

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING BAPTISED

So you are thinking of taking the step of baptism. If you have Jesus as Lord and saviour of your life then this is a great time for you. Not only are you being obedient to the Lord's will and command, it is also a time where you are able to publicly profess your faith and allow the Lord to move in your life in a special way. These notes are here to give you a bit of information and guidance as you consider the baptism process. It is important to know about baptism and why you are doing it. So take these notes to help you along the way. God Bless you as you take this step.



Why be baptised?

- **Baptism is a Command.** – A number of times it is commanded by God for those who have Jesus as Lord of their life and practice a daily walk with God.

This is seen most clearly in Matt 28.

Mathew 28:18-20 - ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

- **Baptism represents the death of the old man and the resurrection of the new man in Christ** – Every person who has Jesus in their heart is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) the old sinful nature has died and the new life in Jesus has begun. Baptism symbolizes this. Here are some other scriptures.

Colossians 2:12 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.

Romans 6:3-7 ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We 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. ⁵If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, ^[a] that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

- **Baptism is a public declaration of your faith** – It allows others around you to see a physical example of what Christ has done in your heart.

Shouldn't I have been baptised as a child?

This is quite common in some denominations also known as christening. Many denominations see infant baptism as an initiation into the Christian community much like circumcision is to the Jewish community. Some practice baptism at birth and that later confirmation classes are taken to confirm your baptism and make you a member of that church or denomination. For some denominations baptism signifies the association of the traditions of the church which represent part of the salvation process. However the bible doesn't show any example of infant baptism. There are some examples of parents who came to dedicate their babies to the Lord but none, even in the early church, that practiced infant baptism. Jesus was baptized as an adult. Furthermore, nowhere in scripture does it reveal that baptism is something that is required for a person to make it to heaven. It is a step of obedience as commanded by the Lord to symbolize and testify to the spiritual new birth of a follower of Jesus. Child baptism actually started sometime in the second or third century.

Baptism is seen as a step of obedience that happens once a person has reached the age where they can understand the process and purpose of accepting Jesus as Lord of their lives. Once a person realizes they are a sinner and asks God to forgive them and have Christ to lead their life, baptism, a public declaration of that act, then follows. Peter talks about this in Acts 2:38 where 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 8 also shows this with an Ethiopian man who had come to know faith in Christ after Phillip explains the gospel to him.

Acts 8:35-38 ³⁵Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" ³⁸And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

What about being sprinkled as opposed to being immersed in water?

There are a number of differing views on this as well. Some denominations practice sprinkling or pouring of water over the head while some practice the full immersion in water (i.e. the whole body being put under water and then out). We practice immersion for the following reasons

- Baptism symbolizes the death burial of the old man that was born in sin. Immersion symbolizes this completely.
- Most instances in scripture refer to baptism by immersion. Jesus (Mark 1:9-10), The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:36-38) show them coming up out of the water.
- The original Greek meaning of baptize was to immerse
- Sprinkling or pouring was not practiced until later in church history

In the study of baptism it is important to recognize that the significant aspect of this observance is the believer's step of obedience and the symbolic act of faith in Christ. The significant thing is not the method but the heart of the individual as they take the step of baptism. Whether a person is sprinkled or immersed is secondary to all of this. Some people have been sprinkled as a result of ailing health, physical limitations, or severe aqua phobia (fear of water).

Some Myths about baptism

- ***If I am baptized then I cannot sin afterwards.***

This is not true and has no foundation in scripture. This stems from a false teaching early in church history. We still live as imperfect (but forgiven) people after salvation and baptism.

- ***If I was baptized earlier as a child I can not get baptized again***

Many people get baptized again when they were baptized at a time when they didn't recognize the significance in it or were baptized as a child. However it is only necessary to be baptized once after a person has recognized their need for Christ and have accepted God's grace.

- ***I need to be baptized to be saved***

Not True – Although it is a command it is not a necessity for salvation. The thief on the cross was never baptized. However, baptism was so important in Peter's eyes that he says in Acts 2 Repent and be baptized.

- ***I need to be a mature believer to be baptized***

Not So. Actually it should be one of the first things you do. It is a command and it quite often is done in scripture right after a person accepts Jesus.

- ***Baptism is a private thing***

Actually it is the exact opposite. It is a public declaration of faith.

- ***What is Your Question?***

Often there is a question not covered. Many times those other candidates may be internally asking the same question so now is the time to ask it

What Does a Baptismal Service look like?

The baptismal service can take on a number of different forms depending on the number of people being baptized the location and the time of year.

The Gathering – Today baptism usually is taken part as part of the regular Sunday service or after the service although it does not have to be that way. Sometimes baptisms will happen at the church but have also taken place at a lake or at a swimming pool. The place or the process is secondary to the fact that you are taking this step of obedience. Usually we have a gathering with the congregation and whoever else you would like to invite i.e. family friends etc. with whom you would like to share this special event. It is important to remember that this is not meant to be a private gathering but it is a public confession of your decision to follow Jesus.

The Worship- Actually the baptism is much like a regular service with the baptism often taking place right at the beginning. We usually have a time of singing before and during the baptism. Afterward there is a brief word spoken and then a time of celebration.

The Testimony- This is an ideal time for the candidate to share their story. Many services have the candidate share at the time of baptism. Others have a baptismal candidate put their story in writing and have someone influential in your decision to serve Jesus read it. That way it takes away nervousness of you having to speak and it allows someone close to you to take part in the celebration with you.

The Proclamation – Once the candidate and baptizer (usually the pastor but not always the pastor) are in position, the baptizer makes a proclamation similar to this:

_____ based on the confession of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and according to his commandment I baptize you now in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Amen.

Depending on the limitations of the area sometimes the candidate has to bend to help the baptizer submerge you in and out of the water.

After the baptism the baptized person leaves the area to allow for the next person to be baptized. A worship song is usually sung to provide time to change candidates

Candidates – Need to come to the service with a change of clothes that they can get wet. Many like to wear a bathing suit under their clothing. Please remember not to wear any pants that are beige or flesh colour as sometimes it appears that they are not wearing any clothes once they get wet. Candidates asked to be at the service at least a half hour early so we can go over any last minute details.

So there you have it, a crash course on baptism. Please let me know if there are other questions or enquiry you may have. God Bless you and give you a wonderful experience in baptism.