

First Ordinance of the Church: Baptism

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:3-4

What is Baptism?

Baptism is a public statement of your faith in Christ. It is like a funeral service in the respect of your previous life without Christ. Baptism is a visual picture of what has taken place in your spiritual life. You have been buried with Christ in baptism and raised to walk in newness of life. There are two ordinances of the church, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. An ordinance is an authoritative teaching from the Bible which is conducted by the local church as an act of worship and a step of obedience in Christ. In this lesson we will learn the true meaning and understanding of baptism.

Baptism is not essential for salvation

Now let's look at what the Bible teaches about baptism. Turn to Ephesians 1:7.

How do we have our sins forgiven, how are we redeemed?

Turn to Revelation 1:5.

What are we washed in and how does it help us?

In Luke 23:39-43 was the thief on the cross next to Christ baptised? _____

Did Jesus say that the thief on the cross would be in paradise with him? _____

According to Romans 10:9, 13 how are we saved?

Facts from the Bible about baptism

- Baptism is a step of obedience in Christ (Mark 1:9-11).
- Water cannot cleanse us from sin only Christ's blood can (1 John 1:7).
- Baptism is not part of salvation (Luke 23:39-43).
- Salvation is given to the sinner as a gift from the Father and therefore cannot be earned or bought by good works such as baptism (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- If baptism is essential for salvation then none of the Old Testament believers were saved as no-one in the Old Testament was baptized. If baptism is a must for salvation, then the Lord Jesus Christ lied on the cross. As Christ told the thief that he would be with him in paradise that day without baptism.
- Jesus never baptized anyone (John 4:2).

- Paul was sent by Christ to preach the gospel of salvation, not to baptize (1 Corinthians 1:17).
- Most importantly Jesus was baptised by John. If baptism does wash away our sin then Jesus had sin that needed to be washed away. The truth is Jesus did not have any sin; He is the sinless Son of God.
- Baptism does not wash away our sin (Mathew 3:13-17).

When one gets baptised, he/she makes a public stand for Christ. The believer is saying “I have accepted Christ as my Lord and Saviour and I want to follow Him for the rest of my earthly life.”

Our English word ‘Baptism’ comes from the Greek word ‘Baptizo’ which means to dip, immerse or plunge. If you read the account of baptism in Mark 1:5-10 you learn that a river was needed for the baptism and in verse 10 Jesus came out of the water.

In Acts 8:38-39 we read about a believer getting baptised. We read that he “came up out of the water”. You can clearly see the believer went under the water.

It is the view of many Christian people such as Baptists, among others that believe only believers should be baptised. However, there are some Christians such as Presbyterians and other Reformed believers (Calvinists) who affirm a belief in paedo-baptism also known as infant baptism. Those who do believe in infant baptism believe that Acts 16:33 and Colossians 2:11-12 among other passages supports a view of infant baptism. In Colossians the Apostle Paul writes about baptism and uses it in connection with circumcision. I think I have made it clear in this study that only believers in the Lord Jesus Christ ought to receive baptism. This doctrine is called “Believer’s Baptism” and is the view that is most in keeping with what the Bible teaches.

Lesson Summary

Baptism is one of the local church ordinances which is performed by believers as a step of obedience. It is a picture of what has happened in your spiritual life when you received Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour. We learnt that baptism is not essential for salvation and if it is then Christ lied on the cross when He said that the thief on the cross next to him would be with him in Paradise. Baptism is only for those who have accepted Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour.

Remembrance verse

Colossians 2:12

Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.