

## **THE MEANING OF BAPTISM**

### **A FINAL WORD**

Baptism is not a doctrine over which to argue, but a declaration over which to rejoice because a lost sheep has been found, an unrighteous sinner has been given the gift of the righteousness of Christ. It symbolizes the reality that a person who once was spiritually dead has passed from eternal death to eternal life. An unholy man or woman, boy or girl has been birthed into the holy family of God and has a forever home in the holy presence of God our Father. What a Savior! What a privilege and honor to testify about what Jesus has done for the one who has repented of sin and placed personal faith in Him as Lord and Savior. The point of baptism is a time of testimony, presenting a physical picture of one's spiritual membership in the Body of Christ, and it is a place of praise and thanksgiving for the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ!

### **A SUMMARY**

#### ***What is Baptism and How is One Baptized?***

Baptism is a public testimony of one's faith in Christ. After giving a testimony of personal faith in Christ, a person enters the place of baptism where he or she is put under the water and immediately raised up out of the water, symbolizing his or her death, burial, resurrection, and new walk in Christ.

#### ***Who Should Be Baptized?***

Anyone who has personally repented and believed the message of salvation in Jesus alone, placing faith in Christ for salvation.

#### ***Why Should a Person Be Baptized?***

One is baptized in obedience to Christ's command, in recognition of the cleansed and changed heart given by Christ. It is a testimony of a new identity in Christ. It is part of being an obedient disciple of Jesus Christ and is commanded in the Scripture (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38).

#### ***When Should a Person Be Baptized?***

After one has placed faith in Jesus Christ, then he or she is to be baptized.

#### ***Where Should a Person Be Baptized?***

Over the years people have been baptized in pools, rivers, creeks, lakes, oceans, or in a church baptistery—Anywhere there is enough water to be immersed and a leader who can lead one into the waters of baptism.



# Baptism Matters!



## The Meaning and Importance of Baptism

## **BAPTISM MATTERS! HOW SO?**

Baptism matters to God. It is part of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. He commands every believer to be baptized “*in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*” (Matthew 28:19). Baptism matters to the believer. Baptism is a step of obedience in which a believer gives testimony of a personal relationship with Christ. Baptism matters to the Body of Christ. Believers share in common a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. Each symbolizes that relationship in the waters of baptism, and all rejoice in that testimony. Baptism matters to the world. It is a testimony of what Christ has done in one life and what He can do in anyone who calls on Him for salvation. Let’s seek to understand these truths by answering several questions about baptism.

### **What is Baptism?**

The word “*baptism*” is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptisma* from the root word *bapto*. The word *bapto* paints a picture for us. In the days of the Old and New Testaments the act of “baptism” was seen in everyday life. How? The word *bapto* means “to dip in or under.” The word that grew out of that, *baptizo*, means “to immerse” and in Greek literature referred to “sinking” a ship or “to sink” in mud, or “to go under.” It also referred to pieces of cloth or clothing being immersed in water for cleansing or in dye for changing (they took on a new identity, the cloth identified with the new dye). Thinking of these pictures, consider the meaning of baptism. Baptism does not cleanse or change a person, but symbolizes what Christ has done in a believer’s life.

### **What Baptism Is NOT...**

It is important to know what **baptism is not...**

**Baptism** is *not a way to wash away sins*. The waters of baptism cannot cleanse a person of their sins. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse us of sin (Ephesians 1:7-8; Titus 2:14; 1 John 1:7).

**Baptism** is *not a means of salvation*. The act of baptism has no power to save. Only the Living Lord Jesus can redeem and save a person (Acts 4:10-12; 10:43).

**Baptism** is *not necessary for salvation*. The call to salvation is a call to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. That means a turning of the heart from trusting ourselves and our “best” efforts to trusting and obeying Jesus alone as Savior and Lord. It is turning from our sin and all that goes with it and turning to Him and to a walk of obedience, to do what He says is right (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

### **Who Should Be Baptized?**

The Scriptures command all who have come to faith in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior to be baptized by immersion as a testimony of this new relationship to Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38, 41; 9:18; 10:47-48; 22:16)

### **How is a Person Baptized?**

In the act of baptism, a believer in Christ is immersed under the waters of baptism whether in a pool, a creek, a river, the ocean, or a baptistery in a church—anywhere there is enough water to immerse a person. In baptism a person goes into the water, then is placed under the water and immediately raised up out of the water.

### **What is the Meaning of Baptism? What is Seen in Its Symbolism?**

The act of baptism for a Christian is an immersion which symbolizes or paints a picture of one’s relationship with Christ. The symbolism of baptism points to a cleansing and a change within made by the Lord Jesus.

### **Why Should a Person Be Baptized?**

Three words answer why a person should be baptized—**identity, testimony, and obedience**.

**Identity** - In baptism we symbolize our new identity and the entrance of His Spirit into our changed hearts. The Greek word *baptisma* does not refer to the outward act of baptism alone [just getting wet]. It always *symbolizes* the full picture of what Christ has done and is doing in redemption. In coming to Christ for salvation, we identify with Christ. We admit we need the cleansing from sin that only He can give.

**Testimony** - Baptism also involves a Testimony of the faith one has placed in Christ for salvation and the change that has occurred. It is a testimony of what has happened. One goes into the waters symbolizing death *in Christ*. One goes under the waters symbolizing burial *in Christ*. One comes up out of the waters symbolizing resurrection *in Christ* and a new cleansed walk in Him (Romans 6:4-5). This is a testimony of being forgiven and cleansed of sin, enabled now by the presence and power of His Spirit to walk a new walk, a new lifestyle with a new attitude of daily surrender to Him.

**Obedience** - Baptism is in obedience to the command of Christ. He commanded His disciples to go into all the world and “*make disciples*.” Part of that is “*baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*.” In baptism, one follows the Lord as an obedient disciple. That is what *baptism is* and why a person should be baptized.

### **When Should a Person Be Baptized?**

Baptism is the symbolic act in which we picture physically what has already happened to us spiritually. When we come to Christ, we come seeking forgiveness and cleansing of sin (our nature) and sins (our actions). We come opening our hearts and lives to Him to enter in and live as Lord and Savior. When His Spirit comes to indwell us, He identifies us in Christ. He baptizes us into the Body of Christ. We become one with Him—part of His Body—by the work of His Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).