

FOUNDATION DOCTRINE

*BAPTISM
IS A NEW
BEGINNING*

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Biblical Baptism

Baptism comes from the Greek word '**Baptizo**' which means to be immersed. The Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah and believed that when He came, He would baptize the people. That is why in **John 1:25**, the leaders questioned John the Baptist, "*Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?*" (BSB)

When the translators of the New Testament, came across the word 'Baptizo' they were unable to find an equivalent word, and so they almost transliterated it as 'Baptism'.

Since 'Biblical Baptism' has a profound significance, the enemy has caused a lot of controversies about the same. You may be surprised about the term 'Biblical Baptism'. This term, 'Biblical Baptism' is used just to differentiate between the various types of baptisms that are being performed amongst Christians and the one true baptism, which is taught in the Bible.

Let's learn more

We will begin this study with the Baptism of Lord Jesus by John the Baptist.

Luke 7:29-30 reads like this :

29 Everyone had been listening to John. Even the tax collectors[b] had obeyed God and had done what was right by letting John baptize them. 30 But the Pharisees and the experts in the Law of Moses refused to obey God and be baptized by John. (CEV)

The Pharisees and experts in the Law of Moses refused to obey God, in not submitting to Baptism. The Berean Literal Bible states that "the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God as to themselves, not having been baptized by him."

So, Baptism is not man's idea but it is the counsel of God so that man can understand God's purpose for his life.

It was indeed remarkable that our Lord Jesus, though He was sinless came to John the Baptist seeking to be baptized, for the express purpose to identify himself with sinful man.

The scene at the River Jordan is amazing. Lord Jesus the sinless Son of God is standing along with the tax collectors and other sinners, waiting for John to baptize Him.

Lord Jesus did that just so that those who believe in Him and are baptized can stand in the line of the righteous.

Let us look at how Jesus was baptized.

In Matthew 3:16 we read, So Jesus was baptized. And as soon as he came out of the water, the sky opened, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down on him like a dove. (CEV)

Lord Jesus coming out of the water means He was totally immersed in the river. The word 'Baptizo' also means to be dipped or immersed completely. So if this was the way Lord Jesus was baptized, we are no exception.

Let's look at the joy of the Heavenly Father, when He witnesses Jesus come out of the waters of Baptism.

Matthew 3:17 Then a voice from heaven said, "This is my own dear Son, and I am pleased with him."

This was the first time, God the Father, openly declared Lord Jesus as His own dear Son and also said that He was pleased with Him.

Yes, we too please our Heavenly Father, when we are baptized in water just like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:4 When we were baptized, we died and were buried with Christ. We were baptized, so that we would live a new life, as Christ was raised to life by the glory of God the Father.(CEV)

Baptism is likened to burial here. If we want to live a new life, we must go through baptism whereby we identify with the death of Jesus on the cross.

The following verse gives a greater revelation as to the significance of Baptism.

Romans 6:5 says, If we shared in Jesus' death by being baptized, we will be raised to life with him. (CEV)

The implication of this verse is that only if we shared in the death of Lord Jesus, can we partake of His resurrection, for without death there is no room for resurrection. Through baptism we identify with the death of Lord Jesus.

The Old Testament has several symbols or representations of Baptism.

1 Peter 3:20-21 reads, They had disobeyed God while Noah was building the boat, but God had been patient with them. Eight people went into that boat and were brought safely through the flood. 21 Those flood waters were like baptism that now saves you. But baptism is more than just washing your body. It means turning to God with a clear conscience, because Jesus Christ was raised from death. (CEV)

The flood waters at the time of Noah are likened to baptism, whereby Noah and his family were saved but all the wicked people were destroyed.

Eight people were saved i.e., Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives. I believe that since God was presenting this as an image of baptism, none of the sons had children. All were adults. So, the practice of baptizing infants needs to be seen in this light.

The waters sent by God not only destroyed evil, it also protected the eight people who believed on the Word of God and entered into the ark. Similarly the spiritual significance of Baptism is that there is a destruction of evil, so that God can save us from eternal destruction.

The next imagery is found in the book of Exodus.

1 Corinthians 10:1,2 Friends, I want to remind you that all of our ancestors walked under the cloud and went through the sea. 2 This was like being baptized and becoming followers of Moses. (CEV)

The children of Israel were lead by Moses through the sea and this is compared with baptism. The Lord who delivered the Israelites from the bondage, through their crossing the Red Sea ensured that the enemy would be totally incapacitated from bringing them under captivity ever again.

The Israelites became followers of Moses after crossing the Red Sea and we are acknowledging the Lordship of the Lord Jesus, when we submit to the waters of 'Biblical baptism'.

Exodus 15:8, *“At the blast of your breath, the waters piled up! The surging waters stood straight like a wall; in the heart of the sea and the deep waters became hard.”*(NLT)

The power of God was manifested as He parted the Red Sea by the blast of His breath. This was the same breath that gave life to man at the time of creation.

Genesis 2:7 says, *The Lord God took a handful of soil and made a man.[b] God breathed life into the man, and the man started breathing. (CEV)*

The very breath of God that gave life to Adam is seen in action at the Red Sea, and in that God made a way for the Israelites to be free from a life of bondage. There is this deliverance of God evidenced in baptism.

The glorious part of this incident is that the very same waters that stood as a wall of protection for the Israelites also became death trap that destroyed the Egyptian army.

The Egyptians could never ever go after the children of Israel. Every strength of the Egyptians their soldiers, horses and chariots were completely destroyed by the waters.

Baptism is not just an ordinary ordinance, it has great spiritual significance that when one fully understands this, they will never dispute the counsel of God.

Another fantastic imagery is found in the Old Testament. That is the supernatural healing of Naaman, the Syrian Army Commander.

In the book of 2 Kings Chapter 5 we read about this man called Naaman who was a leper. We know that leprosy causes a person to lose sensitivity in their skin and flesh. That is why when one is affected with the disease, they are unable feel any hurt or damage to the affected areas.

Sin’s effect on humans is very similar, in that the sensitivity to God is lost and the damage caused leads to serious consequences.

When Naaman goes to Elisha, the prophet of God, for a cure, the prophet tells him to go and wash himself seven times in the river Jordan.

In 2 Kings 5:10, *Elisha sent someone outside to say to him, “Go wash seven times in the Jordan River. Then you’ll be completely cured.” (CEV)*

God's ways are simple but amazing. Most often men complicate simple things. The Word of God is to be believed just like that and obeyed. If done, we will see miracles happen which did not happen with the best of men's expertise.

2 Kings 5:11,12 *But Naaman stormed off, grumbling, "Why couldn't he come out and talk to me? I thought for sure he would stand in front of me and pray to the Lord his God, then wave his hand over my skin and cure me. 12 What about the Abana River[c] or the Pharpar River? Those rivers in Damascus are just as good as any river in Israel. I could have washed in them and been cured."*(CEV)

The problem with present day baptism is also similar because people have pre conceived notions about baptism. Most often it is not in line with the Word of God but based on either tradition or their own expectation about it.

Naaman was so close to his deliverance from the terrible leprosy but he just stormed off. How many people today are unwilling to listen to what the Word of God speaks about baptism and just refuse to obey to the 'Biblical baptism'.

In 2 Kings 5:13 we read *His servants went over to him and said, "Sir, if the prophet had told you to do something difficult, you would have done it. So why don't you do what he said? Go wash and be cured."*(CEV)

Naaman had one sensible guy around. Praise God for those godly people with us, whose counsel helps us overcome our stubbornness. The faith of Naaman's servant is to be appreciated. He said, "Go, wash and be cured". That's just great.

Let's read further.

In 2 Kings 5:14, *Naaman walked down to the Jordan; he waded out into the water and stooped down in it seven times, just as Elisha had told him. Right away, he was cured, and his skin became as smooth as a child's.* (CEV)

That's a powerfully loaded verse. The seven times refers to perfection, as so often the Bible refers to the number seven as a perfect number.

God rested on the seventh day and when one is baptized, he enters in to the rest that God has promised for His people.

Naaman had to do exactly what the man of God instructed. It was only when he obeyed that did he receive his healing.

Let's see a little more into how his flesh that had been devastated by leprosy was healed and he was cleansed.

In 2 Kings 5:14 *So he went down and plunged himself into the Jordan seven times, just as the man of God had said; and his flesh was restored like that of a little child and he was clean.(AMP)*

His flesh was restored. What was the level of restoration? "Like that of a little child". How sensitive is the flesh of a little child. We cannot but notice the stark contrast between the flesh of a man with leprosy and that of a little child. The skin and flesh that was insensitive has not become very sensitive. That's the restorative work of God.

Restoration is what we can call a "*Master Reset*" where one gets back to the original state. That's God's plan for us to restore us back to His original plan and design.

Often our hearts are hardened by many sins and when we submit to the Lord and to his instruction on baptism, the Lord restores back our sensitivity and we become soft and supple, soft enough to understand the gentle prompting of the Holy Spirit and supple enough to let Him do His work in our lives.

So, what are the conditions for one to receive Baptism?

Some people are of the view that a person who requests to be baptized has to be observed for a while so that his repentance is confirmed before we lead them into Baptism.

Let us read what the Bible teaches us on this matter.

In Acts chapter 8, we read of the Ethiopian eunuch who was returning from Jerusalem in his chariot, after worshipping God. He was reading the book of Isaiah but he could not understand the true meaning of the prophecies. Now, the Spirit of God told Philip to get on the chariot.

What an amazing God! A heart that searches for the truth, is never left alone. Now, Philip explains the Ethiopian eunuch that the passage that he was reading

referred to Jesus, the lamb of God. Hearing the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the very next thing that the Ethiopian eunuch asked was to get baptized.

In **Acts 8:36**, *As they were going along the road, they came to a place where there was some water. The official said, "Look! Here is some water. Why can't I be baptized?"*(CEV)

And if the Ethiopian eunuch would have lived today, and made such a request, the reply he would have heard probably would be, "Let's wait for a month or two and see if you really believe and have repented. After that we will arrange for you to be baptized".

Praise God for Philip who was lead by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:37,38 *[Philip said to him, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he replied, "I do believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] 38 And he ordered that the chariot be stopped; and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. (AMP)*

Yes, if you believe with all your heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, yes, then you are ready to be baptized, there is no waiting period.

Now, it also needs to be noted that Philip was not a pastor but an evangelist. Some people have this wrong notion that only Pastors can baptize people. This incident proves otherwise.

Peter, the disciple of Lord Jesus preached his first sermon after receiving the anointing of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. His preaching brought a change of heart in those who heard him preach.

The question they asked was, Acts 2:27, *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart [with remorse and anxiety], and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what are we to do? (AMP)*

Anointed preaching will always make the hearers ask, "What are we to do?"

Acts 2:28 *And Peter said to them, "Repent [change your old way of thinking, turn from your sinful ways, accept and follow Jesus as the Messiah] and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ because of the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (AMP)*

Repentance and faith are the two most important things that one needs to do before receiving baptism.

Repentance is the change of the old way of thinking, turning from sinful ways and accepting Jesus as the Lord and Saviour.

John the Baptist, forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ came preaching repentance. So also, Jesus, our Lord when He started His public ministry, started preaching repentance. That is vital for baptism. This is one another reason why infants cannot be baptized because they obviously cannot repent.

How well the Word says in 2 Corinthians 7:10, *“For Godly grief produces a repentance that leads to Salvation without regret, whereas worldly sorrow produces grief.”*

In Acts 16:33, we read of the jailor and his family who were baptized by Paul and Silas, that same night. Such is the urgency of baptism. Never to be delayed but obeyed at the earliest possible time.

Another important question is “In what name should we be baptized?”

The Lord Jesus Himself said in **Matthew 28:18-20**, which is also called the great commission, Jesus came to them and said: *I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth! 19 Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, 20 and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.(CEV)*

The Triune God who involved in the creation of the world, is once again at work in our restoration through Baptism. That is why Lord Jesus Himself said that baptism was to be given in “..the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” This is the ‘Biblical Baptism’.

If you have not taken water baptism according to the Word of God, do it now. Only when it is done in accordance to the teaching of God’s Word, it is accepted by God, anything else is only a ritual.

Do obey this truth and share it, if you are blessed by it.

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ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

- *Is baptism a christian tradition*
- *Is infant baptism taught in the Bible*
- *What is the purpose of baptism*
- *How should I be baptised*
- *The spiritual significance of baptism*

*If you have been thinking about these,
this book is for you.*

*Do read with prayer and you will surely
hear the voice of the Holy Spirit who will
lead you into all truth.*

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