

MEMORY VERSE

Romans 6:11

Likewise, you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin,
but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

QUESTIONS

1. Why should we be baptised? Give five reasons:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

What does the Bible say:

2. When believers are baptised they are following Jesus in what experience of His life? Romans 6:4 _____

3. If we have been united with Him in His death, what should we also be united with him in? Romans 6:5 _____

4. For what purpose was our old sin-loving nature crucified with Christ?
Romans 6:6 _____

5. When were those who heard Peter's message baptised?
Acts 2:41 _____

6. What are three requirements of Baptism?
Acts 2:37-38 _____
Luke 9:23 _____
Mark 16:15-16 _____

NOTES & QUESTIONS