



**FIVE REASONS
TO GET**

BAPTISED



What is the mode, the
meaning and the result of
Baptism?

“Five reasons why we follow God’s choice to baptise”

Baptism

There have been strong and differing viewpoints regarding Baptism in Christian history, which continues today. This is regrettable since Baptism is not a “major” doctrine that should be the basis of division among genuine Christians, but it is nonetheless a matter of importance for church life and for every Christian.

It is intriguing that in the Great Commission Jesus gives the same prominence to baptism as he does to the great tasks of evangelism and edification. “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” (Matthew 28:19). Why is baptism so important? And why do so many Christians feel it necessary to go through the waters of baptism. The following reasons answer both these questions:

1. Baptism is the first step of obedience.

Jesus commanded every Christian be baptised:

Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:16)

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter confirmed that baptism is a natural result of conversion. He cried out, “*Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38). Those who believed the gospel were asked to demonstrate it by the public act of baptism.

It is important to note that baptism did not save, because the bible says: “*Then they that gladly received His word were baptised*” (Acts 2:41). Receiving the Word of God was the cause that brought salvation; baptism was a result of their faith. In other words:

***The work of the cross is God’s offer of life...
Baptism is our public acceptance.***

That day 3000 people received the Word of God and were baptised.

Similarly, when Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, we read, *“When they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women”* - (Acts 8:12).

Likewise, when Peter preached to the Gentiles in Cornelius’s household, he allowed baptism for those who had heard the Word and received the Holy Spirit; *“Can anyone keep these people from being baptised with water?”* (Acts 10:47). The point of these three passages is that baptism is the appropriate response for those who have received the gospel and trusted in Christ for salvation.

2. Baptism is also a public expression of a readiness to take on the privileges and responsibilities of the more mature.

“As many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ”. (Galatians 3:27). In Roman society, a youth coming of age laid aside the robe of childhood and put on a new toga. This represented his move into adult citizenship with full rights and responsibilities. The Apostle Paul combined this cultural understanding with the concept of baptism. By becoming Christians and being baptised, the Galatian believers were becoming spiritually grown up and ready to take on the privileges and responsibilities of the more mature. Paul was saying that they had laid aside the old clothes of the law, and were putting on Christ’s new robe of righteousness.

Baptism is therefore a public declaration that a Christian is ready to show to everyone that his allegiance is to Christ and to embrace all that God has for them. Some Christians today like to delay baptism until they are ready to make such a strong stand. Their conversion may have occurred sometime earlier but not being ready to openly declare Christ as Lord and Saviour they delay baptism till they are ready. There is nothing wrong with this but in the New Testament, people were baptised as soon as they believed. At Pentecost, 3,000 were baptised the *same day* they accepted Christ.

Elsewhere, an Ethiopian leader was baptised *on the spot* when he was converted, and Paul and Silas baptised a Philippian jailer and his family at *midnight*. There are no delayed baptisms in the New Testament.

3. Baptism shares in Christ's burial and resurrection.

Often a Christian will want to be baptised because they desire to identify even more strongly with Christ thereby living a more vital Christian life with Him and for Him; *“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death (Rom. 6:3)?*

In New Testament times, immersion was the form of baptism- that is, new Christians were completely “buried” in water. They understood this form of baptism to symbolise the death and burial of their old way of life. Coming up out of the water-symbolised resurrection to new life with Christ.

The Greek word *baptizo* means, “to plunge, dip, immerse” something in water. This is the commonly recognised and standard meaning of the term in ancient Greek literature both inside and outside the bible.

If we think of our old sinful life as dead and buried, we have a powerful motive to resist sin. We can consciously choose to treat the desires and temptations of the old nature as if they were dead. Then we can continue to enjoy our wonderful new life with Jesus. (see also Galatians 3:27 and Colossians 2:12 and 3:1-4).

For some Christians the experience of identifying with Christ by undertaking baptism has led to a greater understanding of Christ's death and resurrection. This has then resulted in a closer relationship with Him, a more vital prayer life and deeper worship experiences.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the act of baptism in and of itself actually conveys grace to people (without requiring faith from the persons participating in them). We believe that grace (God's enabling presence) may indeed be imparted to a person going through the waters of baptism but it is to a person who believes and it is through the Holy Spirit. Many Christians have testified of a closer more vital walk with God after their baptism.

4. Baptism is a testimony to the world that a person professes salvation.

In the bible baptism mostly occurs in a public setting, that is: a church service, home group or out in the open. Such an occasion is a powerful witness to the world that the candidate has accepted the free gift of Salvation and Jesus as Lord of their lives. It opens the eyes of those who witness it to the importance of the gospel message. Baptism today often has the same impact that martyrdom had in the first and second century.

We have also noticed that the public confession of baptism often results in strengthening the candidate. Like a wedding ceremony is testimony to the world of a couples commitment to each other. So too baptism is a public testimony of a persons commitment to Christ. Just as a wedding ceremony strengthens the commitment of the couple, so baptism strengthens a persons commitment to Christ.

5. Baptism is a symbol of unity and helpful in identifying with the local church.

Some people desire baptism because it is very helpful in fostering a sense of oneness with a local congregation. The apostle Paul often talked about baptism being helpful in this regard. In 1 Corinthians 12:12 he appeals to the Corinthians by saying **“For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body”** (see also Eph. 4:5).

The local church (body of Christ) is often made up of a variety of people: young, old, different ethnic groups, professionals, labourers, a variety of personalities, men and women with different skills, giftings and temperaments. The one leveling and uniting element is life in Jesus Christ. We have all been brought together by Christ, died to our own rule and now live for Christ. This is superbly illustrated by baptism. Those who have been baptised often talk about their baptism being a defining moment when they experienced a sense of oneness with their Church. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says **“Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptised into Christ’s body by one Spirit and we have all received the same Spirit.”** Baptism doesn’t make you a member of God’s family; only faith in Christ does that, what baptism does do is show that you are part of God’s family.

Summary

Baptism is pregnant with meaning. It declares a person's faith in Jesus, it shares in Christ's burial and resurrection, it symbolises a person's death to their old life, it announces their new life in Christ and it is also a celebration of their inclusion into God's family. Little wonder then, that God calls people to be baptised for a variety of reasons.

Conclusion

It is important to note again that all a person has to do to become a Christian is believe and receive Christ. After reading or hearing the Word of God, a person can believe in Jesus Christ and become a child of God. A person does not have to be baptised for salvation and does not have to confess publicly to be saved. It is entirely possible for a person to be a secret believer (see Romans 10:9), but this is not the preferable option and the five reasons discussed provide compelling reasons to say as the Ethiopian said to Philip **"What is stopping me from being baptised today"** (Acts 8:36).

If you would like to discuss further the issue of Baptism please feel free to contact Rev. Dean Moore on 9809 4977.



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