

# Discipleship Bible Study—Baptism

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith... (2 Peter 1:5)

As you work through this study, you will learn about the important subject of Christian baptism. Have you first prayed for God's help in understanding this study?

## (1) What Does the Word “Baptize” Mean?

The word “baptize” in the original language of the New Testament means to “submerge,” “fully cover,” or “immerse.” If God had intended to mean “sprinkle,” “pour,” or some other action other than total submersion, then there were several other words available in the original language of the New Testament (Koine Greek). However God choose not to use them but used a word that means “to immerse.” This fact alone excludes what is done to babies (i.e. christening) as having any Biblical authority. We will see the full significance of this shortly as we consider the symbolic meaning of baptism. There are “baptisms” other than water baptism. However a discussion of these is not appropriate here.

## (2) The Symbolic Meaning of Baptism.

Water is frequently associated with cleansing. But is cleansing really the symbolic meaning of baptism as some people suggest? Let’s examine the Bible and see what it says on this matter.

(2a) According to 1 John 1:7, what cleanses from sin?

The \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus Christ cleanses from sin.

(2b) What washing is mentioned in Titus 3:5-6?

It is the washing of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Ghost (Spirit).

Thus a sinner is cleansed through the precious blood of Christ, applied through the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Therefore cleaning from sin is definitely not the purpose of water baptism.

(2c) Read Romans 6:3-5.

According to Romans 6:4, what does the submersion beneath the water symbolise?

It symbolises \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

(2d) What does the rising up out of the water symbolise (Romans 6:4)?

It symbolises \_\_\_\_\_ to a new life.

Here we are shown that baptism pictures or portrays death, burial and resurrection. The act of water baptism demonstrates publicly the believer's trust in the saving

work of the Lord Jesus Christ which is based upon His atoning death, burial and resurrection. Therefore baptism pictures what the Lord has done for the believer.

(2e) What are the 3 details of the gospel mentioned in 1Corinthians 15:3-4?

1. Christ \_\_\_\_\_ for our sins ,
2. Christ was \_\_\_\_\_ ,
3. Christ \_\_\_\_\_ again.

Baptism also pictures what happened spiritually (and therefore invisibly) within the believer the moment he/she was saved. He/she died to his/her old life, and through the new birth was brought to newness of life. It is obvious from all this that sprinkling or pouring do not fulfil the requirements of the Bible, because they simply do not portray burial.

**(3) The Motive for Baptism**

(3a) What should be the motive of the believer in everything to do with the Christian life (see 1 Corinthians 10:31)?

The Christian should do everything to the \_\_\_\_\_ of God. Obedience to God's will as revealed in the Bible is certainly one way to please Him and bring Him glory.

(3b) Look at the closing words of Matthew's gospel for the final important instructions of the Lord Jesus to his disciples (read Matthew 28:18-20).

To whom was this addressed in the first instance (see v16)?

It was addressed to the \_\_\_\_\_ .

(3c) Here the Lord commands His disciples to do three things (read v19 and look for the verbs). List those three things below:

- to \_\_\_\_\_
- to \_\_\_\_\_ (notice also v20 "observe")
- to \_\_\_\_\_

(3d) Look at John 14:15. What will the believer who loves the Lord wish to keep?

A believer who really loves Jesus Christ, will keep (obey) His \_\_\_\_\_ ..

If a believer truly loves the Lord, he/she will wish to obey Him. A believer is not likely to submit to the Lord's will in other areas, if he/she does not submit in this matter of baptism. Thus it is a "litmus test" of the Christian life.

**(4) Who Should Be Baptised?**

Baptism is not just for anyone who feels like it. The Bible makes it clear that it is kept only for those who have been saved through faith in Christ (See Acts 2:41 &

18:8). The Bible shows that a testimony of salvation was required before an individual was baptised (we will look at an example shortly).

Baptism does not save anyone—if it did, that would be salvation by works and not by faith! Baptising a lost person would most likely encourage them in their misdirected trust in this ceremony to save them, rather than in Christ alone. Thus a faithful Pastor will do his best to ensure that **only** saved persons are baptised.

**(5) The Case of the Ethiopian Official**

Read the account of the Ethiopian official's salvation and baptism in Acts 8:26-39. You will see how this event brought great joy into his life. The scriptural order of things should be clear from reading this account.

- (5a) What message did Philip preach to the Ethiopian (v35)?  
Philip preached \_\_\_\_\_ to him.
- (5b) What wish did the Ethiopian have (v36)? He wanted to be \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (5c) How do you think the Ethiopian man knew about baptism?  
Philip most likely \_\_\_\_\_ him about it.
- (5d) What one thing was necessary before the Ethiopian could be baptised (v37)?  
A testimony of \_\_\_\_\_ was required.  
Read John 5:18 for an explanation of the significance of his statement.
- (5e) After he was baptised, what did the Ethiopian go on his way doing?  
He went on his way \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Joy comes from being saved and obeying the Lord in baptism.

As in the case of the Ethiopian way back then, the local church today should look for a testimony of conversion from a candidate for baptism.

**(6) Is Baptism Connected with Receiving the Holy Spirit?**

Some think that the two are connected.

- (6a) Look at Ephesians 1:13. The three things mentioned in this verse happened at the same time. The three things are:  
The Ephesian believers \_\_\_\_\_ the gospel.  
They \_\_\_\_\_ the gospel.  
They were \_\_\_\_\_ with the Holy Spirit.
- (6b) Look at Romans 8:9. If a person does not have the Holy Spirit, they do not belong to \_\_\_\_\_ .

It is obvious from the above that the Holy Spirit is received by a person at the moment he/she were saved and NOT at his/her baptism.

**(7) Baptism and the Local Church**

(7a) Please notice that baptism is performed with the authority of the local church, as it is mentioned in the context of the teaching and pastoral ministry of the local church (look again at Matthew 28:19-20). Where the Bible is the standard for church life, baptism is the requirement for the acceptance of an individual into the fellowship of a local church. Baptism is a step of relationship with a particular local church as well as submission to the Lord. It is recognition of, and a submission to the authority of the local church (see Acts 2:41&47). Notice the order here—we see that those who believed were baptised, and then were added (joined) to the local church. Thus baptism is the “doorway” to the local church. Mere attendance at services does not add a person to a church.

(7b) God has given a simple command to those who have trusted Christ as their Saviour What is that command (See Matthew 28:19)?

That command is to be \_\_\_\_\_.

This is the first big step of obedience for the new believer in Christ. Be sure to take this step of obedience - you will not make much progress in your Christian life without it.

Following your baptism, at the earliest convenient occasion (usually the next service), you will be officially welcomed into the fellowship of the local church. It is our practice on that occasion for the new member to sign the fellowship covenant. A copy of the fellowship covenant and also the doctrinal statement is enclosed. Study these carefully. Though you may not understand every point in detail at this stage, you should be in general agreement with them as they are based squarely on the Word of God.

If you are saved, but have not been scripturally baptised then talk to your pastor about arranging this important step of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Your pastor is the one to answer any questions you might have on this subject (and indeed other spiritual subjects also). Further information about baptism is supplied prior to the actual event—such as how to dress for the occasion, what happens etc.

**(8) Review Questions About Baptism:**

- (8.1) Does baptism wash a person's sins away? Please explain your answer.
- (8.2) Does baptism give a believer the Holy Spirit?
- (8.3) What is the main requirement for baptism?
- (8.4) Give two reasons why the “christening” of babies is not valid.  
[It is suggested that the term "christening" is a better word to use.]
- (8.5) Explain what baptism actually does for a person?
- (8.6) What should be the proper motive of a person getting baptised?