

What is Baptism

In our desire to be obedient to what the Lord commands us to do, we need to have an understanding of what his commands entail. We need to know the scriptural and spiritual basis for baptism. Without our knowledge and understanding, water baptism would be a meaningless ritual.

Water baptism by immersion is a scriptural practice of the early church that we uphold today. Baptism was commanded by Christ (Matt 28:19); and Jesus was also our example (Luke 3:21,22). It is important that as Christians we understand what baptism is, what it represents, and what it does and does not do for us.

Baptism is an act of obedience (Acts 2:38), and is meant for believers (Acts 2:41, 8:36-38, 10:44-48, 18:8). Baptism comes after an expressed belief in Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37). Therefore, we are baptized in response to what Christ has done for us. It is an external witness to those around us that there has been an internal, spiritual work done by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The death of our old (sinful) nature and the birth of our new nature in Christ are symbolized by our immersion under water and our being raised up (Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12). Behind this external baptism lies the true baptism - that of the shed blood of Jesus Christ; as well as the inward operation of the Holy Spirit, moving us to live, move, and act in faith.

Baptism does not save us. It does not add to what Christ has done. It does not complete or compete with His atoning work on the cross. Those who say that if you are not baptized you are not saved, have missed the point of the cross of Jesus Christ and its atoning power. As our Lord was hanging upon the cross between the two thieves, He said to the one, "Today, you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). That thief would die before he had an opportunity to be baptized; but it was his faith in Christ that saved him (Luke 23:40-43).

Jesus was baptized by immersion. As it says in Matthew 3:16 "When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water...." Throughout the New Testament, we see in the life of Christ, and the examples left to us by the apostles, that baptism is the full act of immersion. In the Greek, to "baptize" means to "cover wholly with a fluid, to dip or to fully immerse". Nowhere in the New Testament do we find "aspersion" which is the act of pouring water upon the head, or the sprinkling of the head or face.

Baptism is a joyous occasion for the believer. It is an opportunity to declare to the world that we have been redeemed and set free by the blood of the Lamb - our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are a new creation in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17) - reckoned dead to sin, "but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:11). Rejoice!

It is our desire here at Calvary Chapel of Liberty that your lives would be blessed. We are looking forward to having you join us as we fulfill God's Word in your lives. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask Pastor Scott to explain the meaning of being baptized in more detail. May our Lord continue to fill you with His love and knowledge as you walk with Him.

See you at the next baptism!