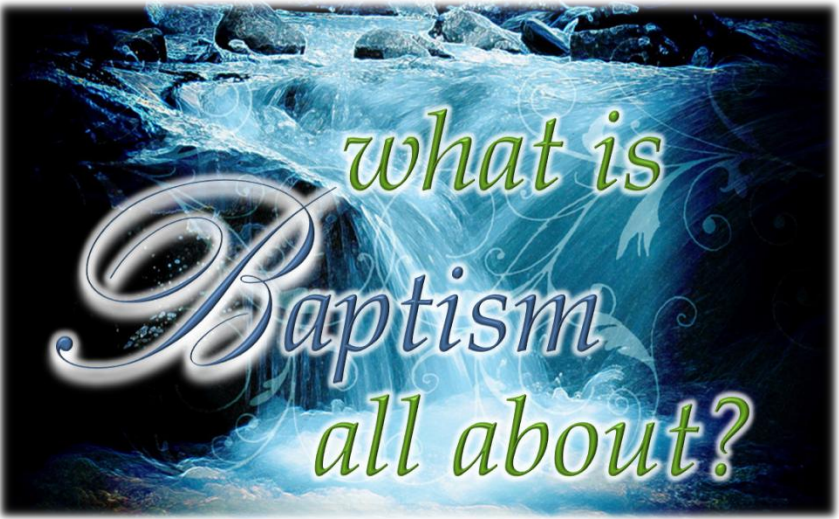




Believer's Baptism



Introduction

Baptism by water is an essential part of a Christian's life. It is one of the first steps that a person should take, following their belief in Jesus Christ. However, baptism can be a confusing topic! People have all kinds of thoughts and ideas about what baptism really is. You may have seen baptism being practiced differently. Some people are immersed under water, others are sprinkled with water at birth. This small booklet is designed to help you discover what the Bible says about baptism.

It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will guide you with discernment as you read this material. It is also our prayer that you will understand what the Biblical command "to be baptized," means for you personally. May God bless you as you continue in your spiritual journey.

Baptism Follows Belief

As we read through the Bible we will discover that baptism took place after a person had professed faith in Jesus Christ. In Acts 2, Peter urged the people to repent and then be baptized, for the forgiveness of their sins (v.38). We see that those who accepted his message, were then baptized (v.41). The same applied in other instances, where baptism was practiced in the New Testament Church. In Acts 8, an Ethiopian believed the message of God and then was baptized. Similarly in Acts 16, Lydia was baptized in a

place called Philippi “after the Lord opened her heart.” A jailer and his family were also baptized in Philippi after they believed in Jesus Christ as Lord. This process for baptism is also consistent with Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples” *and then* “baptize them in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).



Questions for Consideration:

- Have you repented (turned away) from your sins before God (Acts 2:38)?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ as the living God, who died for your sins and rose again from the dead? Do you believe that he is the only way to receive eternal life (John 3:16; 14:6; Romans 10:9)?
- Do you own Christ as your Lord and Savior and are you willing to put him *first* in your life (Luke 9:23-24; Romans 10:9)?

If these are steps that you haven’t done, but would like to do, then take some time to pause and talk to God about this. Tell him you are sorry for the sins that you have committed. Believe in his Son, Jesus Christ as the only way to eternal life. Believe that he died for your sin and rose again in victory over both sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:55-57; Romans 6:23). Believe also in the forgiveness he

now provides to you, once you accept him as Lord and Savior of your life. Talk about this also with your pastor or another Christian friend.

An Act of Obedience

Imagine that a loved one of yours is going away to a remote place on the other side of the world. What do you say to them as they are leaving you? What do they say to you? Those last moments together and those last words expressed become very important. In a similar way, the last words that Jesus expressed on earth before he ascended into Heaven are also very important. Jesus' parting words included the command to make disciples and baptize them (Matthew 28:19). Jesus believed that baptism was a very important part of a believer's life.

We need to ask ourselves whether we have been baptized. If the answer is no, then we must ask ourselves, "Why not! Why are we not obeying what Jesus said?" Peter also urged the people to be baptized in Acts 2:38. When we refuse baptism, we are living in disobedience to Christ's command.

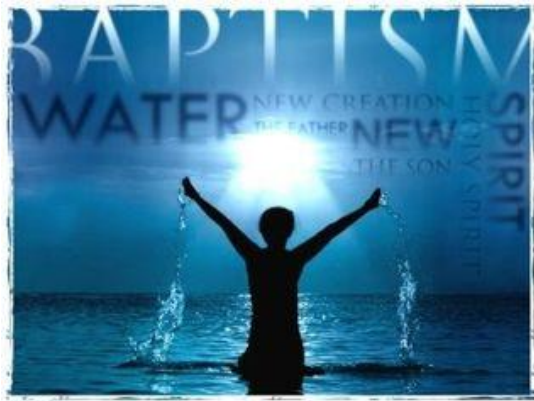
Questions for Consideration:

- Have you ever been baptized?
- Is anything preventing you from obeying God in this step?

A Public Announcement

In Mark 1:4, we see John the Baptist preaching a baptism of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins. The people were being baptized to publicly demonstrate that they were sorry for their sins, and that they had been forgiven. Soon after this, Jesus also came to John and asked to be baptized. Now we might wonder why Jesus requested this. After all, Jesus was free from sin (1 Peter 2:22) and so he didn't need to be baptized. John also notes that Jesus doesn't need to be baptized, but Jesus says to him, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires" (Matthew 3:15). Here Jesus knew the importance of baptism in God's sight, and even though he himself was without sin, he still chose to be baptized, as a public example for us all to follow.

When we are baptized, we also publicly announce to others that we have turned from our sin, that we have received forgiveness and



that we are now following Jesus Christ. Because baptism is an outward sign of an inner reality, it is wonderful if we can invite as many people as possible to witness our baptism!

A Seal

There are passages in Scripture that link baptism with salvation. For example Paul says in Acts 2:38, *“Each of you must repent of 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.”* Peter also says in 1 Peter 3:21, *“... water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”*

Some people believe that these verses imply that baptism is necessary for salvation. Yet other verses indicate that belief and confession of faith in Jesus Christ are all that are required for salvation. For example, John 3:16 says, *“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who **believes** in him will not perish but have eternal life”* (emphasis added). Romans 10:9-10 adds, *“If you **confess** with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and **believe** in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by **believing** in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by **confessing** with your mouth that you are saved”* (emphasis added).

These passages might seem confusing and contradictory about salvation. You may find it helpful however to consider the analogy of a seal. Throughout history, kings and queens and others would use their ring to emboss their signature as a seal on official scrolls or letters. This royal seal confirmed that any document then was authentic. In a similar way, God uses baptism as a seal to authenticate our

salvation. It indicates that we belong to him and that we are part of his family.

How Will I Be Baptized?

Once you have made the commitment to be baptized, you may be wondering how this will be done. Where possible, the preferred approach for baptism needs to be by immersion. This simply means to be fully covered by water. We see this being practiced on various occasions in the Bible. For example, Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. In Matthew 4:16, it says that Jesus “went up out of the water.” Of course, this implies that he was first under water. We see a similar example when Philip baptized the Ethiopian man. Here, the man “went down into the water,” and then “came up out of the water” (Acts 8:38-39).

Going *down* and being fully covered by water is symbolic of our death to our old life. Following this, *rising up* from the water is symbolic of our rising to new life in Jesus Christ. Paul says that “... *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. Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was*” (Romans 6:4-5). We see here that just as Jesus died and was placed in the grave, we also die to sin. But then similarly, just as Jesus rose from the grave as a victor over sin, we too rise from our old fleshly natures. We become new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17), free from the power of sin through the Holy Spirit.

Being immersed in water is also symbolic of the cleansing that takes place in our lives after we have been born again. Prior to Paul's belief in Christ, he had spent much of his time harassing and persecuting Christians. The Lord then revealed himself to Paul in a dramatic way, temporarily blinding him with a bright light. God then sent one of his followers named Ananias to minister to Paul. Paul believed in the Lord and then Ananias said to him, "*What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16). In this passage we can take note of the cleansing nature of baptism. That is not to say that baptism itself has the power to wash away sins. It is only God who can do this. Yet just like water cleans us when we are dirty, God uses baptism to symbolize the cleansing of our sins.

Questions for Consideration:

- Why do you think that immersion is the preferred approach for baptism?
- How is baptism symbolic of death and life?

After Philip explained the way of salvation to an Ethiopian man, the man said to him, "Look! There's some water! Why can't I be baptized?" (Acts 8:36b). There was nothing to stop the man from being baptized and so Philip baptized him. *Is there anything stopping you?* Please spend some time in prayer with God about this. If you would like to be baptized at Gardiner Community Church, please phone or email our office, (360.797.0044 or gccsoffice@gmail.com) or speak to Pastor Caleb. God Bless You!

Bible verses taken from: *New Living Translation* copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation.