

Water Baptism

Introduction

There is only one word used in the Greek for "baptism" which makes for an easy word study.

Baptizo - to dip in liquid; to immerse or submerge; to bury.

The word is generally used in scripture in conjunction with water. It is used to denote a literal physical baptism in actual water which is the subject of this lesson. *Baptizo* is also used to denote a spiritual baptism in the life-giving "water" of the Holy Ghost. We will discuss receiving the Holy Ghost in detail in the next lesson. Both baptisms are commanded in scripture for salvation:

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Mark 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

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

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 22:16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

1 Peter 3:21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Why Must We Be Baptized?

To study the reasons for Water Baptism thoroughly would take a book and more time than we have here. Basically, what Water Baptism accomplishes in our lives can be expressed in 6 categories:

1. Water Baptism is for the washing away of sins. - In Acts 2:38, Peter said to "be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *for the forgiveness of your sins.*" Likewise Acts 22:16 states that when we are baptized we "wash away our sins." As we can see from the scriptures from our last lesson and the scriptures we just read, Repentance and Baptism are both closely related with God forgiving our sins. Paul listed a long list of sins to the Corinth church and then told them:

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1 Cor 6:11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

They were washed of their sins by water baptism in the name of Jesus!

2. Water Baptism is a cleansing of our conscience. - When our sins are washed away and God no longer holds us accountable for our past sins, we can have a clean conscience toward Him! This accounts for the "clean feeling" when a person is baptized.

1 Peter 3:21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Heb 9:14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Notice how this scripture equates our cleansing of conscience with the blood of Jesus. This is one of many scriptures which show that it is the blood of Jesus Christ that is being applied to our lives at water baptism that brings the washing and cleansing.

3. Water Baptism is a burial. - If we are to obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ, then we must identify with His death, burial, and resurrection. How can we die with Christ, be buried with Christ, and be resurrected with Christ? We die to our past sins when we repent (I Corinthians 15:31). We will talk about how that we are resurrected to a new man through the infilling of the Holy Ghost in the next lesson. We are buried with Christ when we are baptized:

Rom 6:3-4 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Col 2:12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

When someone is properly buried, their body is completely covered up and a name is placed upon their grave. For us to be buried with Christ properly, we must go completely under the water (fully immersed) and have His name called out over us.

4. Water Baptism is a part of being "born again." Not only is water baptism the burial of our sinful past, but it is also part of a process that causes us to become a "new creature in Christ Jesus."

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John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Titus 3:5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

The Greek word translated here as "Regeneration" literally translated means "rebirth" - Water Baptism is an essential part of the process of being "born again."

5. Water Baptism is taking upon ourselves the name of Christ. - Part of the salvation process is being "adopted" into the family of God (see Galatians 4:1-7). We take on the family name of Jesus at Water Baptism.

Gal 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Rom 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

6. Water Baptism is a spiritual circumcision. - Male circumcision was commanded by God to Abraham (Genesis 17:10-14) and to Moses (Leviticus 12:3) as a part of being saved before Calvary. God wanted a mark in their flesh to signify that they were in a covenant relationship with Him. Physical circumcision is no longer a requirement for salvation, but spiritual circumcision is. We are spiritually circumcised through water baptism:

Col 2:11-12 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

At water baptism, our sinful past is removed from our spiritual man never to return again. Our sinful man that was alive dies so that we can become a new creation in the Spirit. All of this is accomplished by the blood of Jesus being applied to our lives at water baptism! Our spiritual man forever bears the mark of a covenant relationship that we have chosen to enter with God.

The interesting point about circumcision is that a person was always named at the time of their circumcision. When Abram was circumcised, God changed his name to Abraham. If circumcision was performed at birth, then the child received his name at the time of his circumcision. When we are spiritually circumcised through Water Baptism, we also take on a new name, the name of Jesus Christ!

How and When Must We Be Baptized?

In the life of Christ and the Early Apostolic Church, people were only baptized by full

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immersion in water. The very word used for baptism means to fully immerse or cover with water. The Day of Pentecost happened in 30 A.D. and the last book of the New Testament was written in ~100 A.D. but the first mention of two false teachings on Water Baptism, infant baptism and sprinkling, did not come about until 210 A.D. and 250 A.D. respectively. That's over 150 years after the founding of the Apostolic Church. *There is absolutely no record of anyone ever being baptized as an infant or sprinkled in scripture!* They are later, man-made doctrines that contradicts scripture. Let's take them one by one:

Infant baptism - is invalid because it denies the role of faith in water baptism. Jesus clearly said in Mark 16:16a that "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved..." For a person to get baptized in Jesus' name in water and yet not believe that God is washing their sins away does absolutely no good. If I went to the park pool on a hot day and yelled out "in Jesus' name" every time someone jumped into the water, then it would not save them despite the fact that I am a preacher, I said "Jesus' name" and that the people went completely under water. Why not? Because the individual did not have faith that their sins were going to be washed away. An infant is incapable of understanding the Gospel of Jesus Christ and thus cannot possibly have faith when they are baptized. Furthermore, they do not need to be baptized at that stage of their life anyways, because they have not reached an "age of accountability" where they know the difference between right and wrong and can choose to obey or disobey God's Word for themselves. Before a person is baptized, they should be old enough to know why they are being baptized and be able to believe that God will wash away their sins.

Sprinkling - it rejects the very meaning of the word of baptism. It is another modern invention of man that came from infants being baptized. It was easier to sprinkle them than safely place a new-born infant completely under water. Baptism is to be a complete spiritual cleansing, an immersion which is representative of a baby coming out of the womb, and a spiritual burial. Sprinkling violates all three principles.

The story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch illustrates both points extremely well. Philip taught the Ethiopian on water baptism in a chariot while traveling across the desert, so there was doubtlessly water in the chariot for use if only sprinkling was required. But when the Eunuch saw an oasis of water, he asked:

Acts 8:36-39 **And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.**

It is very obvious from these verses that Philip and the Eunuch were not standing upon the bank but were completely down in the water. An infant is not capable of such faith. Another good example is John the Baptist who baptized in the Jordan because "water was plentiful there" (John 3:23).

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What Formula Should Be Used For Baptism?

Many people ask "does the name called over you in water baptism really matter?" According to scripture it definitely does. In lesson #1 we learned that scriptures do not contradict themselves. If there seems to be a contradiction between two verses, then we must be misinterpreting one of them. Let's start with a well-known scripture:

Matt 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus commanded His disciples to go throughout the world and teach everyone exactly as He taught them. He commanded them to "baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Many religions repeat His commandment word for word and baptize in the "titles." But a seeming contradiction comes when we move on a week later to the preaching of Peter who was obeying Jesus' commandment in Matthew 28:19.

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter said to be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ." Did he disobey the command of Jesus in Matthew 28:19? If he did, then Matthew and the other disciples who were with Peter did not correct him. Neither did God, for that matter. Through a careful study of scripture, it turns out that Peter did NOT disobey Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19 but did obey it. In fact, there is never anyone in scripture actually baptized in the common modern-day formula of the titles. Notice the following scriptures:

Acts 2:41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

About three thousand people that Peter was preaching to were baptized according to his instruction in verse 38: "in the name of Jesus Christ."

Acts 8:15-16 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The Samaritans were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus by Philip.

Acts 10:47-48 Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

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Peter baptized the Gentile converts in the name of Jesus!

Acts 19:5 On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Paul rebaptized the disciples of John the Baptist in the name of Jesus!

Acts 22:16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

Paul himself was baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. In talking about the name of Jesus, Peter said:

Acts 4:12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Col 3:17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

It is very obvious that the disciples only baptized people in the name of Jesus Christ, so did they disobey Jesus commandment in Matthew 28:19? No, they simply understood what He was saying. In His command, Jesus said to baptize in the NAME of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. "Name" is singular. Matthew 1:21 says that the name of the Son to be born to Mary would be "Jesus." "Son" is a title not a name, as are the terms "Father" and "Holy Ghost." I have many titles such as "associate pastor," "son," "husband," "teacher," "preacher" and "father" but I only have one name. The disciples understood that the NAME of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is Jesus and so they always baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Does it make a difference? Absolutely. There is a distinct difference between repeating a command and obeying it. If my father told me "son, go mow the grass" and I looked at him and said "son, go mow the grass" but did not actually get the lawnmower and cut the lawn, then I have repeated the command but I have not obeyed the command. To baptize someone "in the titles" saying "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" is to repeat the command, but the words of Jesus have not actually been obeyed until that NAME, the name of Jesus, has been verbally invoked. To not baptize in the name of Jesus Christ is to ignore and disobey the very command of Matthew 28:19.

We must follow the scriptural example of the Apostolic Church!