

7.0 Common Questions

1. Do I have to be baptized to go to heaven? No, baptism is not what saves us. The thief on the cross who believed in Jesus was promised that he would be in Paradise with Jesus that very day, and he certainly did not have time to be baptized (Luke 23:39-43)! Salvation is by grace through faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). But baptism is an important step of obedience, and to follow the Biblical pattern, should be done as soon as possible after conversion.
2. Should infants be baptized? There is no place in the New Testament where an infant is baptized. Baptism is a symbolic act showing that a person has repented of sin and trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. An infant cannot do this. Some churches, however, baptize infants as a symbol of their being part of the covenant community of the church.
3. I was baptized as an infant or young child, now I have come to real faith in Christ as an adult. Should I be baptized again? Yes, your first baptism was not symbolic of genuine faith. Now that you have a real and personal faith you should proclaim it by being baptized.



Living the Christian Life Bible Study

Lesson 14 (NIV)

Understanding Baptism

Student's Name _____ Unit _____

Instructor _____

Comments _____

1.0 Introduction

The teaching of the New Testament gives the church two ceremonies, or ordinances, to practice. The first of these is Baptism, which we will study in this lesson; the second is The Lord's Supper, or communion. Baptism is a ceremony which every believer in Jesus Christ should do soon after he is saved as a public declaration of his faith in Jesus Christ and his commitment to live as Jesus taught. Communion is a ceremony that is repeated on a regular basis as an act of worship, remembrance, and proclamation of the death of Christ and the promise of His return.

These are the only two ordinances practiced by the early church. To be an ordinance, a ceremony must have been commanded by Jesus Christ in the gospels, practiced by the early church in Acts, and taught by the Apostles in the epistles.

2.0 The Meaning of "Baptize"

The words "baptize" and "baptism" were not used in the English language prior to the release of the King James translation of the Bible in 1611. The older English Bibles, such as the Wycliffe Bible and the Coverdale Bible, used the words "dipped" and "immersed" in places where our Bibles have baptized. By the time the translators authorized by King James did their work, some churches had begun to sprinkle rather than immerse people, so they created a new word by copying from the Greek *Baptizo*. So "Baptism" became a part of our English language and has been used in all English Bibles since that time.

Baptize - from the Greek word <i>baptisma</i> (noun) "consisting of the process of immersion, submersion, and emergence" and <i>baptizo</i> (verb) meaning "to dip, for example, the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a small vessel into a larger."

6.0 The Teaching of the Apostles

As we move into the epistles, we see Paul teaching about baptism, explaining its symbolism. In Romans 6, Paul teaches about our union with Christ; that as believers, we are one with Him; He lives in us, we live by His power. He uses baptism to illustrate this truth in verses 3 and 4. Read these verses and fill in the blanks.

3 Or don't you know that all of us who were _____ into Christ Jesus were baptized into his _____? 4 We were therefore with him through _____ into death in order that, just as Christ was _____ from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a _____.

Paul here uses baptism (going down into the water and coming up out of it) as a picture of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. This becomes symbolic of our oneness with Christ and publically identifies us with Him. It also proclaims our obedience to Him

Now read Galatians 3:26-28. In this passage, Paul uses the picture of baptism to show that all believers are baptized into Christ, and that our racial and ethnic backgrounds have no bearing on our relationship with God. Our unity in Christ, as symbolized by all having been baptized, is greater than any worldly differences we might have.

5.0 Baptism in the Early Church (cont'd)

5.4 Lydia

Read Acts 16:13-15 which tells the story of the conversion of Lydia. Notice that she responded to Paul's message and was baptized. She then invited Paul and his companions to stay at her house.

5.5 Philippian Jailer

Read Acts 16:22-34, which tells the story of the conversion of the jailer in Phillipi, where Paul and Silas were being held in jail. Notice especially in verses 31 to 34 the sequence of events: Paul explained the gospel, the jailer washed Paul's wounds, Paul baptized him, then they went to his house for a meal.

From all these examples, and many others we could look at, we get a pattern of people believing on Jesus as their Savior and almost immediately being baptized. So we see again that baptism is a physical public act which proclaims an inner spiritual reality.

3.0 The Baptism of John the Baptist

John the Baptist was a forerunner to Jesus. His purpose was to announce to the Jewish people that their Messiah was coming and to prepare the people for His message. Read Mark 1:2-8 and answer the following questions.

1. What was the purpose of John's baptism (verse 4)?

2. What did the people do before they were baptized (verse 5)?

3. What did John baptize people with (verse 8)?

4. What did John say Jesus would baptize with (verse 8)?

So we see John baptizing people - immersing them in water - to show their repentance from sin. Their baptism was a physical public act that demonstrated an inner spiritual reality (repentance).

Now read Luke 7:29-30. These verses show the difference in the people who had been baptized by John - who had repented - and those who had not been baptized and who had not repented. Those who repented and were baptized were ready for Jesus' message; those who had not repented rejected Jesus' message. So John prepared the people for the arrival of Jesus.

4.0 Jesus Commands Baptism

After Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, He spent 40 days with His apostles before ascending back to heaven. During that time he taught them many things, because now they understood that Jesus' death on the cross was not a failure and the end of His mission, but was the purpose for His coming and was the beginning of their mission to carry the good news of the gospel to the whole world. In Matthew 28:16-20, He gave them a summary of what their mission was to be; we call it the Great Commission. Read these verses and answer the following questions.

1. What was to be the primary object of the disciples' mission (verse 19)?
Make _____
2. What three things did they have to do to make disciples (verses 19 and 20)?
_____, _____, and _____
3. In whose name are we to be baptized? _____, _____,
_____.

In saying this, Jesus is telling His disciples, and us today, that the way to make disciples is to go to where the people are who need the gospel, proclaim the gospel to them and baptize them, which we will see happening in the book of Acts, and teach them to obey Jesus' commands.

5.0 Baptism in the Early Church

The book of Acts gives us a history of the Church in the 30 years immediately after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As we watch the apostles proclaiming the gospel, we find a common pattern that when people believed the gospel they were baptized almost immediately. Let's look at a few examples to see this.

5.1 Samaria

Read Acts 8:12 and fill in the blanks. *But when they _____ Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were _____, both men and women.*

5.2 The Ethiopian

Read Acts 8:26 - 39 and answer the following questions.

1. What did Phillip do first after getting into the chariot (verse 35)?

2. What did the Ethiopian official ask after that (verse 36)?

3. What did Phillip do (verse 38)?

5.3 Saul

Acts 9:1-19 tells the story of the conversion of Saul, or Paul as he is called later. In the course of the story, Saul is struck blind by the Lord, and a man named Ananias is sent to heal him. Read verses 17 to 19, and answer the following questions.

1. What was the first thing Saul did after receiving his sight (verse 18)?

2. What was the next thing he did (verse 19)?
