

## WATER BAPTISM

### I. WHY SHOULD FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST BE BAPTIZED IN WATER?

- A. Christ's example. Even though Christ was himself the Son of God, He chose to be baptized in water to set His seal of approval upon the ministry of John the Baptist. John's ministry called the people to "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (**Matthew 3:2**). The people were baptized as a public demonstration of their repentance and return to serving God (**Matthew 3:6**). Because Christ was sinless (**Hebrews 4:15; IICor. 5:21**), His baptism did not mean repentance from sin, but rather it served to set an example for the people since Christ knew John's message was from God. (See **Matthew 3:13-15, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-23**)



- B. Christ's command. In giving the Church its great commission to "make disciples of all the nations", Christ made it clear that He expected new disciples to be baptized in water.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." (**Matt. 28:19**)

- C. The practice of the disciples. While Jesus was still on earth, people who decided to follow Him were baptized in water.

"When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee." (**John 4:1-3**)

- D. The practice of the early Church. The record of the early Church, makes it clear that water baptism for new disciples was both taught and practiced.

"And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let each of you be baptized 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**)  
(See also, **Acts 8:12 & 16:14-15**)

### II. WHAT IS WATER BAPTISM?

Our English word "baptize" comes from the Greek word "baptizo" which means "to immerse or dip something in a liquid". This meaning is seen in three passages which make no reference to Christian baptism, but use the verb "bapto" from which "baptizo" comes:

- A. **Luke 16:24** "And He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to **dip** the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame'."
- B. **John 13:26** "Jesus answered, 'It is he to whom I shall give this morsel when I have **dipped** it.' So when He had dipped the morsel, He gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot."
- C. **Rev. 19:13** "He is clad in a robe **dipped** in blood, and the name by which He is called is The Word of God."

### III. WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL METHOD OF WATER BAPTISM?

- A. In the New Testament, people were baptized by being completely immersed in water. John baptized people by immersing them right in the Jordan River. Speaking of Jesus' baptism, **Mark 1:10** says, "And immediately coming up out of the water." When Philip baptized the eunuch, "they both went down into the water..." (**Acts 8:35-38**).
- B. In the New Testament. The New Testament pattern was for people to hear the Gospel, repent and believe, and then be, baptized in water
- C. Water baptism usually took place immediately upon conversion. For example:
  - 1. Philip at Samaria (**Acts 8:12**)
  - 2. The Ethiopian Eunuch (**Acts 8:36-18**)
  - 3. The Apostle Paul (**Acts 9:18**)
  - 4. Cornelius' House (**Acts 10:46-48**)
  - 5. Lydia and her house at Philippi (**Acts 16:14-15**)
  - 6. The Philippian Jailer and his house (**Acts 16:33**)
  - 7. The Converts at Corinth (**Acts 18:8**)
  - 8. The Converts at Ephesus (**Acts 19:4-5**)

### IV. WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF WATER BAPTISM?

- A. Union with Christ.  
When a person repents of sin, believes in Christ, and invites Him to become their Lord and Savior, they are united to Christ. They

become a member of the Church, the Body of Christ and now have the spiritual position described in the New Testament as being "in Christ" (**Phil. 1:1, Col. 1:2**). This is what Paul is describing when he writes "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into (immersed, placed in) one body" (**I Cor. 12:13**). Again he says in **Romans 6:3**, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" Immersion in water is not referred to here but a union with Jesus Christ that has a life-changing effect. Now, He lives in our lives and is at work in our hearts to make us more and more like Jesus. Therefore, Paul can say

"Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; and behold, new things have come." (**II Cor. 5:17**)

#### B. Death to Sin and Alive to Christ.

1. One of the results of our union with Jesus Christ is that we are dead to sin (**Romans 6:1-2**). This does not mean that we can no longer sin, but that we are no longer in bondage to sin (**Romans 6:7**). We now have an entirely new potential in living; we "...walk in newness of life." (**Romans 6:4**) This death to sin happened in the person of our substitute, Jesus Christ, when He died on the cross for us. Jesus died to defeat sin's power in the lives of those who would later become His followers. The Bible says "... our old self was crucified with Him." (**Romans 6:6**).
2. Because I have been united to Christ by faith. I have become alive to God in Christ Jesus (**Romans 6:11**). Instead of obeying the ways of sin, I am now able to obey the ways of God in my life.
3. This death to sin's power in our lives is not automatic. We are still tempted and may even sin though we are Christians. The difference is that now, by faith, you can "consider yourselves dead to sin..." (**Romans 6:11**) and "...now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you deserve your benefit resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life." (**Romans 6:22**).

#### C. Identification with Christ.

1. Water baptism is a public symbolic way for us to identify with Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.  
"Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have

become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." (Romans 6:4-5)

2. It should be remembered that water baptism is an outward symbolic ceremony that points to an inward change of heart. If that inward change is not there (that is, if we have not accepted Christ as our personal Savior and Lord), then the outward ceremony has no more spiritual meaning than taking a bath.
3. Water baptism pictures or symbolizes our entrance into the Lord's Church.
4. Baptism is, in a sense, very much like a marriage ceremony. Just as marriage is a public declaration before witnesses of our death to all other potential lovers and the establishment of a new and permanent union with the Lord Jesus Christ. So baptism is a public declaration before witnesses to the fact of our death to our love affair with sin and the establishment of a new and permanent union with Jesus.

#### **V. WHAT IS THE OLD TESTAMENT EQUIVALENT OF WATER BAPTISM?**

The Old Testament equivalent is circumcision. Abraham was called by God and brought into right-standing with God when he was 75 years old. Abraham walked with God for almost 25 years and was called the "friend of God". When Abraham was 99 years old, however, God returned to him and confirmed the covenant with him by the sign of circumcision. Even though Abraham had been the friend of God, he had to receive the circumcision of the flesh.

The word circumcision means "the cutting around". When spoken of as a physical rite in the Bible, it refers to the cutting off or around of the foreskin in males. God instituted it as a token of the covenant between Himself and Abraham (Genesis 17:10-11).

In the New Testament, it was revealed to Paul that this circumcision of the flesh, symbolizing the covenant with God, was now symbolized by water baptism.

"And in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of 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. 2:11-12)

#### **VI. IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE BAPTIZED AND NOT HAVE A CHANGE OF HEART?**

Yes. A valid baptism is when a person's heart has been prepared by the Holy Spirit, he has confessed his sin, and has a desire to submit to the Lordship of Christ. Otherwise, the result will be merely the performance of a dead ritual, and not a true spiritual experience.

#### **VII. ARE THERE THOSE WHO NEED TO BE RE-BAPTIZED?**

Yes. There are those who were baptized as infants or were baptized as adults without the knowledge of what was actually necessary for true conversion. There was no belief, confession or repentance.

#### **VIII. SHOULD INFANTS BE BAPTIZED?**

No. Infants should not be baptized because they cannot experience faith, nor can they repent, both of which are absolutely necessary for water baptism to be valid. "He who has believed and has not been baptized shall be saved."

**(Mark 16:16)** "Repent, and let each of you be baptized." **(Acts 2:38)**

