

In looking at water baptism for believers in Christ Jesus as taught in the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament, we want to consider three major areas of truth.

1. Baptism's Source
2. Baptism's Timing
3. Baptism's Meaning

Baptism's Source

The source of believer's baptism does not come from a council of churches. Nor does it originate from the ancient traditions of men or a certain culture. It is the risen Son of God who commanded it for *all* nations. Believers's baptism crosses racial lines, cultural lines, gender lines and class lines – just like the gospel.

Upon His resurrection by the Father, Jesus the Lord stated to His apostles that "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth." With that authority from the father, He then instructed the apostles to teach *all nations* the gospel, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:18,19). After being baptized, disciples were to be taught to observe *all* the Lord's commandments.

To agree with believer's baptism is to acknowledge the risen authority of Jesus the Lord. It is to disagree with Israel and the nations who crucified Him as a condemned criminal. It is to go against popular opinion and become that minority who agrees with God.

To agree with the Lord's water baptism is to understand the grace God has offered to all races. God is now receiving from among all nations into His family and kingdom, not just the chosen Jewish race. Baptism, like the gospel, is multi-national (i.e. international). No wonder the man from Ethiopia had such great joy. He was told that nothing could hinder him from being baptized in water if he believed with all his heart that the slain lamb (the crucified Jesus) was the Son of God. (Acts 8:26-39).

The Lord's apostle, Peter, fearlessly challenged anyone to withhold baptism from the Italian Gentiles who had believed on the Name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins. Thus he boldly commanded them "to be baptized in the Name of the Lord," for the Lord had already received them (Acts 10:43-48).

Baptism's Timing

There is only one qualification for water baptism. One must believe from the heart that the crucified Christ is indeed the Son of God and Lord proven by resurrection. (Acts 2, 8, 10). When the sinner has "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" he or she is saved or justified. He is "born again" into God's family and added by God to His assembly.

Thus as a *baby* Christian one is immediately *eligible* to be baptized. This is because the gospel states one is now fully born again and saved: forgiven and cleansed from all sin and indwelt with God's life – His Spirit.

The Scriptures show only believers being baptized *and immediately* upon believing. (Acts 2:41, 8:12, 8:36-38, 10:43-48, 18:8). Paul the apostle was the longest delay recorded in Scripture and that was three days after believing. It took that long to convince someone that he indeed was a believer (Acts 9).

So baptism is for those who have believed and *when* they believe.

To be baptized before one believes is a dead ritual and accomplishes nothing. It's like washing a lifeless baby doll and saying this is now your child. A child must first have your life by conception and then when born it is washed. *And immediately washed.*

To delay baptism after one does believe is to call into question the very gospel of God itself. It would imply that faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ was not enough to save me and constitute me as a son of God. It is to say that more must be done before I am worthy of being in God's family: a false justification (Romans 1-5). Or it could imply that the resurrected Jesus is not fully Lord with *all* authority in heaven and in earth. It is to say that the Lord Jesus does not have complete authority over me and obedience to Him is optional: a false sanctification (Romans 6-8).

Timing can be vital. For example, for a woman to wear her wedding ring before the marriage, does not make her married nor give her license to act as if she is. But for the woman to say her vows at the marriage ceremony and then refuse to put on the ring her husband gave her, would now communicate non-commitment.

Baptism's Meaning

There are four spheres that believer's baptism will involve. They will define baptism.

1. **DEMONSTRATION.** One graphically demonstrates or displays the gospel of Christ when he or she is baptized into the water. The water represents a burial grave. Going into the water pictures a death. Being under the water pictures a burial. And coming up out of the water pictures resurrection from the dead. Of course this is the saving gospel.

"Christ **died** for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was **buried**, and that he **rose** again the third day according to the scriptures."
(1Cor. 15:3,4)

The believer, when baptized, portrays the events that happened to the Lord Jesus and the effects of those events. Baptism glorifies the Lord in His gospel.

2. **CONFESSION.** When water baptized, one is proclaiming his personal confession in the one triune God. God does not only want the belief of the heart but the outward confession of the mouth. (Luke 12:8, John 12:42,43, Rom. 10:10, 1John 4:15). God's way for the believer to publicly confess is not by raising a hand or signing a card nor "coming forward" but by water baptism. In the New Testament when a person said they had believed on the Lord they were then baptized (Acts 8:12 etc).

But what is the believer confessing when baptized? Is it the name of a certain church, preacher or organization? One is baptized "in the *name* of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). One is confessing not just the existence of God (many do that) but is acknowledging His only son, Jesus Christ the Lord, and the Holy Spirit.

What's in a name?

A name shows existence. Something is named because it exists. Baptism in the *name* of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is a confession of the existence of the one triune God.

A name conveys personal identity. When a baby is born it is given a name which personally identifies it. To be baptized in His Name is to acknowledge the personal identity of God in human form: Jesus the Lord.

His name was called Jesus which means Savior, and Immanuel which means "God with us" (Matt. 1:21,23). The believer is confessing by baptism that the identity of God is not unknown nor a mystical force but a Person.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a **name** which is above every name: That at the **name** of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should *confess* that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phi. 2:9-11).

A name involves reputation. When you hear of a name, you think of reputation. So and so has a good name or a bad name. The reputation of a name comes from the person's actions or accomplishments: what they did. One who has a good name is because their actions have been good and helpful. One has a bad name because his actions have been wrong and hurtful. What a person does comes from their internal character: what he is.

A name reveals reputation which comes from actions which comes from character

Baptism in His Name, upholds God's Name (reputation) by illustrating His gospel. When one is baptized "in the *name*" of the Lord, he's acknowledging the Name of God to be good and right. God's goodness and righteousness are revealed by His action of giving His only Son as a sin-sacrifice for us and then raising Him. This action came from His character: holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, love and mercy.

A name conveys authority. When one comes "in the *name* of the law" that means the authority of that government. They have power to command things.

The risen Christ said that all power or authority was given unto Him. It is He alone Who saves and forgives sins. It is He alone Who is the Head of the church. He alone has the keys of hell and of death. When one is baptized in "the *name* of the Lord Jesus" he is acknowledging that the Father has made Jesus, Lord. Thus He's agreeing to obey the authority of the risen Lord.

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3. **IDENTIFICATION.** Baptism identifies one with something. It brings one into union with what they are being baptized into. The word, 'baptized' is simply, 'baptizo,' in Greek and means "to dip, immerse or submerge." In context, it conveys union with something.

A clear example that shows the meaning of baptizo is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be 'dipped' (bapto) into boiling water and then 'baptised' (baptizo) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptising the vegetable, produces a permanent change. (Strong's concordance - Online Bible). Your baptized once but its truth is forever.

Water baptism communicates the truth to the believer about his union with the Lord. It reveals the believer's position and the practical effects that come from such. While water baptism doesn't secure salvation it does symbolize what Spirit baptism (1Cor.12:13) accomplished.

Romans 6 shows baptism identifies us with Christ's death, burial and resurrection. By being in union with Christ one shares in what His death, burial and resurrection mean. Just like a girl that by marriage comes into union with her husband, now as one she shares in whatever wealth, prestige or position he has. This practically will effect her habits and spending manners.

Rom. 6:3,4 - Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his DEATH. Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death.

Death separates from authority. Such as a wife is legally free from the authority of her husband and may legally remarry when he dies (Rom. 7:1-3). By dying the Lord Jesus is separated (dead) to the entity and authority of sin. He can never die again for by death He is legally free from the dominion of sin (Rom. 6:9,10).

The believer going under the water is symbolizing burial and thus is identifying with the death of Jesus Christ. By being in union with Christ he too is dead to sin. Sin has no authority over him to separate him from God. Therefore since sin is no longer his legal master he has no reason to listen to its dictates (Rom 6:11,12, 14).

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Rom. 6:4,5 - ... that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his RESURRECTION.

If death separates – life unites. Like a newborn who with new life is born into a family is now united with that family, the Lord Jesus by rising from the dead now lives unto God. That is, He is in union with God. Rather than being connected to the entity of sin, by union with God He is connected with God's authority and power – never to die again (Rom. 6:9,10).

The believer coming out of the water is symbolizing resurrection and is thus identifying with the life of Jesus Christ. By being in union with Christ he too is alive unto God. God, rather than sin, is his authority. Sin has no more dominion over him but God now does since he is in union unto Him. Therefore, since God is now his legal master he has logical reason to listen to His desires (Rom 6:11,13, 14).

4. **ASSOCIATION.** Baptism associates one with all believers of like faith. For example, when one joins a fraternity, he does certain initiation rites which now bring him into the fellowship of that group.

When one professes to be saved by the Lord Jesus Christ it is their confession by baptism that communicates their sincerity to other believers. For when you are identified with the crucified Christ and his followers, others might reject you and even persecute you (John 15:19,20). The fact that you are willing to demonstrate your faith publicly and identify with the rejected Savior by baptism, regardless of the cost, reveals to God Himself (see Gen. 22:12, John 12:42, 43) as well as others your "good faith."

In Acts two, about three thousand souls received the word of the gospel from Peter. Before they were added to the other believers (association) and continued with them in the apostle's teaching and fellowship and in breaking of bread (Lord's supper) and in prayers – they were first baptized. That act disassociated them from their perverse generation and visually linked them to the Christian assembly (Acts 2:40-47).

When Paul realized Jesus was indeed Lord, he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He was told to

of the Lord Jesus." Acts 19.5

go to the city to find out. There, the first thing Paul was asked to do by the Lord was to be baptized. Then he began to associate with the Christian believers (Acts 9). Baptism alone is not "the door" to church fellowship but it does precede it.

This is God's order. Salvation before church association. And believer's baptism is the first public confirmation of salvation.

Conclusion

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but THE ANSWER of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1Pet. 3:21).

Water baptism does not cleanse away the filth of our sinful body (the flesh). But it is an *answer* to God.

The Greek word for 'answer' (epertotema) means a unique kind of answer. It has to do with a formal question or enquiry like an interrogation. It is as a teacher might see a student in the hallway during classtime and enquire, "don't you know you're in trouble for skipping class?" You *answer* with another question of enquiry, "Didn't you know the principal gave me a pass?" Because a higher authority has approved, you are clear.

Satan will accuse your conscience about the filth of the flesh producing guilt and doubt. But the Lord Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and is accepted on the right hand of God – *above all* spiritual authorities (1Pet. 3:22). Since Christ is accepted by God, our conscience can *answer* in good faith toward God, "Doesn't my baptism *demonstrate* that I'm in union with Christ Who is risen and accepted – and He is the highest authority?" Therefore, one is clean and accepted: saved.

Chronicle #4 of 'The Disciple's Walk' series looks at Winning the War over the flesh.???

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The Chronicles of the

Disciple's Walk

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Water Baptism

The Chronicles of the 'Disciple's Walk' are various exhortations. The goal is to encourage the believer in the Lord Jesus to *follow Him* according to His Word and ways rather than tradition or popular thinking.

Firstly, the New Testament speaks of the baptism of John the Baptist. That was a baptism for God's earthly nation, Israel, chosen for special service. It was a baptism of repentance. It would demonstrate that the people had repented of their sins readying themselves for the Messianic kingdom which was at hand. However, Israel as a whole rejected the Messiah (Jesus) and had Him crucified. Without the king there is no kingdom.

Now we will speak of baptism in the name of Jesus the Christ. This baptism is for those of any race who disagree with Israel's national verdict against Jesus. Israel said He was a blasphemer for claiming to be the Son of God. In contrast, based on God's verdict that Jesus is Lord (via resurrection), believers trust Jesus as Lord and Savior. These people comprise God's church or family: His chosen people today.