

4

RESTORING THE CHURCH - PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH LIFE

Water Baptism

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this lesson is to bring us to an understanding that water baptism is the first step of obedience for the new believer and symbolizes a washing away of former sins and an identification with death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This step is an essential part of the proper Christian birth.

KEY VERSE:

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: 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. Col 2:11-12 (KJV)

I. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE WORD “BAPTIZE”?

The English word “baptize” is transliterated from the Greek word, “baptizo” which simply means “to dip, to overwhelm, to plunge, to submerge.” It actually means “to cause something to be dipped or **immersed** beneath the surface of water or some other fluid.”

If this word was truly translated, rather than transliterated, the command in the New Testament would read “*go ye therefore and teach all nations immersing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*” **Matthew 28:19**

II. WHY IS THE BELIEVER TO BE BAPTIZED?

- A. Because Jesus commanded that believers to be baptized (Mark 16:16; Matthew 28:19).

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 14:15

- B. Because the apostles commanded it. (Acts 2:37-39, 10:44-48).
C. Because Jesus was baptized to fulfil all righteousness (Matthew 3:13-17).
D. Because we validate our faith by our obedience to the Word of God (James 2:17, 18).

Water baptism is an essential part of obedience; it is not optional. To refuse water baptism is to live in disobedience to the revealed Word of God.

III. WHAT ARE THE PREREQUISITES FOR WATER BAPTISM?

Baptism in and of itself cannot save anyone. It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as one's saviour that brings an individual to salvation. Therefore, baptism is only effectual for those who meet certain requirements. Those receiving baptism must have already laid the first two foundation stones in the Christian experience, namely:

- A. **Repentance** (Acts 2:38). This means one is not baptized merely because he wants to become part of a church group.
- B. **Faith** (Acts 8:12, 10:47). This means that one must be old enough to know what they are doing.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Mark 16:16

IV. WHAT TAKES PLACE IN WATER BAPTISM?

We are baptized simply because it is commanded by God to do so. However, as we respond to the Word of the Lord in faith, some very important things will take place. Every person who goes into the waters of baptism should expect to experience the following, by faith:

- A. To be **identified** with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5, 11; Colossians 2:12; 3:1).

In baptism, the old man is crucified. In immersion, the old man is buried. But in rising out of the water, the new man rises to walk in **newness** of life.

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.

Romans 6:4

- B. A new **victory** over life-dominating sins (Romans 6:11-18).
- C. A spiritual **cleansing** and renewal (Acts 22:16). The water itself affects no cleansing, but as we respond in faith to the commands of Christ the Holy Spirit works in connection with the God-ordained means.
- D. An identification with **the name** of the Lord (Acts 2:38; 8:12, 16; 10:48).
- a. Kenyon puts it this way, "Baptism in this sense is equivalent to marriage. When the wife puts on marriage she takes her husband's name and enters into her husband's possessions and has legal right to her husband's home. When the believer is baptized into the name of Christ, he puts on all that is in Christ. He not only puts on the name but takes his legal rights and privileges in Christ."
- E. A circumcision of the **heart** (Colossians 2:11, 12).

V. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART IN CONNECTION WITH WATER BAPTISM?

In the Old Testament, God gave a covenant to Abraham in which He required those who were participating in the covenant to accept and experience the sign and seal of the covenant which was a natural circumcision of the flesh (Genesis 17: 10-14). In the New Testament, God has taken that seal and made it a spiritual requirement. In water baptism, we receive the spiritual experience of circumcision of the heart to which the natural rite pointed. The natural rite consisted of four elements that are all symbolic of something that takes place in the circumcision of the heart.

- A. The cutting away of flesh. In baptism we **put-off** the old man (Colossians 2:11).

- B. The shedding of blood. In baptism a death to **self** is to take place (Romans 6: 3).
- C. The eighth day. Natural circumcision took place on the eighth day, which is symbolic of new beginning and resurrection life (1 Peter 3:20, 21). In baptism we experience **a new beginning** and newness of life.
- D. The new name given. In baptism we have **a new name** invoked over us: the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

VI. HOW SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

- A. Scriptural baptism is baptism by **immersion** (See Question 1).
- B. Baptism is to be administered in **the name** of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus commanded that baptism was to be administered in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost (Matt 28:19, 20), which name the disciples came to see, on the basis of Jesus' ascension and exaltation (Acts 2:33-36), was the Lord Jesus Christ. When they baptized, they baptized in this manner (Acts 2:36-41; 8:12-16; 35-38; 10:48).

VII. WHAT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BAPTIZED?

Even as the waters of the Red Sea served as a separation between the Egyptian life of slavery and the land of God's provision for the Israelites of old, so the waters of baptism should serve as a permanent landmark in the life of the believer. Baptism should signal three things:

- A. **A farewell** to the old way of life. This means a willingness to sever all connections with ungodliness and those who live in ungodliness.
- B. **A new standard** of living. This means that from baptism on, there will be a determination to live by the principles of God's kingdom.
- C. **A disciple** of Jesus. This means that the person who is baptized should see himself as a follower, a student and a witness to others of all that Jesus stand for.

CONCLUSION:

It is very obvious that baptism is more than just an external experience in the Christian life. God wants to do something lasting and permanent at this special time. Sad to say, many people go down into the waters of baptism dry and come up wet and that is the extent of their experience. But if each individual would respond in faith to all that God says is available in baptism, baptism will be one of the greatest experiences of their Christian walk.