

Water Baptism

We have prepared these pages to help you understand the meaning of water baptism and to encourage you to be baptized in water in obedience to the Lord Jesus.

Water baptism is the immersing a person into water. It is a symbol and picture of something that has happened in our hearts and lives by God's Holy Spirit. It is something that God wants us to do as believers in Jesus. We will see as we do this study that water baptism doesn't save us from sin and death. Only Jesus saves us from our old life and brings us into new and eternal life. Water baptism is an outward symbol and reminder of our salvation much like a wedding ring is a symbol and reminder of a marriage.

Let's first take a look at spiritual baptism.

Session I

What is inward or spiritual baptism?

Spiritual baptism is a new birth into the life of God. It is the beginning of the life God has always planned for us. It is a wonderful work of God that fills our hearts with Himself and all that He is. It is like the rain that waters the thirsty ground. It is like bread for the hungry. And it is all about Jesus Christ entering our hearts by His Holy Spirit. It is invisible to the human eye.

The Apostle Paul wrote: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 4:4-6). There is one baptism, which is spiritual and inward. It is the spiritual reality of new birth in the Holy Spirit which brings us into new life in God. Water baptism is the outward and visible sign of the inward, invisible transformation of life.

Spiritual baptism is a simple, yet profound thing. There are other Bible terms that help explain this baptism, such as: new birth, salvation, redemption, and regeneration. Here are ways the Bible explains what happens when we are baptized in the Spirit:



Questions

1. Explain in your own words the difference between spiritual and water baptism?
2. Explain in your own words what happens when we receive the Holy Spirit.
3. What new things have you learned in this first session?

Session 2

How do we receive the spiritual baptism? How can we be born again of the Holy Spirit?

God's purpose for creating this world is to find worthy friends who will live with Him forever. We will not live here in this world forever. It is only a temporary place where we are born, grow up, and have an opportunity to respond to the good news of Jesus that can save us.

God's Plan: Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Man was created by God in holiness, but fell from that place of holiness by willingly disobeying God. Man's nature changed. It became sinful, unclean, apart from God. Because men and women are born of that sinful, fallen nature, they are completely empty of the holiness God requires in His law and naturally lean toward evil and sin by choice. Unless a person turns to God, he is under God's just and fair judgment which ends in eternal death and separation from God forever. Because people are sinful, God will not live inside of them. Because God does not live inside of them, there is much pain, emptiness and loneliness in their hearts.

Man is Sinful: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Man Is Separated from God: "For the wages of sin is death" (spiritual separation from God) (Romans 6:23).

But God loves us so much. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the only one who can save man from sin and separation from God. He was sent by the Father and willingly became a man with a nature like ours, but without sin. He honored the law of God by His perfect obedience, and gave His life as the price for our sins by His crucifixion and death. He rose bodily from the dead and now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven, where He is Lord over all.

God's Love: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Jesus Is the Only Way to God: Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Jesus Died In Our Place: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).



Questions

Jesus Rose from the Dead: "Christ died for our sins... He was buried... He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures... He was seen by Peter, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by more over five hundred..." (1 Corinthians 15:3-6).

Jesus shed His blood for us, so that anyone who believes in Him can have his sins washed away. It is free to all. We are not justified because of any good works which we have done. We are only justified, or made right, by faith in Jesus. The righteousness of Jesus is freely given to us by God, and this brings us into a place of peace and favor with God.

Saved by Faith, not by Works: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

How Can I be born again?

Are you prepared to begin all over again? Do you really want to make a completely new start? There are few who do not wish at heart that they could be different. Have you at times honestly wished you could live your life all over again? Then here is your opportunity. At this point receive inward assurance that you have the power to do what God requires of you. Only believe and God will do the miracle. The power is called faith, which is simply the determined response of your whole being to God. Do it now.

Every person must be born again of the Holy Spirit in order to enter into the kingdom of God. Justification is what God does **for** us; new birth is what God does **in** us. Justification changes our **relationship** to God from enemy to friend; new birth changes our **innermost being** from sinner to a new person in Christ. Justification is the **forgiveness** of sins; new birth is the **destruction of the power** of sin.

Be definite by a sincere act of will:

1. Turn absolutely from the past – Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19
2. Believe on God's Son Jesus with your whole heart – Mark 1:15; John 3:16
3. Receive Him into your entire being; confess Him as your own indwelling Savior and Lord – Luke 11:13

This is the act of cooperation God requires of you. He will then give you birth into His family by His Spirit. This is the only way you can be born again. From that moment onward you must not go back to live your old life again. You must understand that you must part with your old life in order to have the new one. Jesus Christ will now live in you and do His Father's will through you. This is the new and eternal life that God will give you.

1. Explain the main reasons that man is separate from God before he is born again.

2. Explain in your own words what it means to be born again of the Holy Spirit.

3. Have you received the Holy Spirit? If yes, explain your story. If you have not, what is causing you to wait?

Session 3

What is outward baptism in water?

Water baptism is visible and physical. It involves placing the new Christian in water to symbolize the invisible reality that has taken place in his life. We can be baptized in water fairly soon after we are born again of the Spirit. Water baptism symbolizes several things:

- We are cleansed from sin. Baptism in water symbolizes the sinner's cleansing from sin. Just as the water washes any dirt from our body, so the Holy Spirit cleanses our hearts from any and all spiritual sin (Acts 22:16).
- We are baptized into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. When we are born again, we are spiritually baptized into Christ, and so as Christ died, we die with Him; as He was buried, so we are buried with Him, and as He was raised again from the dead, so we are raised with Him into new life (Romans 6:3-7; Ephesians 2: 4-7, Colossians 2: 11-13). Water baptism is a picture of that invisible baptism. When we are immersed in water, we are completely covered. We are "clothed" with water. (Galatians 3:27). And we are alive; we have new life; we are new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). We come up out of the water as a symbol of resurrection from the grave.
- We are immersed into the life of the Spirit. The Spirit is sometimes metaphorically represented as water (John 7:37-39). Thus, our being plunged into water symbolizes our being plunged into the life of the Spirit, with all the life, freedom, power, joy, and wonder it includes. Immersion in water symbolizes that we are totally and completely baptized into the life of the Spirit of Christ.
- We enjoy identification with the entire Church. Water baptism pictures our being placed into the Body of Christ. We are thus able to identify with every believer who has ever lived (Ephesians 4:3-6; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

How should we be baptized?

There are different ways that baptisms are done among Christians. We believe baptism is to be done by immersion because we believe that it best symbolizes spiritual baptism in Christ. We do this for the following reasons:

First, the Greek word BAPTIZŌ means, "to plunge, dip, immerse" something in water. This is the commonly recognized meaning of the term in ancient Greek literature both in the Bible and outside of it. It signified the dyeing of a garment; the

drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another; or the sinking of a ship. It is different from the Greek words for pouring (EKCHĒO) and sprinkling (RANTIZO).

Second, "immersion" is the sense of the word in New Testament stories. Mark tells us that people were baptized by John "in the river Jordan" (Mark 1:5). Mark also tells us that when Jesus had been baptized "He came up out of the water" (Mark 1:10). The fact that John and Jesus went into the river and came up out of it shows immersion, since sprinkling or pouring of water could much more easily have been done standing beside the river, because multitudes of people were coming for baptism. In another place we see that John the Baptist "was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there" (John 3:23). Again, it would not take "plenty of water" to baptize people by sprinkling, but they would need plenty of water to baptize people by immersion. (See also Acts 8:36-39). Every baptism in the Bible was by immersion.

Third, the symbolism of union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection is best represented by baptism by immersion. Paul tells the Colossians that they have been "buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12). This truth is symbolized best in baptism that is by immersion. When someone goes down into the water, it is a picture of going down into the grave and being buried with Christ. Coming up out of the water is then a picture of being raised with Christ to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4). Baptism by sprinkling or pouring does not fulfill this symbolism.

There are sometimes situations when a person can't be immersed because of medical reasons. In those cases, a person can be immersed or made as wet as possible. In any case, we should do all we can to conform to the spirit of the New Testament practice.



Questions

1. Can you summarize the meanings of both spiritual baptism and water baptism? How are they different?

2. What has God taught you about water baptism?

3. Explain in your own words what it means to be crucified, buried, and raised with Christ in spiritual baptism.

4. How does baptism in water symbolize being crucified, buried, and raised with Christ in spiritual baptism.

Session 4

Why get baptized?

If baptism is only an outward symbol of the inward reality of salvation, why should anyone be baptized?

1. To follow the example set by Jesus.

“... in those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan” Mark 1:9. See also Luke 3:21-22 and John 1:29-34.

2. Because Jesus commanded it.

“Jesus said, ‘Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you’ (Matt. 28:19-20). Baptism is therefore, an act of obedience for anyone who claims to follow Christ. However, it is not simply an act of duty. Baptism is an expression of our love for our Lord, because Jesus said, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word” (John 14:23).

3. The early church practiced it and the apostles commanded it.

- On the day of Pentecost - Acts 2:38-41
- Men and women in Samaria - Acts 8:12-13
- The Samaritans - Acts 8:12-17
- The Ethiopian eunuch - Acts 8:35-39
- Saul - Acts 9:18
- Cornelius and his family - Acts 10:44-48
- The Phillipian jailer - Acts 16:33
- Men at Ephesus - Acts 19:1-7

4. It shows that I really am a believer.

“...many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized” Acts 18:8. Baptism is a testimony to our friends and family that we now believe in Jesus Christ for our salvation. People will remember that you are a Christian because of it. Unbelievers who come to the baptism can hear the gospel preached. Also, baptism is a testimony to ourselves that we have truly entered into God’s kingdom by putting our faith in Christ. It is a physical reminder that something invisible has happened to us.

If I have been baptized in water already, should I be re-baptized?

In the days we live in, there are many situations in believers’ lives that don’t exactly match the New Testament pattern. Some believers were baptized in water

when they were babies, or against their will, or at a very early time in their Christian life when they felt they didn't understand water baptism well, or want to experience baptism again. So some believers ask the question, "Should I be baptized in water again?"

Normally, the answer is this: if you were old enough to make your own decision to be baptized in water because you believed in Jesus and wanted to follow Him, the baptism you had was enough. We may always feel we know more today than yesterday or last year, but it doesn't mean we should be baptized again. Water baptism is something done at a time close to when we became a believer. You can be assured that the Lord is pleased with your water baptism. If you want to be baptized again to experience the joy or feeling of it again, it is best not to do it. We should not allow our feelings to make us do something if it is against the teaching or pattern of the New Testament. The Lord's pattern is: be baptized once when you are born again, and then break bread together often with the church to show that you are continuing to live your spiritual life in Jesus day by day.

If you are not sure if you should be baptized in water again, talk to your pastor or a leader in the church. They can help you decide what is best in your situation.

When should children be baptized?

The Bible does not tell us the exact age when a child is ready to be baptized in water. As we have learned, every person must be a believer and should show signs of spiritual growth in their life to be baptized in water. There is no need to hurry up baptism in a child's life. As a child gets older, and understands more about their life and about life in Jesus, their baptism can be more meaningful for them. Many believers who are baptized in water when they are young later feel that they were baptized too early. Nevertheless, a child should be able to clearly explain the gospel on their own. And the child should not be doing it merely because their parents are Christian or because their parents are pushing them to be baptized.

Again, if you are not sure if your child should be baptized in water, talk to your pastor or a leader in the church. They can help you decide what is best in your situation.

How will we do the water baptism at Torch?

Because water baptism is a public declaration of an inner reality, we choose to celebrate baptism as part of our normal worship service, to encourage those already saved and to challenge those still seeking. It should be done when the whole church is together in a place that is public. And it should be done by leaders in the church as was the custom in the Acts of the Apostles.

Each person who wants to be baptized at Torch must attend our Water Baptism class. The person must attend at least three of the four classes. After attending the classes, the leaders will determine if the person is ready to be baptized.

What should you do to prepare for your water baptism?

- Pray: Ask the Lord to prepare your heart for your baptism. Make sure you are right with God with a pure heart, a clean conscience, and an attitude of humility. Ask the Lord if He might make your baptism especially meaningful. And pray for those you invite to your baptism, that the Lord will speak to them.

- Prepare a short testimony – Romans 10:9

1. Tell everyone a little bit about your life before you met Jesus, how you became a Christian, and what has happened since you believed.
2. A testimony isn't about other people's lives or about Bible teaching, it is about your life and what you have experienced.
3. Explain how you have repented of your sins, believed in Him to forgive you and have accepted Him into your heart and life as your Lord and Savior.
4. You can ask a believer in the church to help you prepare your testimony.

- Come early. Bring a towel and dry clothes you can change into after the baptism. Wear clothes that others can't see through when the clothes get wet.

What will happen at the baptism service?

When it is time for the baptism, one of the leaders will signal for you and the others to come forward.

When it is your turn, two of the leaders will help you into the water.

One or two of the leaders will say a few words, you will give a brief testimony and then the leaders will pray for you and baptize you.

You can cross both your hands over your chest (one may be used to pinch your nose if you want). The leaders will tip you backwards under the water. Once the water covers your face, the persons baptizing you will lift you up out of the water.

When you come up out of the water there will be a lot of clapping, cheering and singing as the church family expresses their excitement and joy at your step of faith!



Questions

1. Do you still have questions about baptism? List the questions:

2. Are you ready to be baptized in water?

3. Write out your testimony using the guidelines above. Try to do it yourself first. After you have written it, let one of the leaders or other friend read it and discuss their comments. Then finish editing it so it is ready for you to share at your baptism.