

## Understanding Baptism

Intro: “Coming out of the closet”

Baptism is the Christian’s “coming out” celebration, when their faith “goes public”

The prerequisite for baptism is salvation.

The **ABCD’s of the nature of salvation**:

1. There is something to **ACKNOWLEDGE**
  - That we are flawed, sinful, and in desperate need of a Savior
2. There is something to **BELIEVE**
  - That Jesus Christ is the very Savior we’ve admitted we need.
3. There is something to **CONSIDER**
  - There is a cost in following Jesus: we must say no to our old way of life and yes to Him as Lord, whatever the cost.
    - Those who **trust** in Jesus as their **Savior** must also follow Him as their **Lord**.
4. There is something to **DO**
  - Conversion requires more than simply acknowledging these truths intellectually; we must personally turn to Jesus in repentance and faith.
    - The NT clearly teaches that one’s personal commitment to Jesus is then be publicly demonstrated in baptism.
      - ➔ In Matt. 28:19, the first demonstration of one’s allegiance and obedience to Jesus is in the matter of being baptized.

What baptism IS and ISN’T:

1. What it ISN’T:

**A. Saving** – baptism is *not* the washing away of one’s sins by water

- E.g. the pernicious doctrine of baptismal regeneration.
  - The NT clearly teaches that one is saved by faith *alone* in Christ *alone*, and not by works (including things like baptism).
    - Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 3:21-25, etc.
- Thus in baptism, the cleansing and removal of one's sins is merely being pictured, not performed.

## B. Insignificant

- In an overreaction to the above, many contemporary Christians have swung the pendulum to the opposite side.
  - In the NT, believers are assumed to be baptized
    - Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:3; Col. 2:11-12; Eph. 4:3; 1 Cor. 12:13

## 2. What it IS:

### A. A Public Picture of Salvation (Rom. 6:1ff.)

- Of salvation purchased by the *Savior*
  - When one is baptised, they are visibly declaring that Jesus died for sinners sins, Jesus was buried, and Jesus was raised.
- Of salvation possessed by the *sinner*
  - The glorious doctrine of “union with Christ”<sup>1</sup>

### B. A Public Covenantal Ceremony

- Cf. a marriage ceremony
  - See Jamieson's “Going Public”

### C. The pre-requisite to the Lord's Table

- The covenant meal is only for covenant members

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<sup>1</sup> This is why the unbelieving children of believers ought not to be ‘baptised’. The old covenant was entered by an outward circumcision, and could include unbelievers. The new covenant is entered by an inward circumcision (i.e. regeneration), and thus is only for believers. The covenantal sign of this new covenant is immersion (Col. 2:11-12).

## WHY we do it:

### 1. Because **Jesus** commands it

- Matt. 28:19 – Jesus has charged his church with the responsibility of baptizing those who become His disciples, and therefore it is incumbent upon all who believe to be baptized.
  - Thus, to be baptized as a believer is not an *option*, but an *obligation*.
    - ➔ Since Jesus Christ is my Lord, I **must** obey Him; since Jesus Christ is my Savior, I **will want to** obey Him.

### 2. Because the **Church** practiced it.

- This is the undeniable pattern in the book of Acts.
  - 2:37-41 – the pattern and paradigm established in Jerusalem
  - 8:12 – the conversion of the Samaritans
  - 8:36 – the Ethiopian Eunuch
  - 9:18 – the conversion of Saul (even forgoes eating)
  - 10:47 – the conversion of Cornelius the Gentile and his family<sup>2</sup>
  - 16:15 – the conversion of Lydia and her household
  - 16:33 – the conversion of the Philippian jailor and his family
  - 18:33 – the Corinthian revival
  - 19:5 – the baptism of John’s disciples in Ephesus
    - ➔ They heard the Good News; they believed the Good News; they confessed the Good News – through publicly being immersed.

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<sup>2</sup> Though many paedobaptists wrongly use this text to prove that baptizing unbelieving infants was practiced in Acts, 11:14 decisively destroys their argument (“[Peter] will declare a message to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.”) Thus, those who were baptized were first saved by believing Peter’s gospel message. This is exactly what the apostle Paul tells the jailor: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and all your household (16:31).” This is precisely what Luke says in 16:34: “And the [jailor] rejoiced greatly that he had come to believe in God, together with his entire household” (NET; cf. NLT, HSCB, NASB, NIV, NAB, NJB, KJV, NKJV, etc.).

Conclusion:

1. Have *you* been converted?
2. Have *you* been baptised?
  - Begg: a non-baptized Christian is a walking contradiction.