

Basic Christianity

Part 7 – Water Baptism

Life is full of symbolism. e.g. wedding rings, Nike tick, McDonalds' M, the Mercedes symbol, flags, logos, tattoos, the peace sign.

Despite the fact that some churches have built up an entire belief system on symbols and rituals, there are very few things in the Christian faith that could be thought of as a ritual.

Today we're going to look at one – water baptism.

1. Why should we get baptised in water?

Some churches don't do baptisms – so sometimes when new Christians want to be baptised, they have to go to another church.

Mat 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

According to this, baptism isn't an optional extra – it was Jesus' command.

If Jesus is Lord of our lives, we don't have to understand all the reasons why.

We just need to obey.

2. Even Jesus was baptised.

Mat 3:13-16 Even though there was no need for Him to be baptised, Jesus became a pattern for us.

3. Many experience a special touch from God during baptism.

Mat 3:17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

For Jesus, baptism was a time of personal affirmation from His Father.

Some get a fresh touch from the Lord, or are baptised in the Holy Spirit, or receive a prophetic word.

4. Who can be baptised?

Anyone can be baptised if they believe: you don't have to feel ready, or worthy, or wait for a certain amount of time.

Acts 8:12 But **when they believed** Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptised.

Acts 8:36-38 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptised?" (37) Then Philip said, "**If** you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (38) So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptised him.

He believed and was baptised – immediately!

Acts 10:47,48 "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptised who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (48) And he commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

There is a pattern in these verses.

There were times when whole households (Acts 16:15,31,33) were baptised, but it's obvious from these other passages that a person first had to believe.

You couldn't be baptised as a baby, because you first had to believe.

So who can be baptised?

Anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. How should a person be baptised?

ILLUS – When they took a garment and wanted to dye it a particular colour, they would dip it in the dye. The word that was often used to denote the dying of a garment, was the word from which we get “baptise”. They would baptise the garment in the dye.

So while baptism is more of a religious technical term for us, in the original Greek language it simply meant “to dip”.

That's why we believe that baptism should be by total immersion – not sprinkling – as a person is dipped into the water.

6. What is the significance of water baptism?

If this is one of the few Christian rituals, what does it mean?

(a) Baptism is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.

It's an outward sign of something that God did in your heart.

So what is it a sign of?

(b) Baptism is a sign that sin's power over us is broken.

Every human suffers from a sin virus that makes sinning seem attractive to us.

The Bible teaches that we are all under the power of this virus, but that if we die, it has no more power over us.

Christians call this dying to sin. (Rom 6:1-7)

Jesus died for our sins, and so we have forgiveness and eternal life.

But when you are baptised, you're saying that you not only believe that, but when Jesus died on the Cross, so did you.

The cross is the means of forgiveness *and* freedom.

“For he who has died has been freed from sin.”

Identifying with Jesus in his death and resurrection, means that God has not only provided so that we can be forgiven for our sin.

He is also concerned that we should be free from its bondage and power.

This is called identifying with Christ – or co-crucifixion.

7. How do I make this a reality in my life?

Faith is the key.

Rom 6:11-13

Consider it done!