

"Baptism"

Sometimes people ask, "Well why is baptism so important?" Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're going to explore the meaning and the purpose of baptism, so stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's way; we're here to search God's Word for the Lord's will. Please don't ever take the Bible for granted. It's not simply another religious book. It's unique and filled with God's truth. It's the only book that can teach us where we came from, why we're here, and where we're going. The Bible teaches us the words that lead to eternal life. The word of God is settled in heaven but it can touch our lives for eternity. If we're born again at all, we're born again through the preaching of the word. 1 Peter 1:23 says, "for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." Oh, we're delighted you've joined us today. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

Today we're going to complete our series on how we respond to the gospel of Christ and what we must do. We've talked about the necessity of hearing the gospel and obeying what God says. We've shown the necessity of faith in Christ and how faith is the foundation of Christianity. We've seen the necessity of repentance, turning away from sin and to the ways of the Lord. Well today we're focusing on the need to be baptized to be saved.

Few people doubt the need to believe or repent in order to be saved, but there's much controversy over baptism. People have mistakenly said baptism is a work that people do to earn salvation. Well this simply isn't true. While it's true we're commanded to be baptized, baptism is not so much about what we do as it is about what God does for us. We're going to study what baptism into Christ means and why everyone who chooses to follow Christ should be baptized to be saved.

Now if you want to study more about these matters, we're offering this little book What Must I Do free. And it's yours, and you can have a copy, a free printed copy or a CD of our study by mailing your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or sending an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Romans 6:3 to 7, and we'll see what God says about baptism.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Romans, chapter 6, verses 3 through 7. "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin." That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that in baptism You can bury us with Christ and raise us up again so that we might walk in newness of life, freed from sin. And Father help us to always be obedient to Your will. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines baptism as "a ceremony or sacrament of admitting a person into Christianity or a specific church by dipping him in water or sprinkling water on him, as a symbol of washing away sin." Well this definition describes what baptism means in the English

language, considering there are many different “Christian” groups that baptize in a variety of ways. But simply because the many denominations do things differently doesn’t mean that that’s what the New Testament teaches, or that they teach all these different ways to baptize, and that all of them are God’s will.

So, what does the New Testament teach in regard to the act of baptism? What action does the New Testament describe? The Greek word, baptidzo means to dip, to plunge, or immerse. It refers to the specific act of dipping or immersing in water. A different Greek word rhantidzo describes the action of sprinkling. Now if the Lord or the Holy Spirit had wanted us to sprinkle for baptism, they would have moved the writers of the New Testament to use that word rhantidzo rather than baptidzo.

Now after an exhaustive survey of more than 200 examples in Greek literature and ancient translations, an author Thomas J. Conant in his book, *The Meaning and Use of Baptizein*, concluded: “That the word baptizein, during the whole existence of the Greek as a spoken language, had a perfectly defined and unvarying import. In its literal use it meant, as has been shown, to put entirely into or under a liquid, or other penetrable substance, generally water, so that the object was wholly covered by the inclosing element.”

Now when the New Testament speaks of baptism, the event described points to an immersion in water. In Matthew 3 and verse 16 after Jesus was baptized He “went up out of the water.” In John 3:23 John baptized in the Jordan River “at Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there.” Now baptism or immersion would, of course, require enough water to immerse an adult. In Acts 8 verses 38 to 39, Philip and the Eunuch went down into the water, Philip baptized the Eunuch, and they both came up out of the water. Now whatever happened in this baptism, it took place while they were down in the water.

Now the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 6 and verse 4, “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” Now the likeness of being buried and raised in water is striking here! It’s not an accident that baptism is a burial and a resurrection that leads to newness of life. Romans 6 verses 5 to 7 says, “For if we’ve become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him (well when, when we were baptized), in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.”

Now baptism is that time when our old body of sin is crucified with Christ and done away with. It’s buried. At that point we’re no longer slaves to sin. And when we are raised up with Him, we have new life just as the Lord Jesus had new life when He was resurrected. The resurrection caused the new life for Jesus, and our resurrection with Christ in baptism causes our newness of life. Before baptism we are dead in sin, but after baptism we are freed from sin and walk in newness of life!

Now commenting on this passage William Barclay said, “Commonly baptism was by total immersion and that practice lent itself to a symbolism to which sprinkling does not so readily lend itself. When a man descended into the water and the water closed over his head, it was like being buried. And when he emerged from the water, it was like rising from the grave. You see baptism was symbolically like dying and rising again. And the man died to one kind of life and rose to another; he died to the old life of sin and rose to the a new life of grace.”

There is a second passage that links baptism to the burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Colossians 2 verses 12 to 13 says, “having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you,

who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.” Baptism is an act of faith in the powerful working of God. In baptism we demonstrate our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And we’re united with Him in His burial and resurrection by baptism. Before we were baptized we were dead in our sins; but in baptism God makes us alive, just as God made Christ alive. Now in making us alive, God forgives us of all our trespasses.

Did you notice in this passage how God is active in forgiving us and in making us alive. Baptism is an act of faith on our part. The command in Acts 2:38 and 22:16 is to “be baptized.” Now think with me. Grammatically, “be baptized” is a command, but it’s a passive command. Now God commands us to demonstrate our faith by letting someone baptize us in the name of Jesus Christ. “Be baptized” means someone else is immersing us in water. Someone else is acting on us. We receive the action. That’s what “passive” means.

Now just as we receive the physical act of baptism in water, we receive God’s gracious actions on us in the forgiveness of sins and making us alive. In baptism we are born again or born from above with newness of life. And God is the One powerfully working on us. Baptism is not some work of merit on our part to earn salvation. No. Baptism is an act of faith on our part whereby we receive God’s powerful working in our lives, just as He powerfully raised Jesus Christ from the dead. God buries our old man of sin, God raises us up, God makes us alive, God washes away our sins, and God makes us new.

Now when people say, “well you don’t have to be baptized to be saved,” well when they say that they’ve missed the point. If baptism is the time when God acts on us, then baptism would have to be necessary for us to be saved.

So, there is great importance to immersing as baptism. We should respect what God is doing to us by saving us in baptism or immersion. We have no right or authority to substitute sprinkling for immersing in fulfilling God's commandments. If God is providing salvation to us through our baptism, then shouldn't we be careful to abide by the Lord's commands. Shouldn't we cooperate with what He's told us to do. Sprinkling and immersing are different things, their not the same. While many have sprinkled people and called it baptism for centuries, sprinkling for baptism has no basis in Scripture, you just can't find it there. Baptism into Christ is by immersion. Baptism by sprinkling is an old, human tradition begun centuries after the New Testament.

Obedying the Lord doesn't mean doing what's conventional or doing what's popular. Obeying the Lord means honoring the Lord to the point that you're willing to do what He says. Honoring and respecting God means you won't add to God's commands, take away from God's commands, or edit God's commands to suit yourself. You simply, lovingly, humbly obey the Lord.

So, why should a person who is penitent and believes in Christ be baptized. Well there are numerous reasons. Peter told the guilty people at Pentecost in Acts 2:38, “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.” People repent and are baptized so that their sins will be forgiven. Ananias told Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22:16, “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” Baptism is the time when God washes away our sins.

Baptism is the time we clothe ourselves with Christ or become united with Him. Galatians 3:26 to 27 says, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Baptism is a necessary act of faith. Placing your faith in

Christ necessarily includes baptism. The faithful sons of God today are baptized into Christ and clothed with Christ.

Now we've already seen in Romans 6 verses 4 to 7 and Colossians 2:12 to 13 that baptism is the time that God unites us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Now in baptism we are crucified with Him, buried with Him, and raised with Him to walk in newness of life. Since the old man of sin is crucified with Him in baptism, God at that time frees us from sin and its guilt. Baptism is also that time when we begin sharing our new life in Christ and with Christ. From that day forward we are new people who belong to Him. His blood has cleansed and purchased us; we are no longer our own. We have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6 verses 19 to 20).

When we're baptized, the Lord adds us as God's children to the church. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 13, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." Baptism unites us with Christ and with those who are in His body, the church.

Now to be in the church is to be in God's kingdom. Paul wrote the church at Colossae, when he wrote to them, he said in Colossians 1:13 to 14, "For He (speaking of Jesus) rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Now forgiveness and membership in the church or kingdom are benefits of being baptized into Christ. This agrees with what the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3 and verse 5. When He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Well how are we born again of water and the Spirit? Well this is surely by baptism. The Lord says that without baptism we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Now in Christ, we have the grace and blessing of God. Ephesians 1 and verse 3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." Now in Christ, we have the promise of eternal life. 1 John 5:11 and 12 says, "And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; and he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." The way to have the Son is to respond to the Son by baptism when you confess Christ and repent of your sins. Baptism is certainly not the only thing necessary to faith. We've seen in this past month that hearing God, believing in Jesus, repenting of sin, confessing Christ as the Son of God are also necessary to obey the gospel.

So then, why is baptism so important? Why are we talking about its necessity? Because baptism is that culminating act in our obedience. Our faith, repentance, and confession lead us to baptism. But baptism is that point when God acts upon us, transforming us from people dead in sin to people alive in Christ. That's when we are born again and become members of the Lord's church. To talk about baptism means revealing how God unites us with Christ, saves us, makes us His children. Oh what a blessing! Nothing else could be so very important for today and for eternity! Let's pray together. Father we pray that each one that is listening and studying with us will come to know You and love You, will believe with their hearts, will repent of their sins, confess Your name and be baptized, if they have not yet done those things. Father may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

The New Testament gives us many examples of people being baptized. The 3000 who obeyed the gospel at Pentecost in Acts 2:41 were baptized that very day. In Acts 8:12, when the Samaritans believed the preaching of Philip about Jesus and His kingdom, they were baptized right then. They didn't wait. The Eunuch in Acts 8 verse 36 asked to be baptized. It was urgent! He wasn't content to

wait until another day. He came up out of that water rejoicing. In Acts 22:16 Ananias asked Saul of Tarsus, "why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name." In Acts 16 the jailer and his household considered baptism so important that they were baptized in the middle of the night. Why the urgency? Why the emphasis on acting quickly?

I'll tell you why. Being baptized is necessary for you to be saved. It's necessary for you to receive the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism is necessary for you to be united with Christ and to become a Christian. The Bible never contemplates the idea of a Christian who has not been baptized. Baptism is not something that you do after you have been saved; baptism is the time when God saves you. That's when God takes the blood of Christ and washes you free from sin and makes you His child. 1 Peter 3 and verse 21 says, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Baptism is how we appeal to God to be saved and to have a clear conscience. Have you been baptized into Christ? If you believe and you're repentant, won't you be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins today?

We hope that today's study about baptism has been helpful. And we're offering a free little book entitled What Must I Do. Now it's free, and it's something that we can send to you. We'll offer it free, this printed copy or a CD of this message, so mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now our programs appear on our website at www.searchtv.org. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses to help you learn more about God's will. If you want one, let us know. We also offer free study sheets that go along with our programs. Now you can download them free before each program, or at our website or you can call and request them. Now if you call, we won't beg you for money or put you on a list.

We do ask that you please worship with a church of Christ in your area. They're the reason that we don't ask for money. And if you're looking for a church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Churches of Christ love and want guests, and you'll be glad you worshipped with them. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about our program. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.