



## Baptism - Study One

*"I take it that every Christian delivers himself up wholly to God in his baptism, when he renounces all the pomps and vanities of Satan, and enlists himself as a soldier to fight under Christ's banner all his life." - Desiderius Erasmus (1466 – 1536)*

### Introduction

Jesus commanded all who receive His gift of life, the gift of salvation, to be baptised in water. It is vital to understand from the very beginning that baptism is not something done out of duty or ritual.

Jesus' command to be baptised is a call to experience a dynamic. As you respond in obedience to be baptised, you are setting off on a pathway of submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. You are committing to pursue discipleship as one who has died to sin and is now alive to God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Check out what Paul says in Romans 6:11, *'In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus'*. (NIV)

Victory Network churches are 'Life giving churches empowered by the Spirit'. Another way of putting this is to say we are "Spirit filled and Spirit led churches." Spirit Filled churches are full of believers pursuing the Spirit filled life.

The Spirit filled life is not some mystical, unobtainable lifestyle that God always keeps just out of our reach. The Spirit filled life is a life of process – a life of continually coming under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The very heart of discipleship is being shapeable, teachable and flexible under the Lord Jesus.

Far from begin just a symbolic act; baptism is foundational to our life in Christ and our growth in Him.

### Water Baptism – Why Have a Manual?

A good understanding of every believers need to baptised is the main point of this first lesson. There are a number of reasons why baptism requires our attention and deeper study.

#### 1. Growth as a disciple of Christ depends on moving beyond initiation experiences

Discipleship requires seeing the truths and practices of the Christian life (like baptism) for what they really are and all that they imply. In other words, a disciple never just experiences a truth or engages in an act of faith. A disciple goes on to live out the truth they have acted on.

#### 2. We need to understand Water Baptism in order to sensibly explain the truth to others

As a disciple of Christ, you will inevitably be required to teach or influence new believers. It is therefore to theirs and your advantage that you deepen your understanding and insight into Christian disciplines such as baptism.

Many Christians have never been baptised because they've disregarded it simply as a church tradition and therefore only humanity's idea.

Much more than a human idea, baptism is a:

- Distinct biblical commandment given by Jesus
- The personal responsibility of every believer
- Not just a religious idea

Look at Jesus' command to each one of us:

Mark 16:15-16 - He said to them, *"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."*

Clearly, Jesus told His disciples to go into the world and make disciples by preaching the Gospel and BAPTISING them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19).

Put very simply:

**BAPTISM IS A STRAIGHT FORWARD MATTER OF OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST.**

### **History of Baptism**

Baptism by immersion was a custom known and practiced by the Jews at the time of Christ. A non-Jew (Gentile) wanting to accept and follow the Jewish faith could become a "Proselyte". It sounds like a really bad thing but in actual fact it means they were Jewish without being given the full status of a Jew. To put it another way, they were considered to have left behind their pagan way of life and were now accepted by God. This "conversion" was always marked by Baptism. It was the "baptism" that represented the washing away of the "Gentile defilement".

Today baptism is practiced in a number of different ways. Some Churches believe that infants should be baptised, others reserve the practice for when the child's a little older. Some use sprinkling as a way to baptise while others use pouring or total immersion. One tradition uses olive oil and then water.

### **John's Baptism (Matthew 3:1-12)**

With that brief history in mind, it's not surprising that John the Baptist caused quite a stir among the Jews. He also caused loads of excitement by announcing the Messiah was about to appear in Jerusalem.

However, John created some confusion when he linked the coming of the Messiah (lit: the Christ) with the message to repent of sin, declare a change of heart and be baptised.

Imagine the uproar. Imagine the scene. Up until now Jews had no need to be baptised. This baptism thing was strictly for gentile pagans. These were God's chosen people. Most Jews thought they had no reason to be baptised. Apart from this and the possible scenes that were played out across Jerusalem, many listened to John's message, repented and were baptised.

### **Baptism Publicly Expresses Your Commitment to Jesus Christ.**

Throughout the New Testament you will see that baptism follows immediately after a response to the Gospel message of Jesus. It's a sign of repentance and commitment to Jesus.

Note the words of Jesus as He lays out the plan for becoming a disciple. As we have already commented on, Jesus gives the order for a disciple in Matthew 28:19-20...notice the order in these verses: Make

disciples... baptise... teach...

Check out the Following passages and see if this same order is observed:

Acts 2:38

Acts 8:12

Acts 8:12

Acts 8:35–38

Acts 10:47

Take a few minutes now to think on your own salvation experience.

# Baptism – Study Two

## **Word Study: “Baptizo”**

The Greek word baptizo, is translated “baptise” in the New Testament. Essentially it means “to wash...” It was used in secular Greek to refer to a ship that was sunk, or a student who is immersed in their studies.

The word Baptizo or Baptise literally means to be totally immersed.

## **Total Immersion:**

The New Testament indicates the baptism practiced by early Christians was one that involved total immersion. Look at these two references:

Mark 1:9-10

*At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.*

Acts 8:38-39

*And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.*

## **Jesus Baptism: (Matthew 3:13-17)**

Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist. Although John protested Jesus insisted. If John’s baptism indicated a repentant heart and a readiness to receive the coming of the Messiah, why should Jesus the Messiah himself, be baptised? Several reasons can be seen:

1. Jesus was commencing his public ministry. This was the time when His Father in Heaven publicly commended Him and the Holy Spirit descended on Him. Some have seen this as Jesus’ ordination.
2. Jesus was identifying Himself with John’s ministry. A ministry that He would continue, although in a greater way (Matt 4:17, John 3:26, 4:1-2).
3. In begin baptised Jesus was identifying with sinful humanity whom He had come to save, without being sinful Himself.
4. Jesus plainly says baptism is pleasing to God (Matt 3:15)

## **Jesus Baptism: An Example of His Life’s Purpose.**

Jesus was 100% committed to the mission the Father had sent Him to complete: To seek and save those who were lost and to bring abundant life where there was death. The purpose of Jesus’ life can be seen in His act of Baptism.

John’s baptism was an initial step of a once for all commitment. You would imagine that once Jesus had taken this step it wouldn’t be discussed again relating to Himself. Yet later in Jesus’ ministry he mentions it again.

Matthew 16:21 - *From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*

What was Jesus referring to here? Look also at Mark 8:31.

There are three main events described in these verses:

**DEATH:**

Jesus lived in the anticipation of His death; He knew it was going to happen. He knew the cross was imminent from the outset of His public ministry. Jesus was without sin and did not deserve death, yet He accepted death as though he were. It was God's divine plan to make the sinless Jesus, sin in order to restore humanity – 2 Corinthians 5:21. (See also these verses: Matt 27:46, John 10:11, 17-18).

Through faith in Jesus, forgiveness is found because Jesus paid the full price for our sins:

Read through Romans 4:25 – 5:1

**BURIAL:**

Jesus knew He would be buried. The usual practice for disposing of crucified bodies was apparently on the city garbage pile in order to be burnt. The burial of Jesus gives the believer the assurance that Jesus death was indeed a literal one. Jesus' tomb was closely guarded (Matt 27:62-66) and there is no doubt that it was Jesus raised from the dead 3 days later.

**RESURRECTION:**

Despite attempts to prove otherwise, the Gospel record assures us of the truth of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus resurrection was a historic confirmation of all He had come to do:

*Acts 2:24 - But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.*

*Romans 1:4 – and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Romans 4:25 - He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

Jesus' identity and his sinlessness were confirmed by His resurrection – “truly death could not hold Him down for He is Risen!” Every believer, you and I have the assurance that His sacrifice on our behalf is accepted in Heaven.

As we conclude this study we can see:

- Jesus' baptism was symbolic and a commitment to the events that would take place at the end of His life.
- Jesus' baptism marked the very purpose for which He had come: to bring salvation to all of humanity.
- Although not just symbolic, our baptism is a sign of our death and burial from our past way of life and resurrection to the new life.

# Baptism: Study Three

'Salvation → Baptism → Disciple' could be used to describe the process of the believer's life. Baptism is more than just a symbol, more than just "an external sign of an internal change". Once baptised it is important to LIVE in the power of Baptism, to live by the principles and truths expressed in your baptism.

Living by these principles as disciples of Jesus is "living the baptised life..."

Let's look at the depth of meaning contained in the act of baptism.

## **Baptism & Obedience:**

To be baptised is to be obedient to the call of Christ. To live the baptised life is to live with a continuing mind-set that says:

"I have submitted myself in obedience to Jesus' Lordship and this is my lifetime commitment: MY WILL IS TO DO HIS WILL!"

Jesus himself identified this as a foundational issue in water baptism (Matt 3:14-15).

## **Baptism & the Fullness of the Holy Spirit:**

If you haven't yet been baptised in the Holy Spirit, your baptism is a great time to expect Jesus to baptise you in His mighty Holy Spirit.

To live the baptised life is to live a life that is constantly open to the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Peter tells of the promise that awaits you in the waters of baptism –

ACTS 2:38 says,

*Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Read that verse again!

Hear the words NOW!

Understand the promise.

Even if you have already been baptised in the Holy Spirit, your baptism is still an ideal opportunity to seek God for a refilling, a renewing of His power and presence in your life.

Many people have testified to being filled with the Holy Spirit as they come out of the waters of baptism. Right there and then they are filled and begin to worship the Lord supernaturally by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## **Have you been baptised in the Spirit?**

Enter the waters of baptism with expectancy and faith and God will meet you there with His infinite grace.

## **Baptism and the Death of the "Old Man":**

Romans 6:3-4 - *Or 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 in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

See in here how the truth of baptism's significance continues to expand? Here, Paul shows baptism not only as an act of obedience, an opening for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, but also as an action of commitment to the "burial", to death.

Like a funeral that takes place at sea, we bury our old ways in the waters of baptism, the very waters Jesus has commanded us to Him at.

The word "commit" is used at funerals as the body is being buried or cremated. In the same way our commitment to Jesus is made REAL in our willingness to say:

"For the remaining years of my life, I will dead to my past and my old ways of thinking and doing."

Thankfully dying isn't the end. Just like Jesus rose from the dead so too we rise from the waters of baptism to pursue a life of power and promise.

As you come out of the water you may want to say or think something like this:

"From now on I will draw on the power of the resurrection life of my Lord Jesus!"

#### **REMEMBER:**

Just as Jesus was buried, so we have been buried with Him;

Just as He rose from the grave, so we have risen in the newness of His life and the power of His Spirit –

ROMANS 8:11

To live the baptised life means allowing the life giving Spirit of God to resurrect you on a daily basis, lifting you above the dead habits of the past and into the newness of life for today and tomorrow.

#### **Baptism & Deliverance:**

1 Corinthians 10:1-2 - *For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*

This verse is a great picture of Israel coming out of slavery and into destiny. The Bible uses the miraculous moment of the sea parting to give us insight into the kind of blessing God is ready to impart when you go through the waters of Baptism.

Water baptism is meant to be a moment of deliverance. Things that you may be a slave to, things you may be trapped in can be shattered. The chains on your life can be released. Water baptism is not just a church tradition; it's a miracle moment when God does the miraculous.

Remember, when you are baptised, you are obedient to the Lordship of Christ, you welcome the fullness of the Holy Spirit and you bury your past. In this your bondage is broken and your future is opened to the fullest freedom in Christ.

You can rise up and walk in the life giving power of the living Saviour.

Not only are we called to be baptised, we are called to live baptised – to live in the power and truth of

baptism.

### **A Final Word – The Heavens Opened:**

Matthew 3:16-17 again says,

*As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

When Jesus submitted to be baptised, the heavens opened to Him, the Spirit descended upon Him and the Father spoke to Him.

The Lord wants the same for us. He wants you to enter into a deeper relationship with Him where the invisible is not a mystery but is an area where you function confidently.

God desires to build disciples who see the invisible not as bizarre but as a real dimension of life. He wants disciples who are comfortable moving in the things of the Spirit.

Remember as you are obedient to Jesus' command to be baptised, expect great things as you come out of the water.

Now you can start to live in the power of baptism.



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