

The Basics of Baptism

(Saving Faith Series - #5)

May 17, 2009

Review:

What kind of faith is saving faith?

Many believe that (kind #1 – assent) Jesus is the Son of God.

But we must believe in (kind #2 – trust) Jesus to be saved.

The faith that saves is the faith that obeys.

Repentance is Required

Repentance is a *change of mind* that includes: a hatred of sin, remorse over sin, a desire to be rid of sin, and a determination to forsake sin.

Confession is Called For.

Public confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and our Lord is called for - at the time of our initial obedience and throughout our life.

Baptism is Basic.

Baptism is the specific time when God bestows His gifts of salvation.

Top Questions about the Basics of Baptism...

#1 – WHO should be baptized?

Some churches baptize babies for salvation. They believe babies inherit the guilt and sinfulness of Adam. They also believe (rightly) that baptism is the time when God gives sinners the cure for those problems.

Some churches baptize babies to make them part of the covenant community (the church). They believe children of Christian parents are born into the church and they equate baptism with OT circumcision.

According to the Bible

Baptism is for salvation; therefore it is only for **lost sinners**.

Babies are not born guilty. Only when children become old enough to understand the meaning of God's law and the significance of breaking that law are they accountable for it and in need of baptism. (*Ezekiel 18:20, Rom 7:7-11*)

One become a member of the New Covenant community not by physical birth but by spiritual birth, which is possible only for **those old enough to "believe in His name"** (*Jn 1:12-13*). We are children of God "through faith in Christ Jesus" (*Gal 3:26*).

NT baptism is preceded by other actions which can only be performed by **those old enough to understand what is taking place**. Before being baptized a person must hear the gospel (*Acts 18:8*), believe its promises (*Mk 16:16; Acts 2:41; 8:12-13, 16:14, 31, 34; 18:8; Col. 2:12*), repent of his sins (*Acts 2:38*), confess that Jesus is Lord (*Rom 10:9*), and call upon the Lord (*Acts 22:16*).

Note: There is absolutely **no mention of infant baptism anywhere in the NT**. Some point to the baptism of households (*Acts 11:14; 16:15, 33; 18:8*) and assume that would have included infants. But the members of those households are also said to have feared God, heard, believed, and rejoiced.

#2 – HOW should people be baptized?

Immersion is nearly universally accepted in Christendom as true baptism, but many teach that sprinkling or pouring a small amount of water on the person is also a valid mode of baptism.

According to the Bible

Baptism is *by definition* the immersion of the body into a pool of water.

First, the **literal meaning** of the word "baptize" in the Greek language is "to dip, to immerse." The Greek *baptize* means "I immerse," and *baptisma* means "immersion." In explaining the meaning of these words, Greek lexicons use such terms as "dip, plunge, immerse, submerge, sink, go under, and drown."

Second, the **figurative significance** of baptism requires immersion. It symbolizes the saving events of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (*Rom 6:3-11, Col 2:12*), as well as the sinner's own spiritual death, burial, and resurrection that are taking place at the time of baptism. Only immersion conveys such a picture.

#3 – WHY does baptism "now save"?

Although *1 Peter 3:21* says, "*baptism now saves you*," many do not understand why. We saw in the last lesson that God forgives sins, unites us with Christ, clothes us with Christ, bestows the gift of the indwelling Spirit, and puts us into the body **AT** baptism. So the basic answer to "Why?" is, "Because God said so."

Perhaps God connected salvation with baptism to ensure that we would never separate our salvation from the saving work of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Perhaps God chose baptism as the time of salvation because of our human need for assurance that God has indeed saved us. Baptism is a concrete, objective event that will always stand out in our memories. Without such a reference point, it would be natural to wonder at what point our faith was strong enough or our repentance sincere enough to be saved. God promised to save us in baptism, and when we trust in Him to do so we can be sure He has kept His promise.

#4 – What about those who follow false views of baptism?

What is the spiritual status of the many sincere people who have followed false views of baptism, whether in regard to purpose, subjects, or mode?

First, in view of the clear teaching of Scripture, we must say that only those who have consciously received immersion as a saving work of God can be confident of their **present status** as Christians and as members of the body of Christ.

- Experience is not proof of salvation. *Matt 7:21-23*
- We can only acknowledge as brethren those who have been biblically baptized.

Second, with regard to the **future**, we can expect God to judge everyone in perfect fairness and justice. He is omniscient, and knows what every person was taught, what they understood, and all their opportunities for obedience.