



1. WHAT IS BAPTISM?

What then is believer's baptism? What is the purpose of it, since salvation is "by grace through faith" (Ephesians 2:8,9)?

Water baptism is clearly a FIGURE or TYPE of something which already took place in the heart of the believer the moment he/she was saved (1 Pet. 3:21). Water baptism is the ordinance representing the identification of the Christian with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

You are "crucified" (standing upright in water), you are "buried" (immersed into the water), and you are "resurrected into life" (raised out of the water). Water baptism then, is a picture of spiritual baptism as defined in Rom. 6:3-5 and 1 Corinthians 12:13. It is the outward testimony of the believer's inward faith. A sinner is saved the moment he places his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is a visible testimony to that faith.

This is the SCRIPTURAL basis for water baptism. It PICTURES and PROCLAIMS four important things:

1. Scriptural baptism PICTURES and PROCLAIMS the believer's death, burial, and resurrection with Christ. "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." Colossians 2:12
2. Scriptural baptism PICTURES and PROCLAIMS the death of our old life to sin, and our resurrection to walk in newness of life. "As Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Romans 6:4
3. Scriptural baptism PICTURES and PROCLAIMS our faith in the Trinity of the Godhead. "Baptizing them in the NAME of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matthew 28:19
4. Scriptural baptism PICTURES and PROCLAIMS our "putting on" of Christ. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Galatians 3:26,27

So then, water baptism is a picture of what transpired when you placed your faith and trust in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to save you from your sins (Romans 6:3-5). It does not atone for sin. Only the blood of Christ cleanses us from sin (1 John 1:7; Colossians 1:14).



II. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

Next, let's consider WHO should be baptized. The Bible makes it clear that scriptural baptism is BELIEVER'S baptism.

- In Acts 2:41 we observe that they received the word, THEN they were baptized.
- In Acts 8:12,36,37 we find that they believed, THEN they were baptized.
- In Acts 10:43,44,47, it is plain to see that those who believed received the Holy Ghost, and THEN they were baptized. (Lost people do not receive the Holy Ghost).

When the Philippian jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." (Acts 16:30-34). Paul did not tell him to be baptized to be saved. His baptism came AFTER his believing, which sets the scriptural standard.

Who then should be baptized? According to the established Bible pattern, only those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

Water baptism then, is NOT salvation, but obedience to a command by God concerning discipleship.

WHEN AND WHERE SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

WHEN is the believer to be baptized? The Bible teaches that water baptism follows shortly after spiritual baptism (the new birth).

Notice the example of Paul (Acts 9:18), Cornelius (Acts 10:43-48), and the Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:33).

You were placed into the body of Christ by spiritual baptism at the moment you were saved (Galatians 3:26-27). Now you follow the miracle of spiritual baptism with physical immersion into water, according to Acts 8:38; 10:47; 16:33.

As to WHERE a believer is to be baptized, the obvious answer is in the presence of other believers, the local New Testament church. The Lord Jesus Christ gave the local church the ordinance of water baptism (Matthew 28:18-20).

An ordinance is a ceremony appointed by Christ to be administered in the local church as a visible type of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.



IV. HOW SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

HOW is a believer to be baptized? Immersion in water is the only scriptural method of baptism.

- In Matthew 3:13-16 and in Mark 1:9-10 we find that John the Baptist needed "much water" for baptism.
- In Acts 8:38-39 we are taught baptism by immersion.
- In Romans 6:3-6 we see that baptism must fulfill three types: death, burial and resurrection. It is also referred to as being "planted", and being raised. It is not difficult to see that the only mode of baptism which fulfills all these pictures is the immersion of the believer in water. Furthermore, scriptural expressions such as "much water" (John 3:23), and "down both into the water" (Acts 8:38) are very conclusive evidence that water baptism is by immersion.

WHY SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

Spiritual baptism is the Christian's identification with Christ (Colossians 2:12). This is WHY we should submit to water baptism.

Romans 6:3-5 teaches us that it is literally a picture of your death, burial and resurrection with Christ. It is your first act of obedience to God after salvation. WHY be baptized? Consider the following:

1. Scriptural baptism pleases the Lord. When Jesus was baptized, God the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). When we follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ we certainly please the Father.
2. Scriptural baptism is a testimony to the world. Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32). Our baptism is a public testimony of our faith in the Lord Jesus: Christ, and the way in which we identify ourselves with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

IN CONCLUSION

We understand and believe that baptism is not a "sacrament" that imparts saving grace, but an ORDINANCE. We are not saved by baptism, but by faith in Jesus Christ and His blood..."cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Baptism is the outward symbol of what has already transpired in the heart of the one who has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for full salvation. Have you taken this first step in your walk with the Lord? Have you been obedient to the word of God concerning this matter of believer's baptism? In Acts 2:41 we read, "Then they that GLADLY received his word were baptized..." What is your response?