

100 BIBLE LESSONS

Give these lessons to people you visit, youth groups, hospital patients, church visitors and new members. Use them in Sunday School, bus ministry, jail services, nursing homes, Christian schools, small discussion groups and many other places. God's Word will answer your questions and help solve your problems.

LESSON 38 – WATER BAPTISM

As we come to the teaching on Christian water baptism it is of utmost importance that we be honest with ALL scriptures, asking God to give us light and then to make a quality decision to act upon that light (James 1:22).

Because of religion, tradition and doctrines of men that make the Word of God of none effect (Mt. 15:3, 6-8; Mk. 7:8-9, 13; Col. 2:8) such questions as these have been asked, "Well my grandfather wasn't baptized, Will he go to heaven?" or "Baptism is salvation by works isn't it?" Such questions would never have been asked of the early New Testament church. The reason that such questions would not be valid is because all New Testament believers were immediately baptized as they put their faith in Jesus as Lord, Messiah and Saviour. All the apostles and disciples immediately baptized their converts never questioning it as being a work of the law. This is also true of the apostle Paul who establishes the fact of salvation by grace through faith without works (Acts 19:4-5).

These questions have only been asked because we have not practiced New Testament Christianity. The practice of many Christians today is "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" and when it is convenient and we can get enough people together we will have a baptismal service and then later on as you grow in the Lord, there is another experience we will tell you about called the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In the early New Testament church there was not time period between these experiences, at the most, a time period of a few days and in most cases not even a period of hours.

Because of the lack of practicing New Testament Christianity, and the practice of our own traditions, God is calling the church to again act upon the gospel as did the early New Testament church.

Look at New Testament Christianity and then compare it to the practice of the church today:

Mark 16:15-16

Acts 8:35-38

Acts 16:14-15

Acts 2:36-41

Acts 9:3-6; 17-18 cp.22:12-16

Acts 16:30-34

Acts 8:5, 12, 14-15

Acts 10:43-48

Acts 19:1-6

It is because of a dishonest approach to the scriptures that denominations have built churches based on one scripture such as Acts 2:38 while others have built churches on

Acts 10:43. To get the whole truth on any subject we must acknowledge and approach all of God's Word on that subject. Comparing scripture with scripture we must be willing to believe and act upon God's Word and understanding will come. "For man shall not live by bread alone but by every word which proceeds from God" (Mt. 4:4). Men fall into heresy when they begin to choose which scriptures they would like to believe. The word heresy comes from a root word which means "to take" or "choose."

Upon examination of the word "baptize" we find it is not actually an English word, but a Greek word written in letters of the English alphabet. If we write out the Greek in English letters, this gives us "baptizo." Then with a change of the "o" to an "e," we have the word "baptize."

In Strong's Exhaustive Concordance we see the primary meaning of the word "baptizo," "to make fully wet." Strong's gives the meaning of the verb "bapto" as "to cover wholly with fluid, hence to dip."

We have here the idea of baptism by immersion. If we do not trust the Greek as our final authority, let us go to the scripture themselves to settle this all important question.

Please read Matthew 3:16, Acts 8:38, and Romans 6:4. (A burial is not placing a corpse on top of the ground and sprinkling some dirt on it. It is placing it in the ground.)

As we study such words as "baptize" it will led us to examine other subjects such as "remission." Acts 2:38 states repentance and Christian water baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins. Upon examination of the word "remission" we also see that Acts 10:43 states that "whosoever believeth in Him (Lord Jesus) shall receive remission of sins. It is with an equal approach that we must acknowledge both of these scriptures as being God's holy Word to us. As a study of the subject of "remission" is done, we find that there could be no remission under any circumstances "without the shedding of blood" (Heb. 9:22). John Baptist's baptism of repentance could only be a temporary baptism based on the shedding of blood of bulls and goats (Heb. 10:1, 4). When the apostle Paul had discovered that certain disciples at Ephesus had only received John's baptism he immediately re-baptized them with Christian water baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:1-5). It is only the blood of Jesus that can give remission of sins on a permanent basis (Heb. 10:16-19).

As an objection that Christian water baptism is "works" we are led to examine the subject of works. The apostle Paul establishes the fact "that a man is not justified (declared righteous) by works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16). But what are the works of the law? Read Philippians 3:9. The works of the law are anything that you do to establish your own righteousness before God, saying, "Lord I've done these righteous deeds, I deserve now to enter your Kingdom." Read Romans 10:3-4 very carefully.

As we study the subject of "works" we discover another kind of "work" that must be present with saving faith. It is called "a work of faith." Read 1 Th. 1:2-3; 2 Th. 1:11. John

Calvin said, "Faith alone saves but saving faith is not alone." A work of faith is a corresponding action that results from faith. If I said, "This building is on fire!" it would produce a work of faith, an action which would cause you to get up and run out of the building. To all those that said they believed but did not get up and go out of the building, they would perish. That is what we call intellectual assent or devils' faith (James 2:19), a faith that is dead because it has no corresponding actions (James 2:17, 20, 26).

We do not receive salvation by works but works are the test of whether our faith is real. James gives us several examples of this:

Read James 2:16. If a person has the means to help another but says, "Go your way, we will pray for you." The fact that he could have helped but did not indicates that he really did not care. His words were mere empty talk.

Read James 2:19. Demons faith brings them no comfort, only fear. This shows that true saving faith is expressed by obedience and submission to God.

Read James 2:21-23. In Genesis 15:6 Abraham believed God to give him a seed from his own bowels in which all families of the earth would be blessed. As he believed, righteousness was imputed unto him without works (Rom. 4:9-11). Because Abraham believed in his heart, faith was expressed by a work of faith as God asked him to offer his son Isaac as an offering (Gen. 22).

Because of the faith in Abraham's heart (received in Gen. 15:6) this faith led to a work of faith or result of faith which was offering his son Isaac upon the altar. We read in James 2:22-23 (NIV), "You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete (or perfect) by what he did. And the scripture was FULFILLED that says, Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness."

So it is with Christian water baptism. The result of faith or work of faith that was always expressed when people believed on the Lord Jesus Christ was water baptism. This was practiced immediately upon conversion. So we could say that all those that believed and were baptized have fulfilled or completed by faith and action the scripture which says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ..." Read Acts 16:30-34. Christian baptism understood correctly does not take away from justification by faith but actually strengthens the point. Faith is made perfect, complete or manifest by a work of faith which was usually water baptism in the early New Testament church. Read 1 Peter 3:20-21, the righteous man Noah (Gen. 7:1) became heir of the righteousness which is by faith as his faith was expressed in preparing the ark (Heb. 11:7). Baptism is the like figure or picture of this corresponding work of faith (1 Pet. 3:21). James says, "Shew me thy faith without thy works (which is impossible to do) and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (Jam. 2:18). God sees saving faith in the heart of a man before it expresses itself in action (Gen. 15:6). However, God will, through instruction show a man how to express his faith outwardly (Gen. 17:10-14; Rom. 4:10-11; Gen. 22; Jam. 2:22) thus

bringing it to maturity and proving or making manifest the perfect will of God. Water baptism was a work of faith that the apostles demanded as a distinguishing factor between saving faith and intellectual assent.

On the day of Pentecost 3000 souls responded to the gospel and were baptized (Acts 2:41). If the twelve apostles baptized and it took 2 minutes a person to perform the act, that would mean that each apostle baptized eight and one-half hours that day. It was commonly known and understood by believers and unbelievers that all those that put saving faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, Messiah and Saviour would immediately be baptized.

When Jesus was baptized of John he gave the reason for this act as "to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt. 3:15). Jesus was already righteous, but through this act he fulfilled or completed the righteousness that he already had in his heart. Christian baptism is the outward act of the believer in which he fulfills or completes, the inward righteousness which he has in his heart through faith in Christ's atoning death and resurrection.

Many times as I've baptized I've had people say, "I'm not going to be baptized unless so and so can baptize me." Such attitudes make baptism invalid and for this reason the apostle Paul refrained from baptizing (1 Cor. 1:12-15). Read Gal. 3:27, baptism is done in the name of Jesus. There is no room here for anything less than Christ. Baptism is an identification with Christ not with man.

Through baptism the truth of the gospel message is acted out in the life of the believer, thus bringing before the church the central theme of Christ's atonement. Each time a believer is added to the church, they themselves act out in the ordinance of baptism their identification by faith with Christ - first in His death and burial unto sin, and second in his resurrection to newness of life (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12).

Jesus gave a commission in Matthew 28:19 to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. As we look at actual examples of baptism we see that the apostles and disciples baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. To baptize in the name of Jesus fulfills the commission of Matthew 28 because in Jesus Christ "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

It is also true that the scriptures reveal that "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). This means that when I go to work, when my wife is cooking dinner or whatever is done, do in the name of Jesus. This doesn't mean that every time I do something I have to stop and say "in Jesus' name I go to work, in Jesus' name I cook the dinner, etc." God is not so concerned about the words we say as He does the attitude of the heart. So it is with baptism. God is not so concerned with the words that the preacher said over those being baptized as He is with the obedience to the commission of Christ. So in other words the preacher may have said the words, "I baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" but the act was done in obedience to the person of Christ, therefore the person

was baptized in the name of Jesus regardless of the actual words spoken over the individual.

It is also true that someone can say the words "in Jesus' Name" and actually not do the "deed in Jesus' Name." For example, If I were to teach a Bible study and I began to pray, "Father, in Jesus' Name I come before you and ask you to anoint this teaching because I have been paying my tithes, going to church every Sunday and Wednesday, I've given much money to the poor, so God bless this teaching, in Jesus' Name, Amen." Although I said, "in Jesus' Name" I did not pray in the name of Jesus. Why? Because I listed all of my righteousness as a means of God's blessing instead of trusting Christ righteousness as a means of God's blessing. I prayed IN MY NAME although I said, "in Jesus' Name."

This point is brought out because of the division that has come about in the body of Christ over the words the preacher used when baptizing converts.

I do believe that to be technicality correct as to the mode of Christian baptism that it was probably the name of the Lord Jesus Christ which was used. I say this because of the actual examples of baptism in the book of Acts (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5), but I would never tell someone to be re-baptized or that their baptism was invalid for the reasons that have already been stated. Baptism is an identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, to re-baptize because of one's objection to not pronouncing the right words over the convert seems to take away from the central truth the He (Jesus) has offered one sacrifice for sins forever (Heb. 10:12).

What are the requirements of those desiring baptism?

(1) Instruction. A new convert needs to receive a certain amount of teaching to enable him to understand the nature and purpose of baptism. Read Matthew 28:19-20.

(2) Repentance. Repentance is a gift that God grants people who want to come to Him and be saved. It is a new attitude, a change of mind, a change of heart, that results in one turning from sin, to God and ultimately to His ways.

In Matthew 3:8 John the Baptist said, "Bring forth fruit that is consistent with repentance [let your lives prove your change of heart]." (Amplified Bible) And the apostle Paul said in his preaching to the Gentiles "that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance." (Acts 26:20; NASV) From these scriptures we can see that repentance is a change of heart, a change of mind and that good works are the fruit (evidence) of that changed heart.

(3) Faith. Faith is responding to something God has done. The gospel is responded to by faith in believing Christ died for our sins, was buried, and arose again that we might be declared righteous (1 Cor. 15:1-3; Rom. 4:25). This results in making Jesus the Lord of our lives and committing ourselves to Him as the only one that can save us (Rom. 10:9-10; Mt. 1:21; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 8:36-37).

These requirements for baptism automatically rule out one class of persons - and that is infants. By its very nature an infant cannot be taught, cannot repent, and cannot believe. Therefore, an infant cannot be eligible for baptism if we are going to follow the scriptures.

There are only two reasons people are not baptized immediately when putting faith in Jesus Christ as Lord:

(1) Ignorance. The lack of proper instruction. This can be corrected in a matter of moments by going to the scriptures.

(2) Those being cut off. That is for example, someone in the hospital that has just put faith in Jesus as their Lord but dies without the opportunity to express that faith by water baptism. Read 1 Samuel 16:7.

The purpose of this teaching is to once again lay the foundation of the doctrine of Christ (Heb. 6:1-2), for a house cannot stand that does not have a proper foundation. Faith in Christ is that which justifies (Acts 15:8-9), but a faith that is unwilling to be expressed is dead faith (James 2:17). Only true living faith can make a true living Christian.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Baptism is an expression of faith that usually takes place at the time of salvation. How does Acts 2:38 express this truth?
2. How does Mark 16:16 express this truth?
3. Baptism is a way of calling upon the Lord. How does Acts 22:16 express this truth?
4. Baptism is a way of calling upon the Lord for a clear conscience. How does 1 Peter 3:21 confirm this truth?
5. What are the requirements for baptism according to Acts 2:38?
6. What are the requirements for baptism according to Mark 16:16?
7. Can an infant repent?
8. Can an infant believe?
9. Read Acts 10:43-48. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins. [44] While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. [45] And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. [46] For they heard

them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, [47] Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? [48] And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.” What is the next step, after faith in Christ, that a believer should take?