

The Bible and Baptism

Baptism is more than just a ritual or formality. If we approach baptism as something church people just do and it goes no deeper than this, we are merely dunking people and getting them wet. When we reduce baptism to a simple ritual without understanding of its meaning and significance, then we've missed its true meaning and importance in our faith and Christian life.

John 1:32-34 Prearranged sign: God had told John that the One whom the Spirit comes down on is the Messiah.

Matthew 3:13-17 Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist (Spirit and the voice)

Key Verses: Psalm 2:7 *"He said to me 'you are my Son, today I have become your Father.'"*

Isaiah 42:1 *"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations."*

Why was Jesus baptized?

Why would He "who did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22) offer Himself for baptism? John the Baptist had candidates confess sins prior to baptism but Jesus had no sins to confess. Why then baptism? G. Campbell Morgan gives these reasons. "As Jesus left that in His life which was preparatory, and entered upon the actual work of the ministry, He devoted Himself to the ultimate issue of work, that namely, of an identification with men even to death." More specifically he says: "His being baptized was an act by which He consented to take His place among sinners." Christ's baptism was a prelude to the cross. He fulfilled every religious duty in order that He might be a perfect Sacrifice. How the sinless One could identify himself with sinful humanity is a mystery. For Jesus the cross was the greatest act of submission to the will of His Father. Likewise, His baptism is a remarkable act of submission. Publicly Jesus was baptized receiving the outward sign of cleansing away of sinful acts in which He had no part of.

1. Fulfillment of prearranged sign
2. Marks the beginning of ministry
3. Act of consecration

What is Baptism?

The Greek Word for Baptism is "bap'-tis-mah", which means "immersion, submersion" of Christian baptism; a rite of immersion in water as commanded by Christ, by which one after confessing his or her sins and professing faith in Christ, having been born again by the Holy Spirit into a new life. Baptism identifies publicly with the fellowship of Christ and the church."

1. **Baptism is a Divine Command:** Acts 2:38 *"Peter replied, '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.'"*

2. **Baptism is a Sign of Conversion:** Matthew 3:11 *"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."*

3. **Baptism is a Confession of Faith:** Acts 8:36-38 *"As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?' And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him."*

4. **Baptism is a Testimony of Christ:** Acts 16:30-34 *"He then brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household.' Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he and his whole family."*

5. **Baptism is a Picture of Spiritual Resurrection:** Romans 6:4 *"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."*

6. **Baptism is a Mark of Separation:** I Peter 3:21 *"and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."*

Application: Remember that Baptism is one of the most beautiful experiences beside Salvation one can go through. We are literally identified with Christ through this precious Ordinance. If you are walking with the Lord and have never been baptized with a Biblical understanding and heart commitment, then you should request it today. On the other hand, if you do not currently have a personal relationship with Christ, I would encourage you to make first things first and receive the Lord as your Savior before you consider becoming a candidate for baptism.

Acts 2:41 *"Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."*

Four Steps To Take Before Baptism

1. **Hearing:** Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17)
“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”
2. **Faith:** Believe the word of God (Hebrews 11:6)
“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”
3. **Repentance:** Repent of our past sins (Luke 13:3)
“But unless you repent, you too will all perish.” To repent is to literally turn away from.
4. **Confession:** Confess Jesus Christ (Matthew 10:32-33)
“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.”

The Purpose of Christian Baptism

1. **It is an act of obedience.** “To be and to do the will of God is in itself the greatest success.” ~Phineas F. Bresee
Jesus commanded us to be baptized in the Great Commission.
It shows that we want to be committed to doing what Jesus wants us to do.
2. **It is where we publicly bear witness to God’s work in our life.** We proclaim the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:17 in our life.
“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”
3. **It is where we “put on Christ” or clothe ourselves with Him.** Galatians 3:26-27;29 *“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*
4. **It is where we are buried with Christ and raised with Him.** Romans 6:1-4 *“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 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. **It represents the death of our old self and to sin.** Colossians 2:12 *“Having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead.”* He forgave us all our sins having cancelled the written code, with its regulations that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made public spectacle of them triumphing over them by the cross.
6. **It is the point that we are added to the church of Jesus.** Baptism is the public declaration of faith in Christ and in it, the church also bears witness to your testimony and collectively says, “There is a child of God.”

Baptism Understood As A Vow To Keep

Baptism is a mark of obedience. In one of the last recorded sayings of Jesus, He calls us to make baptism a priority. Matthew 28:19-20 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Baptism: A public declaration that at first glance may seem to be awkward and even unprofitable, yet being commanded by God it must be good for me. If He had told you to build a wall or plow a field, would you not do it without demanding from Him what good or purpose will it bring? The simplicity of the command for baptism should cause the follower of Christ to say “I will do it with a heart of obedience to my Lord.” Even in the absence of entire comprehension, a clear understanding of the relationship between master and servant is expressed. So as God tells us to be baptized we should not allow “what for” questions to take the place of faithful obedience. Baptism is a command; obedience is the faithful response.

“We are to come to God with such a trustful heart of obedience that to any promise of God’s applicable to our condition we say an unequivocal and unlimited yes.” ~Phineas F. Bresee

After baptism we are to remain faithful to the end. 1 Corinthians 15:58 *“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain for great is your reward.”* (Bold mine)

Dear Heavenly Father,

I vow to follow you, in good times and bad; in times of wealth and poverty. Regardless of my circumstances, I will remain faithful to you for the remainder of all my days.