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What the Bible teaches about BAPTISM

**—Answers to questions
people ask**

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I. WHY SHOULD A CHRISTIAN



BE BAPTISED?

(Bible verses quoted are from King James version and R.S.V.)

Does baptism save me, or help save me? The answer is NO. The Bible says, "The Blood of Jesus Christ (not water) cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1, v. 7. "By grace are you saved through faith (not water) . . . not of works (doing the best I can)." Eph. 2, v. 8, 9.

It is important to see matters from God's viewpoint. He has declared that the penalty of my sin is death, Romans 6, v. 23. I am therefore condemned and cannot do anything to save myself. Either I must die for my sin, or a sinless substitute die for me. This is my



only way of escape, the only way God can righteously forgive me. The good news of the Gospel is that Christ has died in my place and met the full penalty of my sin on the cross. When His atoning work was completed He cried in triumph, "it is FINISHED." This being so, God is able to offer forgiveness and eternal life to all who will repent and receive His Son to be their Saviour, Lord and Master. When I accept Christ in this personal

way I become a child of God, John 1, v. 12. I am born again, John 3, v. 3. I possess **eternal** life and will never perish, John 10, v. 27-29. My **union** or relationship with God will never break — my **communion** or friendship can, if I sin, but it is restored on confession, 1 John 1, v. 9.

Baptism does not **make** me a Christian, but it **marks** me as a Christian. It is not the **bridge** to Heaven, but it is the **badge** of discipleship.

Let me now give you 5 reasons why a Christian should be baptised:—



1. Baptism is **COMMANDED** by Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour. "And Jesus came and said to them, 'Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,'" Matthew 28, v. 18, 19. "And He said to them 'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel, He who believes and is baptised will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned,'" Mark 16, v. 15. "And He **commanded** them to be baptised in the name of the Lord." Acts 10, v. 48.

From these scriptures it is evident that baptism is a command of the Lord to those who believe in Him. He commanded the preaching of the Gospel and the practice of baptism in the same verses. Dare we say then that baptism is not important?

Our Lord said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." John 15:15. Please note. A Christian

who knows baptism to be the Lord's command is disobedient until he is baptised.

Trust and obey
for there's no other way
to be happy in Jesus
But to trust and obey.



God said to Abraham, "Because you have obeyed my voice I will bless you." Genesis 22, v. 15-18.

God's blessing is conditional on my obedience in every matter, including that of baptism.

2. Baptism is **COMMENDED** by our Lord's example. And Jesus when He was baptised went up straightway out of the water. Matthew 3, v. 16-17.

He was baptised by John in Jordan. The traditional site is still clearly marked and is shown to travellers in the Holy Land. I saw it myself when on a visit there.

Our Lord walked about 80 miles from Galilee to Jordan to be baptised. He said He did it "to fulfill all righteousness". He had no sins of His own but he endorsed the ordinance of baptism as practised by John. For Him it was a **MUST**. Picture the scene in your mind. At His request John takes Him by the hand — leads Him into the Jordan and immerses Him.

Immediately the Heavens open, the Holy Spirit descends upon Him and the voice of His Father is heard saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Surely the timing of this state-

ment is significant, coming as it did when our Lord was baptised.



The Apostle Peter reminds us that Christ has left us an example that we should follow His steps. 1 Peter 2, v. 21. His footprints lead me down into the waters of baptism. It must bring great pleasure to Him and His Father as they watch my baptism.

3. Baptism was the **COMMON** practice of Christians in the early New Testament Church. It followed immediately after their conversion to God. Please look up the following verses.
Acts 2, v. 41. The 3000 who "gladly received His word," were baptised.
Acts 8, v. 35-38. The man from Ethiopia "who believed with all his heart," was baptised.
Acts 9, v. 18. Saul of Tarsus, converted 3 days, was baptised. Later he became the Apostle Paul and in Romans 6 and Colossians 3, v. 12 he taught the same truth to his converts.
Acts 10, v. 43-48. Those who believed the message preached by the Apostle Peter concerning forgiveness of sins and who received the Holy Spirit, were baptised.
(The Holy Spirit is received into your life **when** you believe the Gospel. See Ephesians 1, v. 13.)
Acts 16, v. 14-15. Lydia "whose heart the Lord opened . . . was baptised."
Acts 16, v. 30-34. The jailor who believed on the

Lord Jesus Christ, with all his house, was baptised at the same hour of the night.
Acts 18, v. 8. Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue and many of the Corinthians "hearing, believed and were baptised."

The question might well be asked, "Why were all of these Christians baptised after they were converted?" The answer must surely be because they knew that Christ commanded and commended it by His example. See points 1 and 2 above.

4. Baptism is my **CONFESSION** of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ — and my **identification** with Him in His death, burial and resurrection for me. This is the clear meaning of baptism.

"We are buried with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead, we too might walk in newness of life." Romans 6, v. 4.

My confession of Christ should be made by lip and life. See Romans 10, v. 9; 6, v. 4. Our Lord says, "Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father in Heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father in Heaven." Matthew 10, v. 32.

Baptism is the visible, outward expression of my inward decision for Christ. It brings me out on the side of Christ in a very definite way. It is a sign of my commitment and discipleship. When people saw Christians being baptised in New Testament days, there was no doubt in their minds as to why they were doing this, or to whom they owed their allegiance.

For this reason baptism can be particularly help-

ful to young Christians brought up in Christian homes

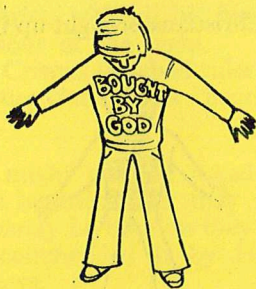


where perhaps their decision for Christ is hardly known. Their baptism will be their act of confession in which they make a definite stand for Christ. But whatever your background, your baptism will prove to be a source of strength and courage in your desire to follow Christ and witness for Him in this way.

5. Baptism is a **CHALLENGE** to live a Godly life. "We also should walk in newness of life." Romans 6, v. 4.

The believer who appreciates the claims of Christ upon Him as set forth in his baptism will recognise that his body is the dwelling place of God, that he is no longer his own and should glorify God in his body and spirit (disposition) which are God's, 1 Corinthians 6, v. 16-19.

No longer should I sin with the members of my body, hands, feet, eyes, tongue, etc., but on the contrary, I should serve God with my members and practice righteousness (do right things). Romans 6, v. 13.



When you awake each morning say to God, "I am a baptised believer, linked with Christ. Help me to live a victorious life today by the power of the risen Christ."

II. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTISED?

Some say babies, others say believers — who is right?

The late Norman Hyde, founder of the Children's Home in Marton, N.Z., once placed an advertisement in a country newspaper that said, "£5 Reward to any person who can show one verse in the Bible which teaches infant baptism or one case of a baby baptised." Calling at a house that morning he was met by a lady with a Bible in one hand and a cigarette in the other. Mr. Hyde said, "I am glad to see you reading your Bible — are you a Christian?" "Oh no," she said, "I am trying to win £5. There is a fool in this town offering this amount to anyone who can show a verse or an incident authorising the baptism of babies."

"How far have you got in your reading?" enquired Mr. Hyde. "Oh, I am only on page 1 so far," said the woman. "Then I suggest you begin in the New Testament," said Mr. Hyde. "In fact," he said, "I will lend you my concordance which lists all the verses on baptism and you can quickly look them up." "Will you please help me?" asked the lady. "Yes certainly," said Mr. Hyde, and together they looked up the cases listed. In every case they found the candidates were people who did things no baby could ever do. e.g. "they gladly received his word," Acts 2, v. 41; "they believed," Acts 8, v. 12; "Whose heart the Lord opened," Acts 16, v. 14; "Hearing, believed, were baptised," Acts 18, v. 8.

Immediately the lady saw she had been mistaken and then Mr. Hyde said, "You may be interested to know I am the man who put the advertisement in the paper!" Needless to say the lady quickly apologised for having stated earlier that the advertiser was a "fool!"

You will notice that all of the above cases show that **faith** was the pre-requisite of baptism. Where faith in Christ has not been exercised baptism in the New Testament sense is not valid and should not take place. Provided personal faith in Jesus Christ has been experienced, the age of the individual does not really matter. However, baptism must always be regarded as a responsible act by responsible people and this should be pointed out to the enquirer if very young in years. Dr. Alexander MacLaren was only eleven years of age when he obeyed the Lord in baptism. Spurgeon, "the prince of preachers" was 15 at the time of his baptism. Many have been older — some very old before they realised their obligations to the Lord in this matter. "If you believe" is the all important condition stated in the Word of God.

III. HOW SHOULD I BE BAPTISED?

The method in the New Testament is clearly **Immersion**, not sprinkling or pouring.

“And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch and he baptised him. And when they were come up out of the water . . . he went on his way rejoicing.” Acts 8, v. 38-39.

“John also was baptising in Aenon, near Salim, because there was **MUCH** water there.” John 3, v. 23.

“Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism . . . raised up.” Romans 6, v. 4.

The meaning of Baptism clearly implies immersion. When a believer in the Lord Jesus is baptised he goes through in figure what the Saviour went through in reality, namely **death, burial, resurrection**.

The usage of the word confirms the meaning as being immersion. e.g. “**Buried**” in baptism . . . “**Raised**”.

To bury a person you must put them beneath something — sprinkling a little earth on them will never do as any undertaker will tell you! Christ was buried in the tomb after His death. I must be buried in the watery “grave” of baptism.

The scriptures speak of going down into the water



(burial) and coming up out of the water (resurrection).

John was baptising in Aenon, because there was **much** water there. Why this comment if he was only going to **sprinkle** the candidates? Surely a little **water** out of a bottle would have been sufficient if that were the method!

Please note then that a Bible baptism requires:

- (1) Water.
- (2) Much water. John 3, v. 23.
- (3) Going down into the water. Acts 8, v. 38.
- (4) Coming up out of the water. Acts 8, v. 39.
- (5) Being buried by baptism. Romans 6, v. 4.
- (6) Being raised up to walk in newness of life. Romans 6, v. 4, 5.

Which method of baptism is best represented by the language, meaning and teaching of these verses — **Sprinkling, pouring or immersion?**

If further confirmation is needed we would point out that the best authorities dealing with the Greek language from which our English Bible was translated admit that the word ‘baptise’ is derived from the Greek ‘Baptizo’ meaning to dip, to plunge, to immerse.

Liddell and Scott in their famous Greek lexicon say that it means “to dip in or under”. A different Greek word is used for “sprinkle” namely ‘Rhantizo’, and a different word again is used for ‘pouring’. Remember too that the Greek Church baptises its adherents by immersion — and they surely ought to know the meaning of Greek words!

Another source of convincing evidence that the early Church baptised by immersion is the fact that baptistries

are commonly found among the ruins of many ancient churches.

Dr. R. T. Knowling, Professor of New Testament Exegesis, Kings' College, London, in "The Expositor's Greek Testament", writes on Acts 8:38, "The context indicates that the baptism was by immersion, and there can be no doubt that this was the custom in the early Church."

Have you been baptised in the Bible way? — by immersion — and since you became a believer in Jesus Christ?

IV. WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTISED?

"Then they that gladly received His Word were baptised." Acts 2, v. 41.

"When they believed . . . they were baptised." Acts 8, v. 12.

"And he took them the same hour of the night (in which they believed) and he was baptised at once." Acts 16, v. 33.

The test is not **Time** but **belief**. This involves total commitment to Christ — a desire to follow Him, obey Him and live for Him.

Where this reality is discerned adequate teaching should be given on the subject thus allowing the Christian concerned the opportunity to "arise and be baptised" to the Glory of God.

No time should be lost in obeying the Lord's com-

mand. When a Roman Centurion said to a servant, "Do this" — he obeyed immediately. Surely the captain of our salvation should not be given less loyal obedience.

QUESTIONS I HAVE BEEN ASKED ABOUT BAPTISM

1. **I was baptised as an infant — should I be baptised again?**

This is a fair question. The important thing to realise is that baby baptism is not taught in the Bible. It teaches only the baptism of "Believers". Moreover your baptism as a baby was not your own act. It was something done for you (albeit in good faith), in which you exercised no choice and of which you have no recollection. You are in a similar position to those in Acts 19 who were baptised "unto John's baptism" but later were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus after they heard the Christian gospel. So they were baptised again — but this time as "believers". Verse 5.

Why don't you follow their example?

2. **"Is it right to dedicate our children to the Lord?"**

Yes. Christian parents should do this asking God's help to bring them to faith by Godly teaching and right Christian example. Let them see you pray, read the Bible, live a Godly life. Take them to services and they will follow on. You will then be well rewarded for your efforts.

3. **"I don't belong to your church. Does baptism place**

me under an obligation to join it?"

The answer is "NO". Your baptism is a single act of allegiance to Christ and does not commit you to join any particular Church. However, it is important for you to find a spiritual home, sound in the Fundamental Doctrines of the faith and that practises "Believers" baptism. If, therefore, you desire fellowship at the Chapel where you are baptised, you should see one of the elders about it.

4. **"What will happen if I don't get baptised?"**

Firstly, you may go back in your Christian life and experience. You can't stand still! You will either go forward in fellowship with God or back in disobedience. Baptism could decide the issue. Be careful how you act at this time.

Secondly, if you are saved you will go to Heaven, but remain unbaptised for all Eternity. If you know the truth and you don't obey it you will feel ashamed when you meet your Lord at the Judgement Seat of Christ.

Peter testified that baptism is the answer of a good conscience toward God. 1 Peter 3, v. 21.

I well remember a crippled lady of 83 years coming forward and requesting baptism. She said, "I would feel totally ashamed before my Saviour if I met Him unbaptised and saw the scars of Calvary reminding me of the price He paid to win me." In spite of her physical difficulty her baptism was a triumph.

Afterwards she went on her way rejoicing until the Lord took her home 8 years later. She had a good conscience about baptism. Have you? To me

the challenge of that incident is simply this — if such an aged person with physical handicaps could face the waters of baptism to please her Lord how can any fit younger person sidestep the issue and not feel ashamed before God?

Make sure you are a committed Christian — then "arise and be baptised".

May we suggest that you now get Mr. Graham's companion booklet to this one, entitled "What the Bible Teaches about the Lord's Supper" — the other ordinance which Christ gave to His Church.

This can be obtained from:

YOUR LOCAL CHRISTIAN BOOKSTORE.

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About the Author



Colin Graham has for many years conducted Gospel and Bible teaching Crusades throughout N.Z., Australia and other countries. He has worked mainly with Open Brethren Assemblies.

Because most who become Christians are not attached to any Church, Mr Graham has felt it important that they should find a spiritual home. For this reason he has included in his follow up ministry, Bible teaching on the two ordinances Christ gave to His Church, namely, Baptism and the Lord's supper. As a result Mr Graham has had the joy of seeing many of these believers become active in the life and witness of local churches. Some have gone overseas to serve as missionaries.

This booklet is the substance of Mr Graham's teaching on Christian Baptism.

- It will help the new Christian who is perhaps confused and needs Bible instruction on this subject.
- It will help parents provide a satisfying answer to their children who ask about Baptism.
- It will help Bible class leaders, youth leaders, study groups who want to encourage those in their care.
- It will help those baptised to see that Baptism is a meaningful experience — not a ritual but a reality — an act that will lead to increasing development and victory.

Mr Graham says "The longer I live the more impressed I am with the beauty and significance of Baptism. I am sure that if it were more clearly understood by Christian people none would hesitate to obey the Lord in this matter . . . "