

SESSION 4

NEXT STEP: BAPTISM

Session #4 Teaching: Next Step...Baptism

When we enter the waters of baptism, we're proclaiming that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and lives again. By joining in baptism, we're identifying ourselves with Him. **Romans 6:4** says we have been buried with Him through baptism into death. We're now dead to the power of sin. Being raised up out of the water expresses our new life in Jesus Christ and our union with Him. If the meaning of baptism could be boiled down to one word, that word would be **identification**. Baptism speaks primarily of a personal, public identification with Jesus Christ.

How important is your baptism? It is your personal identification with the greatest act of human history—the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism doesn't save you—salvation comes by faith alone (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). Your guilt before God is removed the moment you trust in Christ. But baptism is your personal testimony to, and the inward assurance of, your passage from the old life to the new life...

How Baptism Relates to Salvation in Christ:

- 1. It means we have turned from the old life of sin to a new life in Jesus Christ.**
- 2. It means we are publicly identifying with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.**
- 3. It means we are openly joining the ranks of those who believe in Christ.**

When you are baptized, you are in fact visually preaching the gospel. As you stand in the water waiting to be baptized, A, you symbolize Jesus dying on the cross. As you are lowered into the water, B, you symbolize Jesus buried in the tomb. As you are raised from the water, C, you symbolize Jesus rising from the dead. The water of baptism is a symbol of the spiritual cleaning that Jesus offers us (1 Peter 3:21)!

And since you personally are being baptized, you are also saying, "I died with Jesus Christ, I was buried with him and now I am raised with Christ to brand-new life."

In short, in your baptism you are preaching a sermon without using any words at all. And your sermon in your baptism will be more effective with your friends than any sermon the pastor preaches on Sunday morning—more effective because it comes directly from you. Baptism is like a wedding ring. We put on a wedding ring as a symbol of our commitment and devotion. In the same way, baptism is a picture of devotion and commitment to Christ. A wedding ring reminds us and tells others that we belong to someone special. In the same way, baptism reminds us and others that we are devoted to Christ and belong to Him.

Many think, since they were “sprinkled” in Baptism as a child, that there is NO need to be baptized as an adult. There IS a difference. Infant baptism arose from the teachings of some early second and third-century church fathers that baptism washed away sin. In their teaching, this meant that if you died without being baptized then you died with your sins unforgiven and thus went to Hell (or purgatory as that concept developed over time). With the high infant mortality rate in the early centuries, the concept of baptizing babies as soon as possible came into vogue. Since it is not necessarily good to push baby heads underwater, the idea of sprinkling took hold. Again, the word baptism does not mean “sprinkle or “pour.” The Greek word “baptidzo” literally means to “dip” or to “immerse!”

We baptize after salvation because that follows every example we have and since baptism pictures how we’ve been saved, it needs to be after that has happened in our lives. So, in order to take YOUR next steps in your relationship with Jesus Christ, it’s important to take the symbolic step of baptism.

Discuss or Ponder and Review Scripture:

•Why is baptism important?

Baptism is important because Christ commanded it as a part of the Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). If we neglect baptism, we’re disobeying our Lord. Since true faith always expresses itself in obedience, those who have believed in Christ and have been properly instructed about baptism will obey Christ by being baptized.

•Baptism is the place where a believer publicly confesses Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and identifies with Christ and His church. In talking of our need to follow Him, Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me... For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:34, 38). Baptism is the initial way of confessing Christ publicly.

•What is the meaning of baptism?

The word “baptism” is simply a transliteration of the Greek word, baptisma, and some related words which have the meaning of dipping or immersing. Since the object dipped or immersed became totally identified with the substance in which it was placed, the idea of identification is central to the meaning of baptism. Jesus’ baptism by John publicly identified Him who was sinless with sinners in anticipation of His death and resurrection as their sin-bearer. In that sense, He referred to His own impending death as a “baptism” which He had to undergo (Mark 10:38-39; Luke 12:50). For us baptism symbolizes our identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection; our identification with Christ’s church; and, our cleansing from sin.

• Is baptism necessary for salvation?

The overwhelming testimony of Scripture is that salvation is by grace through faith alone (Eph. 2:8-9). Both Romans and Galatians deal extensively with the theme that we are justified (declared righteous by God) through faith in Jesus Christ, not by any works of righteousness. Many Scriptures affirm what Jesus stated, “... he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (John 5:24). He told the dying thief on the cross, who called out to Him in faith, that he would be with Him that very day in Paradise (Luke 23:39-43). Obviously, the man was not baptized.

•At the same time, Scripture is clear that genuine saving faith results in obedience (Eph. 2:10; 2 Thess. 1:8, “obey the gospel”). Thus every true believer who is properly taught and who has opportunity will be baptized in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. But baptism is the result of salvation, not the means to it.

Scriptures on Baptism

1 Peter 3:21 - “and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ..”

Colossians 2:12 - “having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.”

Ephesians 4:4-6 - “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Acts 22:16 - “And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.”