

THE COMMANDMENT OF BAPTISM

Jesus commanded His disciples to baptise (immerse, or submerge in water) all nations in His great commission to the church Matthew 28:18-20. *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

On the day of Pentecost, Peter commanded all those who had repented of their sins to be baptized in water Acts 2:38. *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."* He didn't leave water baptism as an optional extra for Christians, it is a commandment.

THE EXAMPLE OF BAPTISM

Our Lord Jesus Himself gave every Christian an example of obedience and righteousness when He Himself was baptized in water by John the Baptist Matthew 3:13,17. *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

The early church also set a good example for us in gladly obeying God in the waters of baptism: There were three thousand at Pentecost Acts 2:41. *Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.* The Ethiopian eunuch Acts 8:36-38. *As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.* Here are some others to look at; The Samaritans Acts 8:12-16; Paul the apostle Acts 9:18; Cornelius and all his household Acts 10:47,48; Lydia and all her household Acts 16:15; and the Philippian gaoler and all his household Acts 16:33.

THE NAME IN BAPTISM

In water baptism, we receive the invocation of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ upon us, that is we take on His family name, and publicly declare our submission to Him. Matthew 28:19. *"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."* We are called Christians because of our obedience to Him. With His protection, covering, strength, seal and privileges also comes the responsibilities of the name of the Lord. Romans 6:3 *"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"* If we are "baptized into His death" we have an obligation to live our lives as children of God's Kingdom and leave our old nature behind. This is impossible in our own strength, but in Christ all things are possible. Just as a wife receives the last name of her husband, is identified with him in marriage, we also are identified with Christ when we receive His name.

THE POWER OF BAPTISM

When we are immersed in the waters of baptism, our old nature or worldly nature is dead and buried and we rise into the newness of Christ's resurrection life Romans 8:3. *For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh.* Romans 6:4 *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. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.*

Remember the diagram in Lesson 3. It showed how the sinful person is self-motivated and the godly person is God and others motivated. It is only by entering into the new way of life God has promised us that these changes can occur in us, and the new can only come when the old is gone. Some of these changes will be immediate, some can take time. God is patient with us as we adjust to our new life – much like good parents are patient with the progress of their growing children.

Jesus said in John 12:24 *"I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."* Here He was not just referring to wheat, but everyone who is to follow and obey Him. He wants us to be productive and by being obedient even unto death we can be used by Him. When our old sinful nature begins to die, His just, holy and pure nature begins to live in us, and He will use us to carry out His will.

Galatians 3:27 says *"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."* So we are no longer what we were but we're on the way to being what Christ wants us to be. He looks at us and sees the righteousness in which we are now clothed, not what we were but what we are is important to Him.

UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF WATER BAPTISM

Water baptism is regarded as a sacrament of the church. A sacrament is defined as a 'visible sign which has been divinely instituted to confer grace or Divine life upon those who receive it'. There are two main issues that confront the church with regard to water baptism today. They are...

- a) Believing (older) Christians or unbelieving infants
- b) Complete immersion or sprinkling as the mode.

Let's address these two issues.

- a) **Believing (older) Christians or unbelieving infants.** The Anglican church says in Article 27 sect.V. of their 39 articles of faith that *"all children are included in the great atoning sacrifice, and belong to Jesus Christ until they deliberately refuse Him... we baptise a child not in order to make it Christ's, but because it already belongs to Him."* There are no direct references to infant baptism in the New Testament. In fact the first recorded instance seems to be towards the end of the 2nd century when baptism began to take a far greater significance in the life of the church. Baptism began to be associated with salvation in such a way that it was believed that unless a person was baptized they were bound to go to hell. For this reason alone people began to baptise infants for fear if they died they would go to hell and to also baptise the dead for fear that if they sinned after baptism they would go to hell as well.

The reformers advocated a return back to Believer's baptism. Luther's sermon states, *"without personal faith no one should be baptised. Where we cannot be sure that young children are themselves believers and themselves have faith, my advice and judgement are that it is better to delay..."* Calvin states in his Harmony of the Gospels, Vol.3, commenting on Matthew 28 *"As Christ enjoins them to teach before baptising, and desires that none but believers shall be admitted to baptism, it would appear that baptism is not properly administered unless it is preceded by faith"*.

We believe in the truth of believer baptism. We see from Scripture that confession of faith precedes baptism.

- b) **Complete immersion or sprinkling as the mode of Baptism.** As a church we believe that baptism needs to be by complete immersion and that to baptise in any other way is to do Scripture as injustice. John the Baptist baptised in a stretch of the Jordan River simply because of its depth (John 3:23 *"there was much water"* – much water is only required for full immersion). The word 'baptizo' in the Greek also implies total immersion.

WATER BAPTISM

1. Our old way of life only gave us death.
Death is eternal.



2. Once we are saved the old man/nature with its
evil desires died with Christ on the cross.
This kind of death also has eternal consequences.



3. Our old nature is buried – a process of which baptism is the symbol.



4. Our new man rises to walk in newness of
Christ's own resurrection life – a process,
the results of which are guaranteed
by the Holy Spirit



Gal 3:27. *For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* (Being baptised into Christ is what Christian baptism is all about).

Write out and memorise Romans 6:4.

1. Read Matthew 3:13-17. Who was baptised in these verses?

2. What does Colossians 2:12 say happens to us in baptism?
3. What must we do to be clothed with or placed into Christ? Galatians 3:27.
4. Who places us into Christ? 1 Corinthians 1:27-30.
5. What is the revealed name of the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Acts 2:36; Colossians 2:9.
6. How great is the power and authority of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? Philipians 2:9-11; Luke 10:17; Mark 16:17-18.
7. Why did people seek baptism from John? Matthew 3:5,6,11; Mark 1:4,5.
8. By what authority did Jesus command us to be baptised, and into whose name? Matthew 28:17-20
9. What are we commanded to do? 1 John 1:9, Acts 2:38.
10. Read Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15-16. What does it say all believers in Jesus Christ must do?
11. Baptism symbolises that what has been done away with (destroyed)? Romans 6:4-6.
12. What should a Christian renounce? 2 Corinthians 4:2 (We believe ideally that this should take place at baptism).

Ask your mentor to share with you their testimony from when they were water baptised.

What is the most important truth you have learned today?

Write any questions or comments about any area of interest you would like to discuss here.