



Baptism

“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 his death, 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” (Romans 6:3, 4).

The pelican, a large water bird, has an enormous, elastic pouch on the underside of its bill and the front of its upper neck. About five feet long, this bird is the largest web-footed bird, with a wingspread of eight to ten feet. Almost voiceless, this swift swimmer lives in large colonies that cooperate with each other in gathering fish for food.

One of these strong, graceful fliers swooped down on an African woman carrying a fish. Frightened, she struck it with a paddle, breaking one leg and crippling its wing. Dr. Albert Schweitzer, in his nearby jungle hospital, heard of the accident. The kind doctor took the pelican under his care. In a short time the bird was healed and was set free.

But this pelican, which had always lived in water as part of a large colony, refused to leave the doctor. Never was there a better night watchman. His bill frightened away many a prowler as he faithfully watched and protected the doctor. Love for the one who saved his life changed the pelican’s entire nature. So your love for God can change you—from one who wants to do evil, to one who loves to please God. Have you let God make you into a new person?

God changes our desires, values, and attitudes if we submit to His love. He will do what’s impossible for us to do for ourselves.

Preview

“If I could only live my life over, how different it would be!” How many of us have so thought! In reality, though, few of us would really want to become babies again and have to learn all the lessons of life over. However, in the spiritual realm it is not only possible, it is desirable, and very rewarding.

In the physical life, death inevitably follows birth. But in the spiritual kingdom, the reverse is the case: birth follows death. This birth is symbolized in baptism, our gateway into the family of God.

Scripture gives examples of baptism, first of Jesus Himself and also of many in the early church. For this reason, there really should be little confusion as to why we should be baptized, how baptism should be done, and who should be baptized. Many Scriptures also give a clear demonstration that baptism is really significant. It is a symbol of a change in the life, rather than an end in itself.

Points to Ponder

1. The symbol of belonging to God’s family is baptism.

Baptism is an outward symbol of something that has happened in the heart. Our old self dies to sin and is reborn in Jesus Christ. Immersion symbolizes the burial of the old self and the resurrection into a new life through Jesus’ power. A public demonstration of death and resurrection should not be made unless this change has already begun inside. Burial follows death—death to self and death to our old ways of sin.

2. Although baptism is a death to sin, that does not mean we will never again sin.
 Now that we are reborn in Jesus, we only need to pray for forgiveness—we do not need to be rebaptized every time we sin.
 Baptism does not mean that we are now perfect or that Satan will no longer tempt us. Jesus was strongly tempted right after His baptism. Therefore, we need to do as He did. As Jesus came up out of the water, He knelt in prayer (Luke 3:21). If ever there is a time when prayer is necessary, it is when deciding to be baptized and then when asking for the Holy Spirit to lead and guide in the new life.

3. Because baptism is a symbol of burial (Colossians 2:12), baptism must be by total immersion.
 Burial in death takes place when the body is totally covered by earth in a grave—pouring or sprinkling a little dirt over the head of a dead body cannot mean burial. Likewise, if baptism is a symbol of burial, the one being baptized should be completely buried in water.
 While the story of the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43) shows that one can be saved without baptism, the story of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33) shows that if we have the opportunity, we should be baptized. Both stories show that we should not delay any opportunity to make things right with God.
 Think about this: Is the new birth and baptism the same thing?

4. Babies are born into a family.
 Likewise, when we are spiritually born, we are also born into a family—the family of Christ. Just as newborns need nourishment, help, and guidance, so do new babies in the church. As newly baptized individuals, we must seek help and regular spiritual nourishment. Then, as we grow in Christ, we share with others the joy of belonging to the family of God.

Does baptism make a difference in our lives? Does God really require baptism? Is it necessary for salvation? We'll find answers to these important questions in God's Word.

Nuts & Bolts

1. What important reason did Jesus give for baptism?
 When Jesus came to John to be baptized, John objected. But Jesus said it was necessary that He be baptized. "Thus it becometh us to _____ all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).

2. Just before Christ ascended, He gave to the disciples a command, followed by a promise.
 Matthew 28:19, 20: "Go ye therefore, and teach all _____
 _____ them in the name of the _____,
 the _____, and of the _____
 _____ ...and lo, I am with you _____."

3. Find in the following passages proofs to show that Jesus was baptized by immersion.
 Mark 1:9, 10: Jesus “was baptized of John in _____. And straightway coming up _____ the water, he saw the heavens opened.”
 John 3:23: “John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was _____.”
4. When we are placed under the water and brought back up, we are symbolically doing two things that were done to Christ. What are they, according to Romans 6:1-4?

5. When we are buried in the watery grave of baptism, symbolically, what else is being buried?
 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a _____ creature: old _____ are passed away; behold _____ things are become _____.” Thus we can say that baptism is a crucifixion of the old life of sin.
6. Besides baptism in water, with what else must we be baptized?
 Acts 1:5: “Ye shall be _____ with the _____.”
7. What is the purpose for this baptism?
 Acts 1:8: “Ye shall receive _____, after that the Holy _____ is come upon you.” This empowerment will enable us not only to live the Christian life but to proclaim the good news of the gospel (Matthew 24:14).
8. What are the three qualifications for baptism?
 a. Mark 16:16: _____
 b. Acts 2:38: _____
 c. John 15:8: _____
9. Why should we not baptize infants and little children?
 Baptism requires being taught, being able to believe, being repentant, and accepting Jesus as a personal Saviour from sin. Since infants and children cannot do any of these, they cannot be baptized. Baptism is only for those old enough to understand truth, repent of their sins, and accept Jesus as Saviour.

10. After you are baptized, is it essential to become a church member?

1 Corinthians 12:12, 13: "For as the body is _____, and hath many _____, and all the members of that one body, being _____, are one body: so also is _____. For by _____ are we all baptized into _____ body."

After baptism, we're no longer isolated individuals—we have become members of Christ's church. "And the Lord added to the church daily," says Acts 2:47, speaking of the many who were baptized.

11. We are born into Christ's kingdom as His missionaries, eager to share our joy.

Words to Remember

Baptism: From the Greek verb *baptizo*, it means to dip in or under—therefore, immersion.

Ordinance: An important practice of faith and fellowship. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are two important ordinances of the Christian church.

The Difference Between

Immersion: Total submersion of a person in water.

Aspersation: A sprinkling, especially with water.

Affusion: Pouring on of liquid.

I Truly Believe

Think carefully about each statement below. Check the statements with which you agree.

- I believe that following Jesus' example in baptism is important.
- I believe it is clear from Scripture that New Testament baptism is by total immersion.
- I believe that faith and repentance should precede baptism and that these will result in a difference in my life.
- Just as with Jesus, baptism for me must be both of water and of the Holy Spirit.
- I have not been baptized by immersion yet, but I choose to follow my Lord and be baptized soon.

My Prayer

Dear Father,

Thank You for the promised abundant life that You are giving me. Help me to focus on the goals and aspirations You have planned for me. Thank You for transforming my life day by day; I want to be Yours throughout all eternity. In Jesus' name. Amen.