**BAPTISM**

# “Is Baptism really all that important?”

Virtually every Christian denomination in existence teaches some sort of baptism as part of their doctrine, and the diversities in the teachings are wide. The Biblical Greek word ‘Baptizo’ literally means: ‘*To be fully consumed*,’ ‘*immersed in,’ ‘dunk, dip’* or ‘*to overwhelm.*’ The Biblical Greek word for sprinkle is ‘antéxomai.’ It is never used in the context of Baptism, but rather in the context of sprinkling blood on an altar or salt on an offering. So, when the Bible uses the word ‘Baptize’ it suggests clearly that one is to be fully immersed and not sprinkled.

Most people only think of *water baptism* when referring to Baptism. Yet, there are several *types* of baptisms mentioned in the Bible. For example:

1. Jesus’ death on the cross. When two young disciples naively asked Jesus if they could sit on his right and left hand one day in Heaven…

But Jesus said to them, “You don’t know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink? Are you able to be baptized with the baptism of suffering I must be baptized with?” **– Mark 10:38**

So, we see here that according to the Bible, ‘*baptized’* could refer to being *completely consumed* by suffering or emersed in an *overwhelming* trial.

1. It could also refer to: A believer receiving the Holy Spirit at conversion

John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” – **Acts 1:5**

1. Finally, the Bible uses the term in reference to: Judgement for unbelievers

“I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire.” – **Matthew 3:11-12**

As Judge of all the living and the dead, Jesus *baptizes* the Saved with the Holy Spirit and also *baptizes* unbelievers with the fires of Hell.

Although this lesson’s focus is “*water baptism,”* from the above passages we get the clear idea that the word Baptism refers to something that is ‘*all consuming*.’ Therefore, from the outset we understand that Water Baptism is by ***full immersion***. In other words, it is all-consuming and overwhelming, not sprinkling.

**1. Why does God instruct us to be baptized?**

A. Baptism is the *first act of* ***obedience*** in service to GOD.

B. Jesus set the example Himself by submitting to baptism ***before*** He began His public ministry.

* *Matthew 3:13-17;*
* *Mark 1:9-11;*
* *Luke 3:21-22*

**13**Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. **14**But John tried to talk him out of it. “I am the one who needs to be baptized by you,” he said, “so why are you coming to me?” **15**But Jesus said, *“It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.”* So John agreed to baptize him.

**16**After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. **17**And a voice from heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”– **Matthew 3:13-17**

In *Matthew 3:13-15,* it is clear that Jesus was baptized in ***obedience*** to God’s plan.

In verse 15, He said, *“It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.”*

The original Greek (in which the New Testament was written) says: *“Permit it now, it is right to fulfil all righteousness!”*

That’s why Jesus Christ is the perfect sacrifice and Atonement for sin - Everything He did was ‘Righteous’ – *perfect obedience* to what God required.

This point of ***submission*** and ***obedience*** is the single most important thing to realize concerning baptism.

**Quick Note:**

The purpose of John’s water Baptism was in anticipation of Jesus the Christ. It was to prepare hearts in repentance, and to eventually reveal the Messiah (God’s Anointed One) to the people of Israel.

This happened at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry on earth when He was 30 years old. When Jesus was Baptized by John, those around Him witnessed heaven open, heard God speak, and saw the Holy Spirit descending (Anointing) upon Jesus.

The purpose of our Baptism is **different** from John’s, since our water baptism comes *after* Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.

But at this point we need to understand that both our water baptism and John’s baptism of Jesus are acts of ***submission*** and ***obedience*** to God’s will – therefore Jesus sets an excellent example for all believers to follow!

Let’s now take a look at some other Bible characters who submitted to baptism after they heard the message of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. All of them were baptized soon after they believed.

1. The **Ethiopian** eunuch.

**29**The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

**30**Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

**31**“How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

**32**This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
    and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
    so he did not open his mouth.
**33**In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
    Who can speak of his descendants?
    For his life was taken from the earth.”

**34**The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” **35**Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

**36**As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” **[37]** **38**And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. **39**When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. – **Acts 8:29-39**

1. The Apostle **Paul**.

Paul, also pronounced Saul (in Hebrew) hated Christ and the church. He was trying to eradicate the church from the planet. Yet one day, Jesus spoke to him in a blinding light from heaven. He was struck blind for three days. He hadn’t had anything to eat during that time. Then a man named Ananias prayed for him…

**17**Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” **18**Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. *He got up and was baptized*, **19**and after taking some food, he regained his strength. – **Acts 9:18**

Did you notice that? He hadn’t had food for 3 days. Yet he got up and was baptized first, then only did he eat some food.

1. The Philippian **jailer** and his household.

Paul, now a Christian, went around preaching the gospel. He and a friend Silas, were arrested for doing this. Whist in jail, God brought a miraculous earth quake that caused the doors to burst open and their chains to break free from the stocks. The jailer whose life depended on keeping the prisoner’s captive, was about to commit suicide, because he assumed the prisoners would run free and he would be executed for it. But the Christian prisoners didn’t flee. Rather they stayed and reassured him not to fall on his own sword.

Overtaken by their kindness and God’s power so evidently shown by the earth quake, he asked them how to be saved.

**29**The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. **30**He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

**31**They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” **32**Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. **33**At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; *then immediately he and all his household were baptized*. - **Acts 16:29-33**

That very night, they were baptized.

Now, although Baptism is an important first step of obedience, as we have just seen. It is imperative that you understand what Baptism means and if you are a Biblical candidate. Don’t just do it for the sake of doing it or feel pressed into it by someone else. Understand the commitment you are making and stay committed.

In the days of the bible, it was actually dangerous to be a Christian. Getting baptized would clearly identify a person as a Christ follower and they would be targeted. So the fact that these biblical characters were baptized soon after their conversion shows their commitment to Christ. They were not just doing it because their friends or family members were doing it. Some of them were risking their lives.

These days in our culture unfortunately, like many marriages, we rush into this covenant and then break our vows of ‘till death do us part,’ because we were just infatuated with an idea or person rather than truly committed.

In fact, in our culture there are twice as many people who don’t attend church anymore who are baptized than those who do. In other words, two thirds fall away. This happens because people get baptized because of enthusiasm or prompted by parents or friends, when they are too young or perhaps not even saved.

Salvation is between an individual and God, and so is baptism.

Our next two lessons speak to this *falling away* of those who were never really saved to begin with. But that’s for next time. As for *you*: if you or someone close to you is thinking about Baptism, make sure that you or they have truly *committed your lives to Jesus Christ*, and then go for it, take the first step of obedience – Baptism!

**2. What is the purpose of Baptism?**

As mentioned in the introduction: Several types of baptisms are mentioned in the Bible. In each case, **physical** baptism is a picture of a **spiritual** truth. The important point to consider is the ***picture*** portrayed by baptism.

B*. Romans 6:1-7* (specifically verses 3-4) show the two purposes of baptism.

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? **2**By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ***3****Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?****4****We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

**5**For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. **6**For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— **7**because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. – **Romans 6:1-7 NIV**

Water Baptism pictures the ***death****,* ***burial*** and ***resurrection*** of Jesus Christ.

It is a **public** testimony of the new convert’s **identification** with Jesus Christ through the *death, burial* and *resurrection*, which is how they were saved. It identifies the new believer with the Lord Jesus Christ.

**3. Who should be baptized?**

1. It is clear from the Bible that everyone who was baptized, first *Repented* and *believed* the gospel.

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. – **Acts 2:38**

Over and over again in the book of Acts especially, it states that someone ‘believed’ or ‘accepted the message’ and was baptized.

**B.** The requirements for baptism are the requirements for salvation found in *Romans 10:9-10.*

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. – **Romans 10:9-10**

 1. Heart **belief** in Jesus Christ as Lord as Savior.

 2. **Confession** that He is Lord and Savior.

C. There are no cases of baptism in the Bible of anyone *but* born again,**believers!**

Therefore, if you are hoping that baptism will save you or someone else, you will be wrong. Baptism does NOT save, it’s an act of obedience for the saved. So, don’t force yourself or anyone to be baptized so that they will be saved. Yet, if you are born again, what’s holding you back?

D. Here are some other instances of baptism *after* salvation:

1. *Acts 8:12 (Samaritan believers)*

But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. - **Acts 8:12**

1. *Acts 18:8 (Corinthian believers)*

**8**Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.**- Acts 18:8**

**4. What is the method of baptism?**

1. The account of Philip and the Ethiopian, gives a clear example.

**36**As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” **[37] 38**And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch *went down into the water* and Philip *baptized* him. **39**When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. – **Acts 8:36-39**

Notice that they were standing in water, then Philip “Baptized” (fully immersed, dunked, dipped) the Eunuch into the water, and then they came up out of the water.

As seen previously, baptism is a picture of (1) ***death****, (2)* ***burial*** and (3) ***resurrection****.*

The water is not poured over someone, but rather like *death* and *burial*, we sink [fully immersed] into the water only then to come back up from below the surface and *rise* up out of it. It’s a picture of new life!

We are clearly and often taught to “repent, believe and be BAPTIZED” in the Bible, as a clear symbol of our identification with Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. The only way to bury someone is to put them completely underground. The biblical method of baptism is complete immersion. No one in the Bible was ever sprinkled because no one can be buried by sprinkling a little dirt on them.

**5. How important is it to be baptized?**

It is ***not*** essential for Salvation. *Ephesians 2:8-9* makes it clear a person is saved ***by grace*** through *faith* without **works**, including baptism.

**8**For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9**not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**- Ephesians 2:8-9**

Yet, the next verse says *we will do works* that God has prepared for us, after we are saved!

**10**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *for good works*, which God prepared beforehand, that we should *walk in them*. – **Ephesians 2:10**

Baptism should be the first of these *good works* of God that we *walk in.* Therefore, baptism *is* essential for ***service*** and ***spiritual*** *growth*.

Before Jesus ascended up into heaven, He gave His disciples an imperative command that we all need to follow, found in *Matthew 28:19-20.* It’s known as the ‘Great Commission’

**19**Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, *baptizing them* in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. **20**Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” *-* **Matthew 28:19-20.**

Do you see how essential Baptism is? It’s an integral part of Jesus Christ’s ‘Great Commission.’

If anyone desires to follow Jesus Christ, they must be willing to submit to the ***first*** *act of obedience*.

If a person refuses to obey the Lord in the ***first***point, who is to say, they will obey Him in future points.

Remember what Jesus said when John the Baptist tried to deter him from being Baptized?

But Jesus said, “It should be done, for *we must carry out all that God requires*.” So, John agreed to baptize him*. -***Matthew 3:15**

**6. Where should I be baptized?**

Since baptism is a ***public*** confession of your faith in Jesus Christ, it must be public. It may be in front the local church in a baptistery or in a river, lake, swimming pool or even the ocean. All of which are fine. The Lord Jesus Christ was baptized in the riverJordan. The actual *place* of baptism is not important. The actual ***act*** of *public testimony* of your *identification* with the **Lord Jesus Christ** before others, is the important point.

Since it is a public testimony, often the candidate will be asked to share a brief testimony and/or answer the following questions honestly:

1. Do you acknowledge that you are a sinner and in need of God’s magnificent grace?
2. Do you acknowledge that Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection are the only way to save your soul and give you brand new life?
3. Do you acknowledge that by your identification with Christ today, by faith in His Death, Burial and Resurrection, that you show you have died to sin and have been raised to newness of life in Jesus Christ?
4. Is it your intention to leave your old life once led by the desire to sin and have entered a new life led by God’s Holy Spirit – and that you will commit yourself to live your life no longer for yourself, but unto the glory of God?

If you can answer in the affirmative to these questions, then *you are ready for Baptism*.

Key scripture passages you should be familiar with from this lesson:

Matthew 3:13-17; Acts 8:36-39; Romans 6:1-7

NOTE: There is a variety of teaching among Christian churches concerning baptism. The Christian should be aware of some of them. Some are outright *Heretical* (a corrupted and false gospel), and others are secondary errors which shouldn’t stand in the way of Christian fellowship. For example:

1. Some teach Baptism saves a person, therefore without Baptism you’re not a Christian

*(This is* ***heresy****, a false gospel. This idea is ‘works based,’ contrary to the Bible’s teaching. It is not true Christianity).*

1. Some teach Baptism by being sprinkled as the same as immersion. As we have seen this is not accurate. Yet it is a secondary issue, it doesn’t change the gospel and we can therefore still enjoy fellowship with Christians who are sprinkled rather than fully immersed. As for you though, get *Baptizo-ed!*

1. Finally, some churches believe babies should be baptized into God’s family, or into the local Church. It’s called *Paedobaptism* or Infant Baptism [Greek: *Pais* meaning ‘child’]. This is not mandated by scripture and is therefore a man-made tradition. There are no babies baptized in the Bible, only people who have made a clear profession of faith – babies are too young to do that!

*Once again though, not all churches who practice Infant Baptism are heretical, since what one believes about Salvation is the most important point. There are some biblically conservative denominations that perform infant baptism. These churches associate infant baptism with the old testament’s 8th day after birth ceremony of circumcision. Although this is not prescribed in scripture for New Testament believers, it is not a False gospel, because they are not prescribing it as the way to get to heaven. However, those who practice this and do teach that it’s a way to get into Heaven, are Heretical (a corrupted false gospel). Stay away from those churches.*

*Always remember, it is what we believe about the Gospel (how one is saved), that is primary. Everything else is secondary. Yet, you certainly want to be in a church that teaches the truth and not tradition.*

Write down any questions you have concerning the subjects in this lesson.