

Baptized

Introduction

For most of us the tradition we grew up in will shape your perspective on water baptism. Whatever our view on the subject we must understand that water baptism is more than a ceremonial, ritualistic act, there is a spiritual dynamic involved.

In the first century church it was very much the norm to be baptized in water immediately after coming to faith. Actually it would have been unheard of to not be baptized after believing.

So let's take a fresh look at a subject that has been around for centuries.

“Baptizo”

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 38:18)

Jesus was very clear in his direction to us, go and make disciples and baptize them. “Baptizo” literally means, “washing, scrubbing, transforming, cleansing”.

“Baptizo” was a very common term in the first century. It was used for various things, but today the translated word “Baptism” is exclusively used in a spiritual context.

Hebrew's were monotheistic; they believed that there is only one true God. If a Gentile wanted to convert to Judaism there were several steps they would have to complete. They would renounce any other gods, men would need to be circumcised and the converts would eat a covenant meal, (Passover), read and/or memorize the Law that was given to Moses. Another thing that was required was “baptize”; a ceremonial cleansing that you would do yourself.

Then John the Baptizer came on the scene:

“In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea 2 and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

*“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
level up the paths of the Father.’”*

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,

*‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’”*

4 John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan.

*6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.”
(Matthew 3:1-6)*

John was not only different in his clothes speech and mannerisms, but he preached repentance and then baptized them. This was not the norm in that culture. The Hebrew process included a washing, cleansing but not like what John was doing. Then Jesus came to John:

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” 15 Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. 16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:13-17)

Three Important things to Understand about Baptizo”

1) Baptism is a public declaration of a new association.

An illustration of this would be a person saying: “I want to marry you, but let’s not tell anyone; let’s keep it a secret”

“Water Baptism is a public act that renounces sin from your past and professes faith in Christ. You are expressing publicly that Jesus is your Lord and that you are a part of the family of God”.

2) Baptism is a personal declaration of a new association.

“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 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.” (Romans 6:3-4)

3) Baptism is not a condition of salvation but the evidence of it.

“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 38 Peter replied, “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. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” 41 Those who accepted his

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” (Acts 2:37-41)

There is nothing mystical about the water. The water doesn’t save you or forgive you of sins; only Jesus and his blood can do that.

The Book of Acts records 9 individual conversions and in each case they were immediately baptized in water. Here are a couple of examples:

“But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” (Acts 8:12)

“As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” 37 Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” The eunuch answered, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.” (Acts 8:36-38)

“The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.” (Acts 16:30-34)

Paul has been arrested and is telling his salvation story. He recounts his encounter with Jesus and how he was blinded in the road to Damascus. He also tells of how Ananias was sent to him after speaking and praying for him:

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

So what are you waiting for?

Just like the Children of Israel being delivered from Egypt, from slavery and bondage to freedom, through the Red Sea, (Baptism) and receiving freedom from our oppressor.

“As you come through the waters the enemy of your soul is defeated”

“Procrastination is the space between conviction and action”

Discussion Questions

- 1) Many things in our lives will shape our perspective of water baptism. Talk about the process of your understanding of baptism and where you are at today?
- 2) Referring back to your notes on page 1, describe the norm of the early church in relation to water baptism. Also what did the original word, “baptizo” mean in the first century as compared to the exclusive meaning today?
- 3) What does it mean to you that water baptism is both a *public* and *personal* declaration of a new association, relationship and identity?
- 4) Please discuss this phrase: “baptism is not a condition of salvation but the evidence of it”.
- 5) Referring back to the scriptures listed on pages 3 and 4, what was the norm for the early church concerning water baptism and maybe some practices you’ve seen in the larger Body of Christ today?