

## **Baptism Basics**

Introduction: The purpose of this study is to spend time considering what the Bible says about baptism. You may be doing this study because you are considering being baptized. If that's the case – welcome! Hopefully this study will guide you to discover more about the purpose and meaning of baptism.

You may be doing this study because there are people in your sphere of influence who ask you questions about baptism and you're just trying to come up with intelligent responses to their questions. If that's the case, welcome. Or maybe you are just a curious type and you want to know more about baptism. That's great – you are also welcome.

One key point before you begin the study is to understand that we all come to this topic with elements of church tradition and pre-understanding on the topic of baptism. We may even come with our own set of biases on the topic. There is really no way to approach the topic with a blank sheet of paper. We would simply encourage you to approach the topic with a spirit of humility.

So, what will we cover?

1. Jesus' Teaching on baptism
2. Baptism in Acts
3. Paul's writing on baptism

The subject of baptism is addressed throughout the New Testament, beginning in the book of Matthew and going throughout the book of Acts and into the letters written by Paul, Peter and others.

--Any lack of understanding on baptism is not based on a lack of available information. The problem is probably due more to our preconceived ideas on baptism.

--The problem most of us have is we read a passage on baptism and we interpret it by beginning with – “what the writer is really trying to say is....”

--As you move forward with the study, I would encourage you to try to come to each passage with a fresh set of eyes.

### **1. Jesus' Teaching on Baptism**

#### **Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT)**

<sup>18</sup> Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth.

<sup>19</sup> Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

<sup>20</sup> Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

--The context of this passage is Jesus preparing to leave his disciples. Jesus has spent three years with these guys, preparing them to do his work. Now, as he gets ready to leave, he gives them a summary – “just in case you missed it, here’s the primary thing I want you to be about.”

Summary – Go and make disciples/followers; in other words, share with others what I have shared with you. Invite them to live the abundant life.

--Jesus gives two instructions to his disciples regarding these new followers. What are they?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

A couple of thoughts from this passage regarding baptism:

1. Jesus saw baptism as a key element to becoming a follower of his. Jesus didn’t say – “Go and make disciples – and if they want to be baptized as a part of the process of declaring that they are one of my followers, that would be a good thing.”

-Jesus’ instructions are pretty clear and straightforward – followers of mine should be baptized.

--This verse is one of the primary verses we point to when someone asks – “why should I be baptized”.

--The answer is – well, because Jesus commanded it. Jesus instructed those who would lead his ministry from the beginning that baptism should be a key element of becoming one of his followers.

2. A second key thought from this passage – baptism was to be – “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

--This adds an element of significance to baptism.

--It’s not that we are simply getting dunked as a part of an initiation ritual.

--By being baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we are committing our lives to something higher than ourselves.

--We are acknowledging that this is not something we could do on our own.

--The Father, Son and Holy Spirit all have significant roles in the salvation process.

--The Father’s love for you and I was the motivation for providing the means for us to be forgiven and the opportunity to be brought into a right relationship with him.

--The Son’s obedience to the Father’s will provided the payment for our sins.

--The Holy Spirit is given to us as a gift when we receive the salvation that the Father has given to us. And as we will see in the next passage we look at, there seems to be a direct link between baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit.

--So, a quick summary of our first passage on baptism:

1. Jesus saw it as a primary element in becoming one of his followers – he commanded it.
2. Our baptism into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit demonstrates our commitment to something higher than ourselves.

## 2. Baptism in Acts

### Acts 2:36-41 (NLT)

<sup>36</sup> So let it be clearly known by everyone in Israel that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified to be both Lord and Messiah!"

<sup>37</sup> Peter's words convicted them deeply, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

<sup>38</sup> Peter replied, "Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>39</sup> This promise is to you and to your children, and even to the Gentiles—all who have been called by the Lord our God."

<sup>40</sup> Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this generation that has gone astray!"

<sup>41</sup> Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church—about three thousand in all.

--What's the context here?

--This is DAY ONE – Grand Opening DAY – for the church.

--This the day Jesus had been preparing his disciples for. This was a big day because it basically established the fact that things have changed.

--The old Jewish way of doing things is no longer acceptable; this was the day that the message of Jesus' death and what it meant to all of humanity was first communicated to the masses.

--And this is the day that Peter and the other disciples needed to give full and right information to those who would consider joining them as Jesus followers.

--This was day one for them to carry out the command Jesus gave them in Matthew 28:19-20.

--Specifically, It was one of the Jewish feast days – the Day of Pentecost. There were a large number of Jews gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate this feast and on this occasion, Peter (one of Jesus' twelve disciples; one of the guys who would have been present when Jesus gave his instruction in Matthew 28:19-20) stood up and began to teach.

--He was talking to a Jewish audience that would have been made up of people who believed in God, but had rejected Jesus as the Son of God.

--Peter gave them a clear understanding of who Jesus was and also of their role in crucifying him. When we get to verse 36, it is clear that they have recognized their need to take action.

--Verse 37 points out that when they were convicted of their sin – of their wrongdoing – they asked Peter "what should we do."

--What is his response in verse 38? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
--Here we are on Day One of the church and when asked, how do we respond to this new way of doing things, Peter's answer was straightforward in its inclusion of baptism.

--I think that the whole idea of Christianity was probably more difficult for this group of people to receive than any group in history.

--They had been serving God; they had faith in God. And now they are told that God has a new plan; a new means to bring them forgiveness of their sins; a new model for what he desires from them as their God.

-Here, they are on Day One being told, believing in God is not enough – You have to turn from your ways, turn to God AND be baptized.

--How did they respond? \_\_\_\_\_

--This is the largest group conversion recorded in Scripture.

Key takeaway – From Day One of the church, baptism was a key part of what it meant to be a follower of Jesus.

Listed below are the other stories of baptism recorded in the book of Acts.

1. Acts 8:9-13 – Simon and the Samaritans
2. Acts 8:26-38 – Philip and the Ethiopian treasurer
3. Acts 9: 1-19 – Saul/Paul
4. Acts 10: 23-48 – Cornelius and his household
5. Acts 16:13-15 – Lydia and her household
6. Acts 16:25-34 – The Jailer
7. Acts 18:4-8 – Crispus, the synagogue leader, and other Corinthians

--All of these stories demonstrate a common pattern for how/when people were baptized. The pattern is that the people 1) hear the gospel, 2) believe the gospel and 3) are baptized.

So far, we have looked at what Jesus had to say regarding baptism in Matthew 28 and we have looked at how baptism was a vital part of the early church. Now, look at a passage to see how Paul – who wrote more of the New Testament books than any other writer – viewed baptism.

### 3. Paul's teaching on Baptism

#### Romans 6:3-4 (NLT)

<sup>3</sup> Or have you forgotten that when we became Christians and were baptized to become one with Christ Jesus, we died with him?

<sup>4</sup> For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

If you are an analytical person, you probably like the book of Romans.

-Paul is very much an A+B=C, therefore D is true, kind of writer.

--The biggest difference between this passage and the other two is that while the first two passages anticipate baptism, Paul in this passage is writing to Christians in the church in Rome who have already been baptized.

--His goal is not to convince them of their need to be baptized.

--Instead, his goal is to help them understand the significance of their baptism.

--Verse 3 continues the direct link between being a Christian or being a Christ follower and being baptized.

--He doesn't say – when you became a Christian SOME of you were baptized. His statement instead makes the assumption that when they became a Christian, they were baptized.

--Verse 3 also reminds us that when we are baptized, we are becoming a part of something bigger than ourselves – we are “becoming one with Christ Jesus.”

--Verse 4 then gives us a direct link between our baptism and the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

<sup>4</sup> For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

--This is powerful symbolism and this also gives you an understanding of why we say baptism should be by immersion.

--Paul says that we died and were buried with Christ BY baptism.

--In other words, our baptism represents the death and burial of our old way of life.

--It represents the time when we “turn from our sins and turn to God” as Peter described in our last passage.

--And finally, it links our baptism to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we come up out of the water we are prepared to live new lives – lives that reflect our belief in Jesus Christ as the leader of our lives.

--No other form of baptism carries out this symbolism the way baptism by immersion does.

--When you are standing in the baptistry, it represents your commitment to die to your old way of life; when you go under the water, you are burying that way of life; when you come up out of the water it symbolizes that you are ready to live a

new life. A new life (Abundant Life) that is available to you because of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

--Baptism by immersion gives a full visual of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

--So, just as we said earlier, baptism is not simply dunking as part of an initiation ritual. Baptism associates us with Jesus and specifically symbolizes our understanding of the importance of his death, burial and resurrection by allowing us to symbolically go through that same process.

Other New Testaments passages regarding baptism:

1. Galatians 3:26-27
2. Colossians 2:11-13
3. 1 Peter 3:21

Conclusion: This study is not intended to be an exhaustive look at every detail regarding baptism, but instead to focus on what the Bible says regarding baptism. If you have questions regarding baptism, we would love to talk with you. You may e-mail [randy.gordon@necchurch.org](mailto:randy.gordon@necchurch.org) to either initiate an e-mail conversation or to schedule to meet one-on-one.