

Water Baptism Class

By Bill Scheidler

I. What is meaning of the word “baptize”?

Christian baptism finds its origin in the command of Christ after His triumphant resurrection from the grave.

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 28:19-20

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

- A. The word “baptize” (English) or *baptidzo* (Greek) means “to dip”, “to overwhelm”, “to plunge”, “to submerge.” It actually means “to cause something to be dipped” or “to immerse something beneath the surface of water, or some other fluid” (In most cases the act of immersion is temporary and not permanent).
- B. We are commanded of Christ to “baptize” believers. If the Greek word that is used here were translated instead of transliterated, the command in the New Testament would read as follows:

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, **immersing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”*

II. Why is the believer to be baptized?

The believer is to be baptized for several reasons.

- A. Because Jesus commanded that believers be baptized and, therefore, it is a matter of obedience.

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. Matthew 28:19

- B. Because the apostles commanded converts to be baptized (Acts 2:37-39; 10:44-48).

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.” Acts 2:38

- C. Because Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness as an example to us (Mt. 3:13-17).

- D. Because we validate our faith by our obedience to the Word of God (Jam. 2:17-18).

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. James 2:17-18, NIV

- E. Because Jesus closely connected baptism with the experience of salvation.

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Water baptism is an essential part of obedience; it is not optional for the believer. To refuse baptism is choosing to reject the lordship of Jesus over this area of your life.

III. What are the prerequisites for baptism?

The act of being baptized in and of itself cannot save anyone. It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as one's savior that brings an individual to salvation. Therefore, baptism is only effectual for those who have met certain requirements. Those receiving baptism must have already laid the first two foundation stones in the Christian experience prior to their baptism, namely—repentance and faith.

- A. Repentance (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." Acts 2:38

This means one is not baptized merely because he wants to be part of a particular local church.

- B. Faith (Acts 8:12; 10:47; Mark 16:16)

But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Acts 8:12

This means that one must be old enough to know what he or she is doing. This requirement of faith rules out infant baptism.

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

IV. What takes place in water baptism?

We are baptized simply because we are commanded by God to do so. However, as we respond to the Word of the Lord in faith, some very important things will take

place. Every person who goes into the waters of baptism should expect to experience five things by faith:

A. Identification with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; 3:1).

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food... I Corinthians 10:1-3

1. We identify with Him in His death.

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Romans 6:3

2. We identify with Him in His burial.

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. Romans 6:4

3. We identify with Him in His resurrection.

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. Romans 6:4

Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. Colossians 1:12

B. New victory over life dominating sins (Romans 6:11-18).

When we are baptized, we lose our old master (sin, Satan) and become servants of righteousness.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not

under law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:5-23

C. Spiritual cleansing and renewal.

The water itself affects no cleansing, but as we respond in faith to the commands of Christ, the Holy Spirit works in connection with the God prescribed means.

And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name. Acts 22:16

D. Identification with the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 8:12, 16; 10:48).

Because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Acts 8:16

So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days. Acts 10:48

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

Kenyon puts it this way, “Baptism in this sense is equivalent to marriage. When the wife puts on marriage she takes her husband’s name and enters into her husband’s possessions and has legal right to her husband’s home. When the believer is baptized into the Name of Christ, he puts on all that is in Christ. He not only puts on the Name but takes his legal rights and his privileges in Christ.”

E. Circumcision of the heart (Col. 2:11-12).

V. What is the significance of circumcision of the heart in connection with water baptism?

In the Old Testament God gave a covenant to Abraham that required those who were participating in the covenant to accept and experience the sign and seal of the covenant which was natural circumcision of the flesh (Gen. 17:10-14).

This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner--those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant. Genesis 17:10-14

In the New Testament God has taken that natural sign and seal and made it a spiritual thing. In water baptism we receive the spiritual experience of circumcision of the heart to which the natural rite pointed. The natural rite consisted of four elements that are all symbolic of something that takes place spiritually in the circumcision of the heart.

A. The cutting away of the flesh. In baptism we put off the old man (Col. 2:11-15).

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. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins... Colossians 2:12-13

When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure—the cutting away of your sinful nature.¹² For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to a new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.¹³ You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins.¹⁴ He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross.¹⁵ In this way, God disarmed the evil rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross of Christ. Colossians 2:11-15, NLT

B. The shedding of blood. In baptism a death to self is to take place (Rom. 6:3)

C. The eighth day. Natural circumcision took place on the eighth day, which is symbolic of new beginning and resurrection life (I Pet. 3:20-21). In baptism we experience a new beginning and newness of life.

D. The new name given. In baptism we have a new name invoked over us—the Lord Jesus Christ, the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him... Colossians 1:19

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form..., Colossians 2:9

Note: All through the Scripture a name change indicated a change in nature as well (Abraham, Sarah, Jacob). As God works through you in baptism, expect your nature to change.

VI. How should we be baptized?

A. Scriptural baptism is baptism by immersion (burial).

1. Refer again to the definition of the word baptism.
2. In order for something to be buried, it must be all the way under.

B. Baptism is to be administered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus commanded that baptism was to be administered in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19-20), which name the disciples came to see on the basis of Jesus' ascension and exaltation (Acts 2:33-36), was the Lord Jesus Christ. When they baptized, they baptized in this manner (Acts 2:36-41; 8:12-16, 35-38; 10:48).

A suitable statement to be made in conjunction with baptism would be:

“Upon the confession of your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; in the Name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so you also shall rise to walk in newness of life.”

This formula:

1. Quotes the command of Christ as declared in the Gospels.
2. Invokes the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as demonstrated in the Book of Acts.
3. Declares the spiritual significance as revealed in the Epistles.

VII. What is the responsibility of the baptized?

Even as the waters of the Red Sea served as a separation between the Egyptian life of slavery and the land of God's provision for the Israelites of old, so the waters of baptism should serve as a permanent landmark in the life of the believer. Baptism should signal three things:

(The following is from *God and His Word* by Ernest Gentile)

A. A Break with the Old Way of Life

This means a willingness to sever all connections with ungodliness and those who live in ungodliness. It signifies the start of the CHRISTian life and dedication to

Christ and the work of His Church. Baptism into His Name passes the ownership of our life over to the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. A New Standard of Living

This means that from baptism on, there will be a determination to live by the principles of the Kingdom of God. This entails both its blessings and its obligations.

C. A Disciple of Jesus

This means that the person being baptized should see himself as a follower of Jesus, a student and a witness to others of all that Jesus stands for.

CONCLUSION

It is very obvious that baptism is more than just an external experience in the Christian life. God wants to do something lasting and permanent at this special time. Sad to say, many people go down into the waters of baptism dry and come up wet and that is the extent of their experience. But if each individual would respond in faith to all that God says is available in baptism, baptism would be remembered as one of the greatest experiences of their Christian walk.