

BAPTISM OF BELIEVERSⁱ

This message presents the meaning of and reason for baptism of believers

The subject of baptism can be controversial as it is often viewed very differently by different denominations, Bible teachers, and theologians... so this message will focus on why all “believers¹” should be baptized.

- 1) Believers should be baptized because Jesus commanded it.
- 2) Believers should be baptized because it is a testimony to others that a believer has repented and has put their faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins according to the Scriptures.

In the first century the word "baptize" was used in describing the process of dyeing cloth. A piece of cloth was "baptized" into the dye, that is, it's dipped into the dye. The cloth took on the color of the dye. In the same way, believers are "baptized" into Jesus Christ... when they put their faith in Him. By believing, we are inwardly identifying ourselves with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection on our behalf.

By being baptized you identify yourself publicly with Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection, according to the Scriptures, for the forgiveness of your sins. This is not always an easy step to take, especially if you have family or friends who are unbelievers. Baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ on behalf of sinners. Baptism does not save²... rather; baptism is a believer's obedient response to Christ's command, to be “*baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*”

Baptism is also a testimony to others that a person has identified themselves with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ on their behalf. Baptism is mentioned in several different contexts in the New Testament. In Acts 2:41 we see that 3,000 people put their faith in Jesus Christ and were baptized... “*Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*” The Church was born that day 2000 years ago and baptism is an important moment in the life of every believer.

John the Baptist baptized to prepare people for Jesus' coming

John baptized repentant Jews in preparation for the coming of Jesus as their Deliverer. In Matthew 3:1-2, 5-6 we read, “*In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’ People went out to him from*

¹ **Believers** are Jews and Gentiles who by the grace of God, through faith, have received Christ by “believing” (Eph. 2:8-9; John 1:12-13, **20:31**; Acts 15:7-8, 16:31-34; Rom 3:22-24, 10:9-10; 1 Cor 1:21, 15:2-4; Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Tim 1:16; Heb 10:39, 11:6; 1 John 3:23-24, 5:13). Believing means to Acknowledge, Commit to, and Trust in Christ as Savior. To “believe in” Jesus includes both a wholehearted trust in him for forgiveness of sins and a decision to forsake one's sin or to “repent.” All who truly “repent [or turn from their sins] and believe [in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins]” will be redeemed (Mark 1:15) and restored to a right relationship with God (1 John 1:9). To “believe in” Jesus also requires relating to, and putting trust in, Jesus as he truly is—not just a man in ancient history but also a personal living Savior today, seated at the right hand of the Father, who is sovereign and who knows every heart, and hears all prayers.

² Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us clearly that we are saved by God's grace, through personal faith... “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.*”

Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River”. John told the people that the Deliverer was coming very soon, so they must repent in Preparation to trust in Him as their Deliverer. All those who agreed with what God said to them, through John, were dipped under water by John.

They were baptized to show everyone who was watching...

- 1) That they agreed with God that they deserved death for their sins.
- 2) That they were trusting in God to send the promised Deliverer to rescue them from the death they deserved.

Jesus commanded His apostles to baptize all believers.

Before Jesus left this earth to return to heaven, He told His eleven apostles what they must do as His representatives... *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"* (Matthew 28: 18-20).

Jesus told His apostles to go into the entire world and make disciples.

They were to tell people the message of Jesus Christ. And they were to baptize all those who believed their message and trusted in Jesus as their Savior. Jesus told them to baptize all believers in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

What does baptism mean?

The New Testament uses the word baptism in several ways. For example, the baptism Jesus commanded His apostles to give all believers was different from John the Baptist's baptism. John's baptism was to show that the people had repented of their sins and that they were looking and waiting for the promised, Deliverer, to come.

But Jesus told the apostles to baptize all who trusted in Christ. John's baptism was to *prepare* people to put their faith in Jesus. But the baptism Jesus spoke of was to *signify* that a person truly *had* put his faith in Christ. This is the kind of baptism which we are talking about in this lesson. Baptism is a picture of the burial and resurrection of Christ. The water into which believers are immersed at baptism is a picture, or illustration, of the grave into which the Lord Jesus was placed after He died for us on the cross.

When Jesus hung on the cross, He was our representative.

- God punished Jesus just as if the believer was hanging there being punished by God for the believers own sins.
- God says that, when Jesus died, all who believe in Him as their Deliverer also died with him.
- God says that, when Jesus was buried, all who believe in Him are also buried with Him.

Therefore, when a believer is immersed in the water, he is showing others that he has acknowledged that Jesus died and **was buried for him**. Also, because a believer has put faith in Jesus, they have been raised with Him. God says that, when Jesus rose up from the grave, everyone who has believed is raised up to live in Him.

The life which God has given to us is the life of Jesus:

- We died when He died, but now we have everlasting life in Him.

When the believer comes out of the water into which he was immersed, he is showing others that he acknowledges the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead on his behalf. Paul wrote, “...*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*” (Colossians 2:12).

Baptism is not what saves us.

Our salvation is complete in Christ alone. In John 14:6 we read... *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* We do not need to be baptized to be saved from the punishment of our sins or the power of Satan and death. Baptism does not make anyone a child of God. A believer becomes the child of God the moment they trusted in the Lord Jesus as their Savior.

John spelled it out clearly for us in chapter 1, verses 12 and 13... “*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*” If you have received Christ... by believing, then you are a child of God, and you will go to heaven even if you are never baptized. Baptism cannot remove any of our sins. Only the blood of Jesus, given for us on the cross, can take away our sins. Jesus' blood alone was the full payment for all of our sins.

Believers should be baptized in obedience to Christ and as a testimony to other people

In the Bible Jesus Christ commands us to share His Gospel—the Good News of salvation with people everywhere. He wants people everywhere to know that they are sinners, and that Jesus died and took the complete punishment for “*the sin of the world.*”

Jesus died, was buried, and rose again to give mankind eternal life. In the Bible, Jesus also commands, that all those who have trusted in Him as their Savior should be baptized in obedience to Him. Therefore, when we are baptized, we should do it as our obedient response to Jesus Christ. Baptism is also a testimony to others.

By being baptized, you show others that you are not trusting in yourself but in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as... your death, your burial, and your resurrection. Baptism is a public testimony of the fact that you have died with Christ, been buried with Him, and have risen with Him into new and eternal life. Baptism is an opportunity to obey the Lord Jesus Christ, and to testify to others of the fact that you have put your trust in Him and His death, burial, and resurrection.

Any questions? Have you received Christ by believing in him? Would you like to be baptized as a testimony to your family, friends, and neighbors that you are child of God? I'll help... Please feel free to call me... 414-588-0846 or email me at...

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REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) How did John the Baptist baptize those who repented? *By immersing them in water.*
- 2) What did the baptism of John the Baptist mean? *It meant that those baptized by John agreed that they were condemned sinners deserving to die, but that they were trusting God to send the promised Deliverer.*
- 3) By being baptized, what do believers show to others who are watching? *By being baptized, believers show that they have repented of their sins and have trusted in Jesus, their Savior, who represented them in His death, burial, and resurrection.*
- 4) What does God say happens to all believers because Jesus died, was buried, and rose again on their behalf? *God says that they died with Christ, they were buried with Christ, and they were raised again with Him.*
- 5) In whose name are we now commanded to be baptized? *In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*
- 6) Must a believer be baptized in order to be sure of being saved? *No! We are saved only through Jesus' death for us.*
- 7) Can baptism wash away a person's sins? *No! Only the blood of Jesus shed for us on the cross can remove our sins.*
- 8) Why should believers be baptized?
 - a. *We should be baptized because Jesus commanded us to do it.*
 - b. *We should be baptized because it is a testimony to others that we have repented and have put our faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.*

ⁱ From "Firm Foundations—Acts" Chronological Bible Teaching, Author-Trevor McIlwain; New Tribes Mission, Sanford, Florida