

WATER BAPTISM

MEMORY VERSE

Romans 6:4

"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."

When we come to Jesus and repent of our sins, we enter into what the Bible calls the "born again" experience. We experience a "new birth" and receive a new heart. Jesus comes to dwell in our hearts by the Holy Spirit through faith. We become partakers of eternal life, for eternal life is in the Son. When we depart from this earthly life, we will go to be with the Lord.

1. What are five vital elements of the Christian life? (Acts 2:38-4:1)

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____
- e) _____

In our previous studies we discussed the atonement of Jesus and God's provision for man's sin. We discussed what true repentance and submission to the Lordship of Jesus means. We come now to our next truth, water baptism, in which we experience a burial of our old nature and a rising to walk with Christ in newness of life. Water baptism in itself apart from a relationship with God cannot save you, but is nonetheless an absolutely essential step of obedience for every Christian.

2. What does Jesus expect for every person who chooses to become His disciple?
(Matthew 28:18-20)

Jesus clearly desires and commands that every one of His disciples to choose to be water baptized. His command should be enough for every believer to be baptized in water. But the word of God gives us several other compelling reasons to do so.

Read Mark 16:15-16.

In this passage, Jesus again expresses His expectation that His disciples will be water baptized, giving another reason they should be. First of all, let's clear up a common misconception.

3. According to verse 16, who will be condemned?

4. Who will be saved?

It is vitally important that we understand what this verse is saying. The word “saved” is the Greek word “sozo” which means to be made whole and complete in every facet of our lives. It means more than simply being born again and going to heaven when you die. So, to clear things up, we must understand that water baptism in itself doesn’t forgive our sins. If a person is not born again but for some religious reason is water baptized, he or she will still go to hell. But if a person is born again but refuses to be water baptized, he or she will go to heaven, but they will not be made whole, i.e., “saved” to the fullness the Lord intends for them. They will go to heaven but miss out on the blessings of "heaven on earth."

Read Romans 6:3-8

5. Through baptism, what has happened to your flesh, your old sinful nature?

6. What does water baptism accomplish for us in light of this truth?

The glorious truth is that, regardless of what or how we feel, our old self was crucified with Christ. If you are born again, the old you that you hate is dead! But even that is not enough in itself to live a life of victory.

In ancient Rome, murderers were condemned to a gruesome fate. When the body of their victim was found, the corpse would be tied to the murderer. The murderer was initially healthy and could go and do whatever he wanted, but in a short period of time the corruption from the rotting flesh attached to him led to disease, decay and death. Without the burial of our old self, we could suffer a similar fate spiritually! Water baptism is the means God has provided to bury your old self, your flesh, so you are not weighed down and corrupted by the weight, guilt and compulsions of your flesh and your past.

Read Colossians 2:11-12. Besides a burial of our flesh, what else does water baptism accomplish for us? (Colossians 2:11-12)

We see that through water baptism we receive a spiritual circumcision, one done without hands, a circumcision of the heart. Circumcision in the natural sense is the cutting away of the unclean part, the foreskin of the man. In the spiritual sense, circumcision is the cutting away of the whole body of sins, the sin-loving nature.

Two Old Testament examples demonstrate the burial of our old selves and circumcision of the heart that water baptism provides. The first is shown in the book of Exodus. God’s people had been in the bondage of slavery in Egypt under the rule of

Pharaoh for 400 years. Egypt is a type, a symbol, of sin and our former slavery to it. When the Lord brought the Israelites out of Egypt and Pharaoh pursued them, the Israelites went through the Red Sea unscathed, but once they were through, the waters rolled back in onto Pharaoh and his armies and drowned them.

The ones who held Israel in bondage and slavery, who were pursuing her in her new relationship with God, were buried in the waters of the Red Sea. Israel was left alone on the other side of the water, free from slavery, free to be servants of God. If the sea had not buried the Egyptians, the threat of slavery would have followed them into the Promised Land. Not only would Israel have had to fight her enemies in the Promised Land, but she would also have had to fight the one who was trying to bring her back into bondage. Those who have come to faith in Christ and are identified with Him in water baptism have been made free from the power and bondage of sin and have pressed into the Promised Land able to meet and conquer their enemies head on.

The second example takes place in the book of Joshua. After forty years of wandering, the disobedient generation whom God had originally brought out of Egypt died in the wilderness. When the Lord rolled back the waters of the Jordan River just as He had done at the Red Sea, this new generation walked through the Jordan and into the Promised Land.

7. Read 1 Peter 3:21. What is baptism a pledge of and an appeal to?

This pledge and appeal is multi-faceted. First, when you are water baptized you are publicly committing your life to Jesus and identifying with Him, and so you are pledging to keep your conscience clean to the best of your ability by being faithful to Him. Second, since the old you is dead and now buried and cut off through water baptism along with your sin, you can boldly appeal to God for a completely free conscience. Your past sins and the old you who committed them are dead and buried, so there is no more need to be guilty or ashamed of your past. You are free to serve and enjoy God and other people with a clear conscience.

Through all these things, we can see that baptism is far more than a religious ceremony; it is a means of bringing salvation (wholeness) to us so that we can indeed “walk in newness of life!” (Romans 6:4)