

WHY BAPTISM?

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When people love each other, wanting to spend the rest of their lives together, and are committed to each other, they get married. In the same manner, when people love Jesus, wanting to follow Him as His disciples, and are committed to Him, they get baptized.

I. The Meaning of Biblical Baptism

Ceremonial washing occurred in the OT. John the Baptist introduced a baptism of repentance (see Matt 3) which was also accepted by Jesus and practiced by His disciples.

- Baptism has to do with repentance of sins and with dedicating one's life to Jesus - Matt 3:2, 5-6, 11; Acts 2:38
- Baptism has therefore to do with cleansing and is a sign of accepting forgiveness and salvation - John 13:10; Acts 2:38; 1 Cor 6:11
- Baptism is by water and the Holy Spirit, depicting death to sin and bringing about newness of life - John 3:3, 5; Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 5:17
- Baptism is a public act of confessing Christ and believing in Him - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16
- Baptism has to do with discipleship and allows Jesus to live His life in His followers - Matt 28:19; Gal 2:20

II. Jesus and Baptism

Christian baptism is rooted in Jesus who Himself was baptized and who gave the commission to baptize those who desire to become God's children. However His own baptism was not a baptism of repentance; He was baptized as our example.

- Matt 3:13-17 - Jesus' baptism is the example that we should follow. What happened at His baptism indirectly happens with any person who is serious about following Christ and who is being baptized.
- John 3:22; 4:2 - Jesus through His disciples baptized people.
- Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16 - Jesus wants people to be baptized.

III. Practical Considerations

1. The Mode of Baptism

Baptism is by immersion.

- The Greek verb *baptizō* and others words of the same family are used in the NT to denote baptism by immersion.
- That people went into the water and came up out of the water again supports immersion - Matt 3:16; Acts 8:38-39
- Baptism is a symbol of being buried with Christ. A burial is a complete and not just a partial interment. - Col 2:12

2. Prerequisites for Baptism

The Book of Acts continuously stresses the sequence of hearing the proclamation of the gospel, believing in Jesus, and being baptized. Exceptions confirm the rule and are due to special circumstances. Nevertheless, hearing and believing always precede baptism.

Acts 2:37-41 Hearing, believing, repenting, being baptized, receiving the Holy Spirit

Acts 8:12 Hearing, believing, being baptized

Acts 8:34-39 Hearing, believing, being baptized

Acts 10:44-48 Hearing, receiving the Holy Spirit, being baptized

Acts 18:8 Hearing, believing, being baptized

Believing in Jesus includes the entire gospel. Therefore, people were baptized in the name of Jesus after they had heard the proclamation of the message and accepted it. This is not possible with infants.

Acts 19:1-7 Renewed baptism because the first was inadequate

3. Entrance into the Church by Baptism

Although people are baptized because they believe in Jesus, they are also joined to “His body” which is the church.

Acts 2:41-42, 46-47 Those who were baptized were added to the church.

1 Cor 12:13 They form one body.

Heb 10:24-25 One cannot be a Christian in isolation.

IV. Benefits of Baptism and Responsibilities

Benefits are described, for instance, in Acts 2:38-39; Matt 3:11, 16-17; 1 Cor 12:7-13

- Belonging and relationship: Beloved sons and daughters of God
- Members of the community of Christ
- Forgiveness of sins, salvation, eternal life
- Receiving the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts

Benefits lead also to responsibilities. They include:

- The use of one’s natural and spiritual gifts for Christ’s cause
- Becoming active in a local church
- Fulfilling the missionary task given by the Lord

V. Baptism and I

We are challenged as Paul was when he met Jesus: “And now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16). We decide to follow Christ’s example.

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