

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

Where Does Baptism Fit In?

Romans 6:1-11

1 There is a lot of confusion about what baptism is in Christian circles. There are so many interpretations about it. I don't have all the answers but I believe I have a few that will help you to understand how important it is, what its purpose and role is in our faith and how it fits in to our relationship with the Lord. I might not solve all the problems but maybe I can alleviate some of the confusion by sharing Bible verses that describe it.

2 The passage that says the most about baptism is Romans, Chapter 6, verses 1 through 11. What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 3

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. ⁴

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Baptism does have an historical context. When people who were not ethnically Jewish but wanted to embrace the Jewish religion would seek acceptance as a believer, they would experience a ceremony. It is called Proselyte Baptism. ⁵

The candidate for acceptance into the Jewish faith would cut off all body hair and nails. They would make a confession of their faith and then completely immerse themselves in a tub of water before a rabbi and two witnesses. If the candidate were a woman, she would have two female witnesses and the rabbi would stand out of sight. ¹ The result of this event would be complete acceptance into the Jewish faith. This initiation ceremony was called a “bath of regeneration” implying a new birth into a different life. Christian baptism is called a “washing of regeneration” ²

⁶ John the Baptist’s ministry paved the way for the Lord’s mission. He baptized his followers in the Jordan River for repentance. ³ He expected them to live a changed holy life. His baptism was a purification rite which recognized the life changes that occurred ⁴.

¹ Edersheim, Alfred, “On the Baptism of Proselytes”, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 2, Appendix 12, page 745.

² Titus 3:5.

³ Matthew 3:11.

⁴ Matthew 3:7-8.

7 The Lord came and requested to be baptized by John. John felt unworthy to baptize the One he knew to be the Christ. Lord Jesus insisted, stating that it was to “fulfill all righteousness”. ⁵

I believe the reason Jesus desired baptism was to fulfill the ordination ceremony to be a priest. ⁸ A priest’s ordination consisted of being washed and anointed before functioning in that ministry. ⁶

Knowing this background, ⁹ how does water baptism fit into God’s plan of salvation?

I. It Fits in By Its Importance ¹⁰

The Book of Acts, found in the New Testament, is the history book for the foundation of the Christian Church. It describes the earliest conversions to our Christian faith. When men and women decided to trust Lord Jesus with their lives, they were baptized. ¹¹ Every conversion records the baptism of the ones making that choice.

⁵ Matthew 3:13-15.

⁶ Exodus 20:4-7.

12 Conversion # 1 was on the Day of Pentecost. Acts, Chapter 2, verses 38 and 41, **Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. . . Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.**

13 Conversion # 2 was the Apostle Paul. Acts, Chapter 22, verse 16, . . . **And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.**

14 Conversion # 3 was the Ethiopian. Acts, Chapter 8, verse 38, **And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.**

15 Conversion # 4 was the Ephesians. Acts, Chapter 19, verse 5, **On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.**

16 The other notable conversions where baptism is included were the Samaritans ⁷, ¹⁷ Cornelius ⁸, ¹⁸ Lydia ⁹, ¹⁹ the Philippian Jailer ¹⁰ and ²⁰ Crispus with the Corinthian believers ¹¹.

21 **But what about Apollos in Acts, Chapter 18?** This appears to be the single description of a conversion in the Book of Acts where baptism isn't mentioned. Notice verse 25 ²², **He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.** ²³ Was this a real conversion or simply a Christian who had a misunderstanding of what baptism was? After worship that Lord's Day he

⁷ Acts 8:12 - But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

⁸ Acts 10:48 - So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

⁹ Acts 16:15 - When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home.

¹⁰ Acts 16:33 - At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

¹¹ Acts 18:8 - Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

was invited over to Aquila's and Priscilla's home for lunch where they **explained to him the way of God more adequately** ¹².

II. It Fits in By Its Purpose ²⁴

Baptism fits into God's plan of salvation by its importance. God's Word says It also fits in by its purpose. There's confusion today about what baptism's purpose is.

²⁵ **Christian baptism is not the same as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.** This spiritual phenomena, found in the New Testament, was the miraculous power given to the apostles and those to whom they laid their hands. The people in the Bible who had received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit could perform supernatural signs confirming the validity of the gospel message they presented. ¹³

¹² Acts 18:26.

¹³ Much has been made of this from the modern Pentecostal movement in the last 100 years. The modern Pentecostal movement is traced historically to the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, California in April 1906.

There are two conversion events in the Book of Acts which mention both the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and baptism in water. In the case of the conversion of the Samaritans ²⁶, the baptism in water came first ¹⁴, ²⁷ then they were baptized by the Holy Spirit later ¹⁵. ²⁸ With the conversion of the household of Cornelius, they were baptized by the Holy Spirit first ¹⁶, ²⁹ then in water later ¹⁷.

Both of these cases involved the conversion of non Jews for the first time. Baptism in water was the response in faith and repentance to the gospel message presented to them. They became believers. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit was a dramatic

¹⁴ Acts 8:12 - But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

¹⁵ Acts 8:15-17 - When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁶ Acts 10:44 - While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.

¹⁷ Acts 10:47-48 - "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

supernatural event given by God to convince believers that all people have been included in God's grace and to ensure that the gospel was, indeed, of God!

30 **Baptism is pictured as a death to sin and a resurrection to life.** Romans, Chapter 6, verses 3 and 4, **Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**

31 **Baptism pictures a putting off of the sins of the flesh.** Colossians, Chapter 2, verses 11 and 12, **In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.**

32 Baptism is pictured as putting the Lord on like a suite of clothes. Galatians, Chapter 3, verse 27, . . . for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

33 Baptism is pictured as bringing us all into one body, regardless of our race. First Corinthians, Chapter 12, verse 13, For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

34 Baptism provides the final ceremonial aspect of your new birth into Christ. John, Chapter 3, verses 3 and 5, Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again . . . Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

35 Baptism pictures salvation from sin. **36** This is seen as an expression of your faith. Lord Jesus told His disciples in Mark, Chapter 16, verses 15 and 16, Go into all the world and preach the good news to all

creation. **Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.**

37 It is seen as a response to God's grace. First Peter, Chapter 3, verse 21, . . . this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God.

38 It is seen as a resemblance to Israel in the Red Sea. First Corinthians, Chapter 10, verses 1 and 2, **For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.**

III. It Fits in By Its Role ³⁹

The ceremony of baptism fits into God's plan of salvation by its importance, its purpose and its role. Much confusion is over the role of baptism. Some see baptism as Baptismal Regeneration; that there is a mystical or supernatural element either in the water or

in the ceremony itself. This train of thought views baptism, in and of itself, providing salvation. Others view baptism as insignificant, having nothing to do with salvation, and don't seem to know what to do with it. There are various levels of interpretation between these extremes.

Since there appears to be sufficient scriptures to support each view, please allow me to share a view that makes sense to me. This interpretation seems to include rather than exclude other positions.

⁴⁰ The act of submitting to the ceremony of **baptism doesn't provide salvation**; the act of dying on the cross did the saving! I see a correlation between these two events that seem to be misunderstood or ignored by many. Please let me explain.

How could an event 2000 years ago, thousands of miles away, affect me? Answer: when I identify with what took place there!

41 What made possible the forgiveness of your sins? The blood of Jesus ¹⁸. ⁴² But when were your sins forgiven? At your baptism ¹⁹.

43 What washes away your sins? The blood of Jesus ²⁰. ⁴⁴ When does the blood of Lord Jesus wash them away? At your baptism ²¹.

45 What purges your conscience from acts that lead to death? The blood of Jesus ²². ⁴⁶ When does the blood of Jesus do the purging? At your baptism ²³.

**Obedience to the Lordship of Christ is a key here! ⁴⁷
Lord Jesus plainly stated that not everyone calling**

¹⁸ Matthew 26:28 - This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁹ Acts 2:38 - Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

²⁰ Revelation 1:5 - To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood . . .

²¹ Acts 22:16 - And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.

²² Hebrews 9:14 - How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

²³ I Peter 3:21 - this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God.

Him Lord will be saved. Only those who obey God ²⁴. Obeying God means obeying the gospel. ⁴⁸ When Lord Jesus comes again He will take revenge upon those who do not obey the gospel ²⁵. ⁴⁹ Your baptism is your act of obedient faith in response to what Lord Jesus did on the cross!

There's another misunderstanding that needs to be cleared away. ⁵⁰ **Baptism is not something you do to earn heaven!** It is something that is done to you! You don't do a work, you submit to a privilege. You receive baptism as God's pledge to you that you will be resurrected when you are dead and buried!

⁵¹ Your baptism will not keep you saved. Only faithfulness to Lord Jesus will do that!

⁵² According to First Corinthians, Chapter 15, verses 1, 3 and 4, the gospel is the story of the death, burial and

²⁴ Matthew 7:21 - Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

²⁵ II Thessalonians 1:8 - He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

resurrection of the Lord ²⁶. Since the gospel must be obeyed, how do you obey a fact? You can't! But you can obey the likeness of a fact. Both Romans, Chapter 6, verses 3 and 4, and Colossians, Chapter 2, verses 11 and 12, say baptism is your personal death, burial and resurrection.

If you have ever wondered if you have been saved, don't doubt. Respond to the Lord the way He has made known. Genuinely put your faith in the Lord Jesus and His gospel message. Repent of your sinful lifestyle. Pledge your allegiance to God through the Good Confession and be baptized.

⁵³ Base your faith about your salvation on the promises of God's Word!

<http://biblelifemessages.org/>

²⁶ I Corinthians 15:1, 3-4 - I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you . . . that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.