

Baptism: Questions & Answers (5/19/13)

Rom 6; As I was thinking about our upcoming baptism services, I felt compelled to do something I haven't done for a long time – which is preach a full message on baptism I've done many *devotions* on baptisms over the years, but the last time I preached a whole message on it was April of '07

More compelling however, is my sense that many of you *need* to be baptized
You've come to Christ recently, and this is one of the next steps in your walk with him
So I've chosen to address it through a series of questions and answers

And though this may challenge your closely held beliefs, or even cause a crisis of belief for some of you – I pray that you'll listen; And, I pray that you'll respond
In fact, at the end of our time together, I'm going to give you an opportunity to do just that – to stand up, and commit to being baptized in a few weeks

With that in mind then, the first question I want to address, is . . .

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

And the first answer is that . . .

It's an act of immersion

The act of immersing someone in water for religious purposes
And I say immersion, b/c that's what the word means – to dip under
It doesn't mean sprinkle; It doesn't mean shower; It means immerse

And several Scriptures bear it out; Like **Mark 1:9-10**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. [10] And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

The fact that Jesus came up out of the water, indicates that he was immersed; He was baptized by immersion

And **John 3:23** says that – *John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized*

Aenon near Salim was a spot on a tributary leading into the Jordan River
And the fact that plentiful water made it a good spot for baptizing, implies immersion
B/c you don't need much water at *all* for sprinkling*****

So by definition *and* example, baptism is the practice of immersing people in water

And as such . . .

• It's a picture of salvation

In fact, immersion is the only means that does justice to the symbolism of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection

Going under shows your state of spiritual death *apart* from Christ
Being immersed shows your cleansing from sin *b/c* of Christ
Coming up shows your new life *in* Christ; It's a picture of salvation

➤ But it's Rom 6 that ties the two together *biblically*; That's where the Apostle Paul cites some of the foundational truths of our *salvation*, and uses *baptism* to illustrate them
3 – *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*

IOW do you not know that those who have been brought under the influence of Christ just like we're brought under the influence of water . . .

Have also been brought under the influence of his sin-defeating death on the cross?
It's true; The point being, that Paul uses baptism to picture our salvation; We're brought under the influence of *water*, just like we're brought under the influence of *Jesus*

4 – *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death . . .*

IOW when we were saved, we were brought under the influence of his death . . .
In order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

We too might be raised from our spiritual deadness; And live a new life

Again, Paul uses baptism to picture our salvation

Showing outwardly, what has *already* taken place inwardly; That we've been forgiven and cleansed of our sin, released from its bondage of death . . .
And assured of eternal life; It's a picture of salvation

Third . . .

• It's an expression of belief

In fact, it's one of the main ways in the Bible for us to say *publicly*, that we *believe* personally; That we believe in Jesus; That we believe his Word
That we trust him by faith

Several times in the Bible, you find statements like – *when they believed . . . they were baptized* (Acts 8:12); Why? To *express* their belief; To *show* their faith
Apart from *any* words, baptism is an expression of belief

And . . .

• It's a declaration of identity

Identity, first of all, b/c we're doing what Jesus did – he was baptized, and we're baptized
Which identifies us with him, b/c we're intentionally *doing* it to be like him
Baptism is an intentional declaration of identity with Jesus
Just like some of you do certain things or wear certain things to identify with your favorite team, or actress, or pop star, or business guru
When you imitate someone like that, it's an intentional declaration of *identity* w/ them

And when it comes to Jesus, Paul describes it as – putting him on

That's **Gal 3:27** – *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ* [saved, brought under his redeeming influence] *have put on Christ*
Have clothed yourselves with a new identity, a new nature*****

➤ Which, if we could get baptized in space, would show it even better
B/c I found out recently, that in a zero gravity environment – the water never leaves your skin; Just like the robes of righteousness never leave your soul
Take a look at this little **video** (YouTube – Chris Hadfield; Space Station)

That's what's it's like to be baptized into *Christ*; We put him on, and it changes our identity; And then, we get baptized to declare it
It's a declaration of identity

And then last on this question . . .

- **It's a proclamation of allegiance**

That's what the Apostle Peter was getting at when he told the Gentiles in **Acts 10:48**, to – *be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ* (Acts 10:48)

That is, under his authority; Connected to his power; Devoted to his purposes
All of which makes it a proclamation of allegiance*****

It's like a tax collector in those days, who would show up and say – “I'm here in the name of Caesar;” IOW I'm connected to him; I'm his guy and I'm *loyal* to him

Or how about an ambassador who speaks in the name of her government; Like the US ambassador to the United Nations these days

When she stands up in the name of our country, she's not just giving a press release, she's proclaiming her allegiance

And the same is true of being baptized *in the name of Jesus Christ*; It's an unashamed proclamation of allegiance, that you're his and he's yours
You're his follower, and he's your Lord

That's the 1st question; 2nd, is . . .

WHY GET BAPTIZED?

Which has already been answered to some extent; And if that's where it stopped, it would be optional; But it's not; B/c first of all . . .

- **It's a part of discipleship**

Just before his ascension to heaven, Jesus said in **Mt 28:19-20a** – *Go therefore [in light of my authority] and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*

The command is to *make disciples* – followers of Christ; Who *grow up in every way into him who is the head* Paul says (Eph 4:15)

And the process for that, is to be baptized and taught; That's what Jesus said *Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them******

So *baptism* is a part of your discipleship, your growth process – just like being *taught* is part of your discipleship

2nd is that . . .

- **It's an act of obedience**

IOW get baptized b/c it's commanded; In **Acts 2:38** Peter said – *repent and be baptized every one of you*; Which applies no less to us than it did to them

Making it an act of obedience that we'd do well to heed, as we work out our salvation *with fear and trembling* (Phil 2:12)

But that doesn't mean that baptism saves you; Or somehow *contributes* to your salvation
If that were true, it would be a work; And Paul says in **2 Tim 1:9**, that . . .

[God] *saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works* [not b/c of something we did, something tangible] *but because of his own purpose and grace*

And Eph 2:8 says that it's by *grace* we are saved, through *faith*; Again, not something we *do*, but something we *believe*

And goes on to say that our salvation is a *gift* – *not* a result of *works*
So baptism doesn't in any way save us (see also Gal 2:16; 3:3)*****

But that doesn't negate the fact that God *tells* us to be baptized, and we need to obey
Just like he tells us to love one another; And walk by the Spirit; And pray
It's an act of obedience, and the 2nd reason to get baptized

Which brings us to . . .

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

And there's really only *one* answer . . .

- **All believers**

As in those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord

That's not only the command we just saw from Peter – *repent and be baptized every one of you* (Acts 2:38) . . .

But that's the precedent that follows in the book of Acts

And I want you to see it for yourself in a few passages; **Acts 2:41**

➤ The context here is that Peter has been preaching, and urging them to believe and repent
And it says in v41 – *So those who received his word* [those who embraced the truth about Jesus] *were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.* Those who received his word, were baptized; All of them

And then **Acts 8:12** – This is where the people of Samaria were amazed by a magician . . .
But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Once again – when they believed, they were baptized; All of them
Emphasized by the mention of both men and women

And last, is **Acts 18:8**, where Paul's been reasoning in the synagogue

The result of which, is that – *Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.* Not all believed; But those who did, were baptized

So it's not only *commanded* that all believers be baptized, but the precedent and example of the early church confirms it

In fact, so closely is baptism linked with belief, that an *unbaptized* believer is a contradiction of terms

If you don't want to be baptized as a believer, something's wrong with your belief

➤ Now, some of you are probably wondering whether you should be baptized if you were sprinkled as an infant; And the answer is yes

B/c there's nothing in the Bible about *sprinkling* as it relates to baptism; Nothing
And neither is there anything in the Bible about *infant* baptism; It's just not there

That doesn't mean you're a bad person if you had your *child* sprinkled; Or that your *parents* were bad people if *you* were sprinkled

It just means that you took part in a well-intended religious tradition, but it wasn't *baptism*; And it doesn't have any biblical significance or meaning . . .

When it comes to baptism; In which case you should be baptized as a believer

And then last, is the question “when”

WHEN SHOULD I GET BAPTIZED?

And that comes down to two things; The first, is . . .

- **When you understand what you’re doing**

Get baptized when you understand what you’re doing; That’s the example of the *Ethiopian* in Acts 8

As soon as he understood the gospel and believed, he was eager to follow through with baptism

And you should do the same; When you have a good grasp of what it means and what it doesn’t – you should get baptized

When you appreciate the significance and importance of it all – you should get baptized

When you value the *opportunity* it entails, an opportunity like few others to glorify the Lord – you should get baptized

And we’ll help you with all that, in our *Baptism Packet*

Fear shouldn’t keep you; Family shouldn’t keep you, unless they don’t approve and you’re living under their roof; And pride shouldn’t keep you

Only a lack of understanding should keep you

And 2nd, get baptized . . .

- **When you’re able to profess your faith**

When you’re able to give a believable and biblical testimony of how you came to Christ, and how he’s changed you

Biblical, in that you should use the *Bible*’s terms; “I’m saved b/c I got goose bumps one night” isn’t worth much

“I’m saved b/c I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he’s able to keep my life until he comes” – is; It’s biblical and believable

That doesn’t mean you don’t have to be a public speaker or a polished orator . . .

It just means you just have to be overflowing with the love of God, and able to give expression to it; And that goes for your child as well

If they want to get baptized, we recommend they wait until 5th grade; Maybe 4th on a few occasions, but mostly 5th and beyond

B/c we want it to be as *meaningful* and *memorable* as possible for them

Which comes through genuine *understanding*, as opposed to just repeating what they’ve heard

And being able to articulate their faith *publicly*, instead of just privately

➤ At which point you might ask – “Why do I have to give a testimony at all? If baptism in and of itself is an expression of belief, why do I have to say *anything*?”

B/c giving a testimony *personalizes* your baptism, *clarifies* it, and *reinforces* it

It *personalizes* it, in that you’re not just a name and a number to those who are listening

It *clarifies* it, so that those watching know why you’re doing what you’re doing

And it *reinforces* it – by adding emphasis to the meaning and significance

Not only that, but our faith was *never* meant to be private; Personal yes, but not private

Look at King David’s example in that respect (**Ps 40:9-10**)

I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. [10] I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; // I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.

He told all; And we should too; Especially at baptism*****

➤ So how about it? Do you need to be baptized? (**Summary**)

If so, if I’ve been speaking to you, I want you to stand to take the first step

To basically say – “I’m in; I need to be baptized, and I’m going to do it in a few weeks”

“I’m going to work through the packet, I’m going to prepare my heart, and I’m going to profess my faith”

Just stand up right now, and remain standing so we can rejoice with you, and I can pray for you as we close

Prayer – Lord, would you bless the courage and boldness of each and every person who’s standing? And would you solidify their step of obedience and allegiance? Fill them with anticipation as they prepare.