

## **Lesson 3: Baptism**

### **A Relationship Made Public**

What is the first step that we must take  
in our walk with the Lord?

Having understood that we belong to the family of God and that we cannot lose our salvation under any circumstances, the Bible instructs us that in our process of spiritual growth and our service to the Lord, the first step of obedience is baptism.

Some questions that demand a reply are:

- A Why does God command us to be baptized?
- B What is the purpose of baptism?
- C What requirements must we fulfill in order to be baptized?
- D At what moment should we be baptized?
- E Where and how are we to be baptized?
- F Is there any validity in any type of baptism we may have been a participant to prior to our conversion?

These and other questions about baptism will be addressed in the light of the Word of God as we study this lesson.

## **I. Why must we be baptized?**

### ***A. Baptism is the first step that demonstrates our obedience and submission to God and marks the beginning of our service to Him.***

1. Just before initiating His public ministry, Our Lord Jesus Christ was baptized as an example to us. Although He is God, He was willing to be obedient by taking this first step.
2. Matthew 3:13-17 shows very clearly that Jesus was baptized in obedience to the God's plan.
3. In verse 15, it is He himself who says: "Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."

### ***B. Our attitude of obedience is the basis for being able to understand the Bible.***

1. God is the one who has established this order. Matthew 28:19-20 says, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen"
2. You should be baptized because it is God's will for you.

## **II. What is the purpose of baptism?**

### ***A. It is important to understand that we do not need to be baptized in order to be saved.***

1. Ephesians 2:8-9 says that:
  - a) Our salvation is by grace.
  - b) We received grace through faith.
  - c) The receiving of grace through faith is a gift of God; not by works, so that no one can boast.
2. No work which we may do, including baptism, is able to give us salvation.

### ***B. Baptism demonstrates our willingness to be obedient to God.***

1. If we refuse to obey Him in this first step, it will be difficult to obey Him in whatever He may ask of us later.
2. Therefore, if we do not obey Him in baptism it is very likely that our spiritual growth will not progress.

***C. Baptism serves as a public testimony of our conversion to other people.***

1. By being baptized, we confess publicly that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. In the Bible, all those who were converted publicly professed their faith by being baptized.
2. In Acts 2:41 we see how about three thousand people were converted and were baptized publicly. This happened when Peter finished preaching “he lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem,” Acts 2:14.

***D. Baptism visually represents something that has happened on a spiritual level at the moment of our conversion, but was not seen.***

1. When we accepted Christ, God baptized us, that is He submerged us in His body, which is the church. He did this by means of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13.
2. We illustrate this upon being baptized, being totally submerged in water.

***E. We are baptized so that we can identify ourselves with Christ’s picture of His death, burial and resurrection. Romans 6:3-4.***

**III. Is there any requirement that we must fulfill before being baptized?**

***A. The only requirement for being baptized is that we be saved. This, in turn, implies that we must fulfill the two elements of salvation. Romans 10:9-10***

1. Element 1: To believe with all our heart that God raised Jesus Christ from among the dead.
2. Element 2: Confess with our mouth that He is our Lord and Savior.
3. There is no one recorded in the Bible who was ever baptized without first having believed and confessed Jesus Christ as his Savior.

***B. The best example of this truth is the public baptism of a believer whom we know only as “the Ethiopian eunuch”. Let’s read his history in Acts 8:26-39***

1. Upon being confronted with the message of the gospel, the eunuch asked, “See, here is water. What doth hinder me to be baptized?” Philip, who was evangelizing him, responded to him with the only biblical condition: “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.”
2. The eunuch’s reply demonstrates that he was qualified to be baptized since he appropriately replied: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God.” And at once he was baptized.

***C. Being baptized is a matter of decision.***

1. It is not necessary to have any special talent or ability.
2. Neither is it necessary to have a profound knowledge of the Bible nor a special position in the church.

**IV. At what moment in our Christian life should we be baptized?**

***A. As soon as possible.***

1. In the Bible, the believers were baptized immediately after having been converted.
2. Just as we have seen in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, he was baptized as soon as he understood the gospel and accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior.
  - a. He did not wait for something special to occur in his life. Neither did he wait for “a few months” to pass before he was baptized.
  - b. He simply obeyed immediately

***B. The Word of God contains many examples similar to this, in which each person who was converted immediately followed in to baptism:***

1. The Apostle Paul.
  - a. Saul of Tarsus, afterward called Paul, upon going to Damascus in persecution of the Christians, had an encounter with Jesus Christ and was converted.
  - b. In this encounter, Paul saw the Lord and was blinded, but, after entering the city, he recovered his sight and was baptized. Acts 9:17-19.
2. The Philippian jailer and his family.
  - a. While Paul, Silas and other believers were imprisoned in Philippi for preaching the gospel, there was a great earthquake and, thanks to the testimony that they gave of their faith even in those conditions, the one in charge of the jail repented and believed in Christ along with his entire family.
  - b. That very night all were baptized. Acts 16:25-33.
3. Other similar cases.
  - a. During his ministry, Philip preached the gospel in Samaria. Those who were converted were baptized upon believing. Acts 8:12-13.
  - b. The same thing happened with those who believed in Jesus through Paul’s preaching in Corinth. Acts 18:8.

*C. We never encounter anyone in the Bible who postponed baptism. Actually, no valid reasons exist for its postponement by us.*

## **V. What is the biblical model for baptism?**

*A. The word “baptize” comes from the Greek word “βᾶπτιζέω” (baptízō), which means to submerge completely.*

1. Upon consideration of this and remembering that baptism is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, we conclude that all biblical baptism must be by complete immersion of the body in water.

*B. In the Bible, nobody was baptized by sprinkling because nobody could be buried simply by having a little dirt sprinkled on him.*

1. Baptism by sprinkling is not biblical. If baptism is to be a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord, the new believer must be submerged completely in water and not just sprinkled.

## **VI. Is there any validity at all to any type of baptismal rite which we may have participated in prior to our conversion?**

*A. Definitely NOT. No one is baptized without first having believed and confessed Jesus Christ as his personal Savior in the manner established in Romans 10:9-10.*

*B. In order to confess Christ we need not only have the use of our reason, but also we must have arrived at the maturity necessary in order to make the firm decision to repent of our sins.*

1. Therefore, the baptism of a newborn baby has no biblical validity. In the Bible no infant was baptized.
2. In the same manner, no baptism that takes place before our genuine conversion is valid.

## **VII. Where should we be baptized?**

*A. Wherever there is water and always in the presence of witnesses.*

1. Since baptism is a public confession of our faith in the Lord, most of the time it is done publicly before as many witnesses as possible, especially in front of the church congregation.
2. Many times, Christians are baptized in ponds, creeks, rivers, lakes or waterfalls. Jesus Himself was baptized in the Jordan River.
3. Wherever we do it, baptism is an excellent opportunity for us to invite our friends so that they may witness the testimony of our faith in the Lord.

***B. The place itself is not so important; let's not forget that the most important part of this step is our attitude of obedience and our public identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

### **Some Popular Beliefs**

1. Baptism is a requirement for salvation.
2. Baptism by sprinkling has the same spiritual validity as baptism by immersion.
3. We do not need to be baptized after our conversion if we were baptized as children.

From the Biblical principles taught in this lesson, you should understand why these teachings are completely false.

Write, in your own words, the spiritual principle from this lesson which has had the greatest impact on you:

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### **Put into practice what you have learned:**

1. Get baptized.
2. Make your baptism a special occasion. Take advantage of the opportunity to invite your family members, friends or fellow workers who don't know Christ. Inform your pastor of this beforehand so that it may be an evangelistic event.
3. Make a list of people whom you wish to invite. Include in it those from the list that you made at the end of lesson 1.

### **What did we learn?**

Circle the correct answer

1. Why should we be baptized?
  - a. Because it is a mandate of our church.
  - b. Because by doing so, we demonstrate our attitude of obedience to God.
  - c. Because if we don't do it, we don't obtain eternal life.
  - d. None of the above is correct.
2. What is the purpose of baptism?
  - a. So that our sins may be washed away and our salvation made complete.
  - b. To give public testimony of our faith and to identify ourselves with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
  - c. So God may confirm that He accepts us as his children.

- d. All of the above choices are correct.
- 3. Which of the following is the only requirement for being baptized?
  - a. Regular attendance at the church worship services.
  - b. Having had a special chat with one of the church leaders.
  - c. Having been converted.
  - d. Having studied the Bible for some time.
- 4. Where should we be baptized?
  - a. In the baptistery of our local church and in the presence of others.
  - b. In a river in front of others.
  - c. In a lake in front of others.
  - d. All of the above choices are correct.
- 5. At what moment in our Christian life should we be baptized?
  - a. Upon the completion of the study of these 12 lessons.
  - b. After a few years of regular church attendance.
  - c. As soon as possible.
  - d. When we mature in the faith.

Circle either T (True) or F (False)

- 1. The biblical model of baptism is the sprinkling of water upon the body of the new believer.      T      F
- 2. If we were baptized when we were babies or unconverted adults, it is not necessary to be baptized again.      T      F

Before Starting Lesson 4, memorize Matthew 28:19-20:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

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