



Baptism

READINGS FOR THIS LESSON:– Acts 8, Romans 6.

A new start

Have you ever watched a small child, when he or she turns to a new page of his writing book? The new page looks so clean and unspoiled, that they take extra care, as they begin to write, that they don't spoil it. He or she makes a fresh start.

When we begin to understand how much Jesus Christ has done for us, we shall also want to make a fresh start. We will want to follow him.

God's way

In Matthew 28:19-20, we read that before Jesus went into heaven, he said to his disciples,



"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Read these verses very carefully. You will notice that when they made disciples, they were to **baptize** them. Baptism is the way God has chosen for us to make a new start.

When we are baptized, God forgives us our past sins. Jesus himself, although he had done no sin, set us an example by being baptized. We read in Matthew 3:13-17, how Jesus came to the River Jordan, and was baptized by John the Baptist.

Have you noticed that, when John said that he was unworthy to baptize Jesus, Jesus replied in verse 15,

"Let it be so now; it is proper for us to fulfil all righteousness."

He did not say "**me**", he said "**us**", showing that **we also** must be baptized. Baptism is **essential** for salvation.

Burial in water

Baptism means a complete burial under water. It is as though, when we go under the water, we die and are buried; and when we come up out of the water again, we are resurrected and ready to begin a new life in Christ. In a sense, we die with Christ, and then we rise with him. Paul tells us this in Romans 6:3-4,

"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, on order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Christening and Baptism

Perhaps you have heard of babies being “*baptized*” or christened when they are sprinkled with water on the forehead.

But this is not really baptism. You remember Jesus said,

“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16).

We must understand and believe **first** – and a baby cannot do this. Of course, being sprinkled with water is not the same as being buried in it and coming up again out of the water. It cannot remind us in the same way of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.



A man who believed and was baptised

You will notice in the reading from Acts 8, that the eunuch, who was a servant of the Queen of Ethiopia, said to Philip,

“Look here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?” (verse 36).

There was **one** condition. Philip said to him,

“If you believe with all thine heart, you may.” (verse 37).

You will notice, too, that “*both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water*” (verse 38). That was necessary because Philip was going to baptize the eunuch by burying him completely under the water and lifting him up again.

A big decision

Here is another very important passage about baptism:

“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.” (Acts 8:12).

We learn from this quotation that people should not rush into baptism before they are ready. The men and women of Samaria were not baptised until “*they **believed** . . . the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.*”

Deciding to be baptised is the most important decision of a lifetime. It is not a decision to be made lightly. **Before** baptism, it is necessary to understand, and believe, the true teaching of the Bible. **After** baptism, it is necessary to fight against temptation and try to obey God's commandments.

Without these things – **belief** of true Bible teaching **first**, and **obedience** to God **afterwards** – baptism is of no value.

Children of God

As humans we are born the children of Adam. But when we are baptized we are taken into the family of God, and we become the children of God. Every man and woman is a child of Adam, and the Bible speaks of them as being “*in Adam*”.

When we are baptized, we “*clothe ourselves with Christ*”; and are spoken of as being “*in Christ*”. Paul tells us in Galatians 3:26-27,

"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

We have a new hope of life, for we read in 1 Corinthians 15:22,

"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ will all be made alive."

Christ our Mediator

We make a fresh start at our baptism. But we cannot live without sinning. What happens if we sin, after we are baptised?

Because we are "*in Christ*," we have Jesus Christ as our mediator, to present our prayers to God for us. If we are really sorry we have sinned, and repent, we may be sure that God will hear us, and forgive our sins for Christ's sake. The apostle John writes in 1 John 2:1,

"But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."



Summary

1. God has commanded us to be baptized.
2. Baptism is a complete burial in water.
3. Because baptism must follow belief, it is for adults, not babies.
4. In a symbol, we die with Christ, are buried and rise out of the water to a new way of life.
5. When we are baptized, we become the children of God, and the Bible speaks of us as being "*in Christ*".