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## Should Everyone Be Baptized?

**Mark 10:39:** (NASB) *They said to him, We are able. And Jesus said to them, The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.*

Humanity loves ritual and tradition, as they give us a sense of our roots and a sense of belonging. Christianity has its rituals, one of which is baptism. The problem is there are many ways different Christian groups define baptism. So, what part should baptism play in our Christian faith? Is it necessary? Should babies or adults be baptized? Does baptism actually change you or is it a symbol of a change within you?

There are many perspectives on this important topic. We believe baptism to be two things: 1. Baptism is a symbol of change and not an event that actually changes you. 2. Baptism symbolizes the life-changing decision to live one's life in dedication to Christ.

**2 Corinthians 5:17-18:** *He is a new creature - something has changed; something is different. We believe baptism is a symbol of being in Christ.*

**1 Peter 3:18-21:** *We just said baptism was a symbol, but here it clearly says baptism now saves you. The answer lies in the previous verse: Jesus was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.*

Our baptism is an appeal to God for a good conscience, sin remission and the mind of Christ. These texts give the picture of Noah and the Ark saying it is a picture of baptism. Noah and his family are on the ark and the boat is in the water - did they get wet? No. It shows the symbol of passing through the water. It is not showing the personal act of baptism but rather the symbol of passing through the water.

How many baptisms did Jesus have? **We know he was baptized at Jordan:** **Matthew 3:13-17:** This was not for repentance or the remission of sins, as Jesus was not sinful. This was the beginning of something new... **Much later in his ministry, Jesus speaks of yet another baptism:** **Luke 12:50:** (NASB) *But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!* This baptism is the *real* baptism of Christianity. It is the real immersion into the calling of living and dying for Christ. Jesus was about to undergo the baptism of death. (...put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit)

**Mark 10:38-39:** He spoke of this as a future event and definitely as a symbol of something much bigger. He was referring to the process of his trial, crucifixion, death and resurrection. We believe Christian baptism is the *result* of a profession, not the profession or intention of a later result.

The remainder of our program will primarily focus on biblical baptisms. We will look to see who was baptized as well as why and when they were baptized...

Let's look at the two kinds of baptisms in the New Testament - the baptism of John and baptism in the name of Jesus. Were either of these two used to erase the stain of original sin?

**JOHN THE BAPTIST:** Repentance to get ready for Messiah was only the first stage.

**Repentance:** Strongs #3341 metanoia (met-an'-oy-ah); compunction (for guilt, including reformation); by implication reversal (of [another's] decision)

**Mark 1:4-5:** Was this erasing original sin or were people confessing their personal sins? These were the personal sins they committed.

**Acts 13:24:** This was written long after John the Baptist died, Jesus was crucified and raised, reviewing the type of baptism John performed. The people of Israel would have recognized repentance as an important concept from the Old Testament sacrifices required to atone for their sins. John's type of baptism made them ready for something different. Christianity is about readying ourselves - being prepared - to realize the importance of Jesus.

**JESUS:** The remission of sins comes after repentance and is accomplished through the sacrifice of Jesus.

**Remission:** Strongs #859 aphasis (af'-es-is); freedom, (figuratively) pardon





Luke 24:47: And that repentance and **remission <859>** of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

This is at the end of his ministry and sums up the two types: There is to be both repentance and remission of sins. John's baptism only included repentance.

Does Jesus' baptism take away original sin? Yes, it covers us and grants us the opportunity for life eternal for which we never had an opportunity. Jesus' ransom was the exchange of his human life for Adam's life. Adam sinned and we are all born in sin. Jesus, as a perfect man, sacrificed his life and "bought back" Adam and his progeny stuck in sin.

An analogy of Jesus dying as a ransom is like him presenting us with a present of forgiveness of original sin for the entire world but with a label on it for the world that says, "Do not open until the Day of Judgment." For his true followers now, there is a more immediate application.

**BIBLICAL BAPTISM: CORNELIUS AND HIS HOUSEHOLD** Acts 10:1-8: An angel appears to Cornelius. **Peter and company arrive at his home:**

Acts 10:30-33: Cornelius was years in waiting for God's direction - he was a believer without a teacher. **For much more on Cornelius and this life-changing story, see our programs called, "Why Cornelius? Why a Soldier?" (Part I) May 17, 2015 and (Part II) June 14, 2015.**

**Peter preaching to the first Gentile convert, Cornelius:** Acts 10:44-48: Baptizing was to show they had dedicated their lives to something bigger than themselves. These were obviously adults - those who were given the Holy Spirit, enabling them to speak in tongues (speaking in a language not native to their own; not gibberish) were those who were baptized. We do not have any scriptural evidence that any child was ever given the Holy Spirit.

Cornelius and his household loved God - they showed it and lived it. They were finally given a teacher and the gift of God's Spirit. Baptism became appropriate for those of a mature age who believed and professed Jesus. Notice the personal change in them happened *before* the physical baptism.

**Is baptism for those of a mature age who believe and profess Jesus only?**

**BIBLICAL BAPTISM: PHILIP AND THE EUNUCH** The eunuch was absolutely searching and ready to believe spiritual truth the moment he saw it: Acts 8:34-39

**Observations:**

- The eunuch was searching, studying and questioning about Messiah - he wanted to know and follow.
- He knew baptism was appropriate and sought it out at the first opportunity. He paid attention to Christianity developing around him.
- He rejoiced afterward, for his life had been given the clear purpose of following Jesus. He was ready, willing and able to accept Jesus; he just needed a teacher to help him understand. The commitment was made before the physical act of baptism.

Baptism is a picture of something that has already taken place in your heart. It is nice to see the eunuch *went on his way rejoicing* at the prospect of living his life with this new purpose. His rejoicing was because of what Philip taught him and not that he had been physically in the water.

**BIBLICAL BAPTISM: SIMON THE MAGICIAN** Baptism does NOT necessarily change us! Acts 8:9,12-15,17-21:

**Observations:**

- Simon chose to be a follower and was baptized.
- Simon watched Philip in amazement - what Philip did was genuinely miraculous!
- Simon's base character wanted the glory of real miracles.
- Baptism did not "change" the people - the Holy Spirit did. For the Holy Spirit to come upon people, they had to have humility and be willing to be changed.
- Simon was reprimanded for his sinful desires and saw the error of his ways further in the account.

Baptism was a symbol of a life change, showing what one decided in their heart. Again, we see baptism as an act for those who could discern right from wrong - those who could be responsible.



**BIBLICAL BAPTISM: PENTACOST** Peter gives a clear and vivid description of who Jesus is: Acts 2:32-41: Peter received the Holy Spirit - the influence of God working in his life - and is speaking as a mouthpiece for Jesus. The Holy Spirit focuses who we are in our service for Christ. Peter was "the bold one." This influence took his bold nature and made the boldness work in a God-glorifying manner.

After such bold statements of truth and prophecy, the crowd (who had previously seen and heard of Jesus and his works) reacts: <sup>37</sup>Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? (Their hearts were ready!) <sup>38</sup>Peter said to them, Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

These are adults reacting to an adult crisis of conscience. What were they to do to make amends? Repent (John's message) and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. (Remission)

<sup>39</sup>For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself. <sup>40</sup>And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, Be saved from this perverse generation! <sup>41</sup>So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

The promise is for you and your children (generations to follow), as well as those *not* part of your generational lineage...Gentiles. The promise was NOT a promise of baptism, it was a promise of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus did love children for their trust, humility and innocence and used them as an example: Mark 10:13-16: Restated, those who will enter the kingdom of God are those who have the characteristics of children - obedience, full of energy, wanting to learn. He used childlike characteristics as an example for adults who would follow him.

*Laying his hands on them* - this does not mean he touched them and gave them the Holy Spirit. There is no record of giving the Holy Spirit to another at any time. Here he simply touched them and gave a blessing.

In summary, biblical baptism had to do with thousands who saw and knew of Jesus for several years. The illegal crucifixion 50 days before this time of Pentecost rocked all of Jerusalem. Now the people were seeing the truth of the matter and chose to follow Christ.

Baptism was not something done for a child in hopes of a profession later. It was done as a result of their profession to follow Christ.

### Could baptism have been put in place to replace the Jewish national rite of circumcision?

If circumcision was to the Jew as baptism is to the Christian, this would be significant as this interpretation would lend itself towards infant baptism.

**Old Testament circumcision:** Genesis 17:1-12: (NRSV) There was a name change from *Abram* to *Abraham*. The covenant was put in place and then a sign of the Covenant was given - circumcision. This was a physical symbol given in the context of a name change and a land inheritance. It showed Israel was different from any other nation. This was all given as outward evidence of God's promise. Circumcision was one of the symbols of God's Covenant with Abraham, but it was not THE Covenant.

Colossians 2:10-13: Circumcision was a symbol of separation, of being different than the world. Was he talking to little children here? No, this was a letter to the Colossian church, those who were worshipping and following Jesus. **We are separated as well...**<sup>12</sup>having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup>When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive together with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ...and we are "dead" with Christ.

**Baptism did not replace circumcision, it was another symbol built upon circumcision. It is a "circumcision of the heart."**

*Having been buried with him in baptism* - this is obviously a symbol, as no one gets literally buried when they are baptized. It symbolizes the death of your own will. *Raised up with him through faith in the working of God* - raised up to a new life, a new way of living.



For the Jewish people, circumcision was a symbol of separation. In the context of Christian baptism, circumcision is also a symbol of separation - sanctification (set apart for holy service) - to be a basis for being *dead with Christ* through baptism. Where the Old Testament focused on children (who were circumcised), the New Testament proclamations regarding infants and children are actually referring to adults.

1 Peter 2:1-2: A newborn Christian must be "babied." As Christians when we just start out, we are likened to babies - immature with a lot to learn. Ephesians 4:11,13-15: *Growing up* means being tested as an adult. *Children* is used as a description of those who are young in Christ, drinking the *milk of the word* - basic knowledge.

**BIBLICAL BAPTISM: LYDIA'S HOUSEHOLD** Acts 16:14-15: Lydia made a personal decision to be a part of the Gospel.

Acts 16:40: There is no indication of any children - the implication is it was only adults who believed. Households would follow the lead of the owner regarding their beliefs and worship.

**BIBLICAL BAPTISM: STEPHANAS' HOUSEHOLD** 1 Corinthians 1:14-17: The Apostle Paul speaks of trouble going on in Corinth. He wanted them to refocus their choices. These were adults following in what was supposed to be the footsteps of Jesus.

**That same event is referred to here:** 1 Corinthians 16:13-16: *Act like men, be strong* - this is not the kind of command one would give to an infant or child.

Notice the *household* that had been baptized in 1 Corinthians was *devoted for the ministry to the saints* and in 1 Corinthians 16:16 are spoken of as *men* who heard and believed the Gospel.

We think baptism is a ritual or symbol of a choice that has been made in your heart to follow in Jesus' footsteps. It is an outward symbol of what is being professed inwardly. We believe baptism is a full water immersion - **see the bonus material for more**. It is a picture of your own will "dying" and being raised up, "alive" in Christ. It does not change you; it just shows the world what you have decided.

**BIBLICAL BAPTISM: PAUL AND SILAS IN PRISON** Acts 16:26-33: Same story! There was a heart belief - the guard and his household changed their direction completely.

The Scriptures give us a sensible explanation of what baptism is supposed to be.

#### **Observations of where baptism came into play in all of our examples:**

- For those in Cornelius' house, it was after hearing, believing and receiving the Holy Spirit.
- For both the eunuch and Simon, it was after hearing or seeing the Gospel made plain.
- For those at Pentecost, it was after their consciences were pierced. There were thousands of people who already knew who Jesus was. Some might have even been healed by him or otherwise touched by his teaching.
- For Lydia and her household, it was after she heard the word and opened her heart to it.
- For Stephanas and his household, it was after the preaching of Paul.
- For the jailer and his household, it was after seeing miracles and believing.

The pattern is always the same: An adult decision based on an acknowledgment of who Jesus is and a willingness to follow him. Baptism today has a lot of denominational perspectives. In examining these biblical "case studies," the only time Christian baptism is appropriate (according to the Bible, not tradition) is one based on desire and the will to follow Jesus; the willingness to lay down your life for him. Baptism is the lowering of your body into the water symbolically in death and then being raised up in a newness of life as a footstep follower of Christ.

*So, should everyone be baptized?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*