

# Water Baptism - What Is This All About?

Sunday, January 29, 2023

## Game - Password

Today we have the privilege of celebrating the ordinance of Water Baptism. Candidates will declare their faith in Jesus by stepping into the water, answering a couple of questions, being completely immersed, and then brought back up.

But what is it really all about. After all, through church history and even today, there are many differing thoughts regarding baptisms meaning and mode. Some will say we baptize as infants, we baptize by sprinkling, without baptism you cannot be saved.

The Early Church Fathers had much to Say about Baptism that goes beyond what is provided in the Canon of scripture and can be confusing and worse than that, at times substituted as doctrinal practice above the Commands we have in the scripture

That doesn't mean that all Early Church teaching is heresy and shouldn't be considered for its value, just that it alone cannot be our source of truth, nor should it be elevated above scripture

In fact one of my favorite passages of early Church teaching was brought to my attention quite some years ago by our Mike Hester. He brought me a copy of a passage from the Didache, which is considered to be a collection of the teachings of the Apostles from the late 1st century.

*ca. 70 A.D., Didache or Teaching of the Twelve*

*7:1-4 In regard to Baptism—baptize thus: After the foregoing instructions, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19), in living water [i.e., a flowing stream]. If you have no living water, then baptize in other water [i.e., a lake or pool]; and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, pour water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Before the Baptism, let the one baptizing and the one to be baptized fast, as also any others who are able. Command the one who is to be baptized to fast beforehand for one or two days.*

*— ca. 100 A.D., Death of Saint John, the last of the Apostles —*

*Some years later, Tertullian (ca AD 200-210) rightfully states that the place of baptism is of no consequence: "There is no difference whether one is washed in the sea or in a pool, in a river or a fountain, in a reservoir or a tub" (On Baptism, IV.2).*

Even this week I had a conversation with someone wanting to know what this tank was for and how we do baptism as compared to what they have experienced.

So today I want to take a few minutes to discuss Water Baptism and what it all means.

Reading from our own church beliefs- we call them the 16 Fundamental truths -

## **6. THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH BAPTISM IN WATER**

*The ordinance of baptism by immersion is commanded by the Scriptures. All who repent and believe on Christ as Saviour and Lord are to be baptized. Thus they declare to the world that they have died with Christ and that they also have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life.*

### **KEY TEXTS:**

#### **Matthew 28:19-20**

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

#### **Acts 8:4-13 (NLT)**

4 But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went. 5 Philip, for example, went to the city of Samaria and told the people there about the Messiah. 6 Crowds listened intently to Philip because they were eager to hear his message and see the miraculous signs he did. 7 Many evil spirits were cast out, screaming as they left their victims. And many who had been paralyzed or lame were healed. 8 So there was great joy in that city.

9 A man named Simon had been a sorcerer there for many years, amazing the people of Samaria and claiming to be someone great. 10 Everyone, from the least to the greatest, often spoke of him as “the Great One—the Power of God.” 11 They listened closely to him because for a long time he had astounded them with his magic.

12 But now the people believed Philip’s message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized. 13 Then Simon himself believed and was baptized. He began following Philip wherever he went, and he was amazed by the signs and great miracles Philip performed.

Acts 8:26-38 (NLT)

26 As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, “Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza.” 27 So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

29 The Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and walk along beside the carriage.”

30 Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

31 The man replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?” And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

32 The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. 33 He was humiliated and received no justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.”

34 The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?” 35 So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus.

36 As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look! There’s some water! Why can’t I be baptized?”

37, *“You can,” Philip answered, “if you believe with all your heart.” And the eunuch replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”*

38 He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

I believe that the act of baptism was commanded and was the normal experience of the who believed in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins and who desires to follow Him with all of their hearts.

I also believe that the act of baptism itself does not save us. Our salvation comes by grace through faith as we repent of our sins, believe on Jesus, Gods only sin who died for our sins, and ask him to come into our hearts as savior and Lord

Baptism then, is a symbol and a picture - to ourselves and to the world - of what has taken place spiritually inside of us and of our commitment to allow that work to continue in our lives.

## 1. Baptism Is Personal

*The professed object of Charlemagne was to establish Christianity in the remote parts of Germany, but it must ever be regretted that he used such violent means to accomplish his end. Thousands were forced into the waters of baptism to escape a cruel death. The sword or baptism were the conqueror's terms.*

*From <<https://bibletruthpublishers.com/the-sword-of-charlemagne-or-baptism/andrew-miller/europe-653-a-d-855-a-d-chapter-16/millers-church-history/la58098>>*

Baptism, like salvation is a personal decision. It cannot be something that someone does for you (infant baptism for instance) This is about you having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and making a personal decision to follow Him.

## 2. Baptism Is Public

At the same time, Baptism is something that is public. It demonstrates to others what we have decided to do, who we have decided to follow and the changes that will happen in our lives as a result of that decision and commitment.

There are still places in the world in which a public decision to be baptized as a follower of Jesus Christ, places a mark of the persons head. They will now be ostracized, driven from the family, persecuted, and sometimes killed. Why because when we take a public stand for Jesus, even the devil knows that that means it is real.

Likewise, the public act of Baptism prepares us for a public life of the faith. Our faith was never meant to be kept a secret. We must not fall into the trap of believing that we can be a believer on the inside but live like the world on the outside. Following Jesus will cost us something. We must be willing to pick up that cross and follow Him and not worry about who sees us and what they think of us.

## 3. Baptism Requires Surrender

This brings us to another picture of baptism. Baptism requires Surrender. We Surrender ourselves into the hands of the one baptizing us. IN our faith we surrender ourselves to the will of the one we are now following. The old chorus tells it well... *I surrender all... I Surrender all... All to Jesus I Surrender... I Surrender All.*

Some relate the story of a ruler - some say Charlamagne, some Constantine, others even attribute it to Ivan the Terrible. Who would allow his soldiers to be Baptized while holding their sword in their hand above the water. Thus, they signified that they were unwilling to surrender their right to use their sword to kill their enemies but were none the less fulfilling the act of baptism.

Whether this story is true or not it still makes the point. There are many who want to be baptized who have not fully surrendered their lives to Christ. We cannot surrender halfway dear friends. It is all or nothing.

This is one reason why we practice emersion. Completely going under the water. Complete submission

#### **4. Baptism Requires Trust**

It takes a measure of trust to allow someone to take hold of you and dunk you under the water. When I baptize people, I place one hand over their mouth and nose and have them grab my arm. I place the other hand behind their back to support them. Then I ask them to trust me with their weight and allow me to bend them back and immerse them under the water before bringing them back up.

Now even though I have never failed to bring someone back up (I have jokingly threated them by asking them how long they can hold their breath) it takes trust.

In our walk with Jesus, we must trust Him with everything. He will not let us drown. He will walk with us. He will bring us through. We must trust that His way is the only way. That His word is complete truth. That He will take care of us. That he will raise us from the dead and that He will take us to heaven to live for eternity

Baptism is a picture of Trust.

#### **5. Baptism Requires Obedience**

Notice that Jesus says that Baptism is to be followed by teaching them to obey everything I have taught you.

Baptism itself requires obedience, but it is just the beginning of a lifetime of Obedience to the teachings of Jesus.

## 6. Baptism Speaks of Cleansing

### Memory Verse - Romans 3:23

### Game - Beach Ball Melee

Romans 3:23-24

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

*Baptism itself is a corporal act by which we are plunged into the water, while its effect is spiritual, in that we are freed from our sins.” —Tertullian, Baptism 7:2 Date: 203 A.D.*

Colossians 2:9-12

9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. 11 In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ 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.

From the letter of Barnabas we read...

*Regarding [baptism], we have the evidence of Scripture that Israel would refuse to accept the washing which confers **the remission of sins** and would set up a substitution of their own instead [Ps. 1:3–6]. Observe there how he describes both the water and the cross in the same figure. His meaning is, ‘Blessed are those who go down into the water with their hopes set on the cross.’ Here he is saying that after we have stepped down into the water, burdened with sin and defilement, we come up out of it bearing fruit, with reverence in our hearts and the hope of Jesus in our souls” —Barnabas, Letter of Barnabas 11:1–10 Date: 74 A.D.*

In Acts 22:16, Paul speaks of his own conversion and baptism with these words...

Acts 22:12-16

12 “A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. 13 He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him.

14 “Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. 15 You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

## 7. Baptism Speaks of New Life

Romans 6:4

4 We 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.

The symbol of death and new life is paramount to act of Baptism. We will not truly follow Christ if we fail to allow the Spirit to put our old flesh to death and raise us to walk in newness of life. The scripture also makes it clear that we have a responsibility in this process too...

Ephesians 4:17-32

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.