

Lesson 16 - Bible Baptism, New Life in Christ.

Our subject today is one of the most beautiful found in the Bible. The teaching of baptism invites us into a closer relationship with a loving God than any other subject. Through baptism, a person finds the old life of sin and guilt washed away. The Holy Spirit empowers, and one begins a very special walk with the Lord fully committed to love and serve Him. A ceremony takes place that publicly declares, "I have decided to follow Jesus!"

If you were to go to 14 homes and ask what baptism really is, you could get 14 different answers. Some say baptism is by sprinkling, others say it's by pouring, others say it's by immersion. One preacher baptized his grandson 3,000 miles away over the telephone! Let's go to the Scriptures and see. **Ephesians 4:4- 5, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism."** Only one baptism! As usual, Satan has brought his many counterfeits into the church, and they have even affected this area of baptism. The Bible says there is only one baptism, and it's important. The New Testament mentions it over 100 times.

Just before Jesus left His disciples to go to heaven, He gave the parting words in **Matthew 28:18- 20, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 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 alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."** Here it clearly shows that baptism was to be an important step in the Christian's life. One of Jesus' most emphatic statements in the Bible centers on this subject. It is found in **John 3:5, "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."**

"Except a man be born of water" (baptism) he cannot enter heaven!
Mark 16:16 says the same. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

What really is baptism? Baptism is the outward sign of an inward change. A total change in your life. You have become a new creature. There is no magic in the baptismal water. If you go down a devil you'll just come up a wet devil! Before baptism, you must go to the "fountain filled with blood." You start with Jesus. In **Romans 6:3- 6** we find the full meaning of baptism. **"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life, For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."** It's a symbol of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection to a new life. The same happens to us in a spiritual sense. Baptism is a symbol that the old life of sin and guilt dies, and is buried, and the new life is born again. In baptism the eyes are closed, hands folded, and the breath is suspended for a moment while one is lowered gently below the water, then brought up again. A perfect illustration of death, burial and resurrection to new life!

Now we want to know what true Bible baptism is. The Bible says there is only *one* way. Let's see what Jesus did at His baptism.
Matthew 3:13- 17, "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus

answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Jesus came "up straightway out of the water." that's baptism by immersion! Now note **verse 15**, He did it to fulfill all righteousness." Righteousness is right doing. **First John 3:10**, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." We ought to walk as Jesus did. So we see that we need to be baptized to be saved and to show we are committed to Christ.

Let's establish this burial or immersion again in the New Testament. **John 3:23**, "And John also was baptizing in Æ non near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized." There was "much water." Later in the New Testament we have the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch. **Acts 8:36- 39**, "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: *and they went down both into the water*, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." They went down "both into the water" and came up out of the water.

Again that's immersion. Perhaps the most irrefutable proof of baptism is in the word itself. The original word in the Greek is "baptizo," a word used in the textile industry. All material came out a dull gray and had to be dyed. So they put the material in a big tub of dye, and with a stick pushed it under the water. They called this "baptizo." The Greek Dictionary says it means "to dip under water, to submerge." When you are baptized you are buried!

The true story is told of a little fellow who came home from school one day and ran up to his father and said, "Daddy, Daddy, do you know what we learned in school today?" The father replied, "No, what did you learn?"

The boy said, "Daddy, we got to talking about baptism, and I learned that the Bible says that the true way to be baptized is to be put clear under the water and *buried* so your sins are washed away, and then you come up out of the water. It is like a burial and resurrection." **(Romans 6:3)**

The father said, "Son, that isn't necessary. Why, it doesn't make any difference. Sprinkling is just as good. One form or the other; they are all baptism."

The little boy said, "No! That's not true. You must be put clear under in order to be buried!"

Father said, "No, I tell you, it doesn't make any difference."

Well, you know that an argument between a father and son is usually a one-sided argument. So the father said, "Son, we won't talk about it anymore. It doesn't make any difference. Let's go do the evening chores." As they were walking along in the back yard,

they came upon a dead chicken, so the father said, "Son, I want you to take that dead chicken out behind the barn and bury it."

The little fellow picked up the chicken and with dutiful obedience walked out behind the barn. There he dropped the chicken. He then reached over and picked up a few grains of sand and "sprinkled" them over the chicken and walked away.

It was several hours before father got out there behind the barn to see the dead chicken, and how it was buried. The father not liking what he saw went to look for his son. When he found him he said, "Son, I told you to *bury* that chicken. Why did you disobey me?" The little fellow, with all of the innocence of childhood, looked up and said, "Dad, I did. I buried it *your way!*"

Certainly we see the difference between baptism by immersion, and sprinkling!

One question still remains. Where did the other forms of baptism come from? Believe it or not, sprinkling did not enter the Christian Church until A.D. 1311 in the Council of Ravenna. For more than 1,200 years after Christ, the entire Christian Church practiced Bible baptism by immersion. Sprinkling came in for two major reasons. One for convenience. The clergy in their heavy robes didn't like to get wet in the baptistry. The other reason was a pagan concept. The ruling Papal power kept the people in fear. A theory was created that a new baby coming into the world was a sinner and, if it died, would go immediately to hell and burn forever. So infant baptism came in. Since the mother and child usually couldn't come to be baptized for the first two or three days, they took the baptismal water and sprinkled the child upon its birth.

This leads us to another question. Is infant baptism biblical? It's amazing to note that there is not *one* instance of infant baptism in the entire Bible. And the reason is simple. There are three basic requirements for baptism according to the Scriptures:

1. Repentance
2. Belief
3. Knowledge that leads to obedience

Now can an infant repent, believe, and be taught Bible truth? *No!* A little infant is not responsible for its outward acts until it reaches the age of accountability. **James 4:17, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."** A little child is innocent and does not sin until it knows the difference between right and wrong, and therefore it is saved. What God does invite us to do is to dedicate our children to God, just as Jesus was dedicated (**Luke 2:22, 27- 28**). In this simple ceremony, the child is dedicated to God, and the parents pledge to raise the child to love and fear God. Then as the child grows, it can make its own decision to publicly follow God in baptism.

Let's consider the three steps to baptism, because when baptism is preceded by these steps, it becomes a beautiful public testimony to let the world know you have changed sides and now belong to Jesus. It is an outward sign of the inward change.

Considering the first part of repentance and confession, let's turn to **Acts 2:37- 38, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, *Repent, and be baptized* every one of you in name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy**

Ghost," *Repent* and be baptized. What is confession and repentance! **Proverbs 28:13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."** It is confessing *and forsaking* sin. Confession without giving up sin is worth nothing. Make no mistake about it, people who confess and then go and *willfully* do the same sin again are wasting their breath. True repentance is sorrow for sin and rejection of it. Paul says in **Romans 6:11** you're *dead* to sin. **"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."** What does that mean? It means as far as sin is concerned, you're *dead*. You do not want to follow it or serve it any longer. The problem is, a lot of folks in the church are not dead to sin yet! When a man dies we bury him. When a man dies to sin, he is also buried in baptism. "Therefore we are buried with Him in baptism." And when you rise from the water you are "born again." Jesus said in **John 3:1- 6, "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."** We are born of water, that's baptism. We are born of the Spirit. that's the power that comes at baptism. When you choose to die to sin, the Holy Spirit begins to dwell in you and give you power over all

sin. You rise to a new life! **John 1:12- 13, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."** He promises to "give power to become sons of God!"

And then not only do you need heart preparation, you need head preparation. You can't have a change of heart until you know God's will. Jesus therefore commissioned in **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."** Go teach all things. Before you baptize, teach! What should we teach? Teach to observe all that God commands. Do you think God is intelligent? Of course He is! Because He is intelligent, the true Christian faith is an intelligent faith. In some churches today you don't need to know anything, but in God's Christian Church you need to know and be taught how to live and what to do. You need to know God's will and understand the truth! Let's go again to the Ethiopian in **Acts 8:31. "And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him."** He asked for some man to guide him. And so Philip taught him, and when he covered all the areas, he got to baptism in **verse 35, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."** He gladly and joyfully received the truth. Then in **verse 36- 39, "And as they went on their way they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded**

the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." Philip baptized him after teaching him. Baptism is to be preceded by knowledge and then a person can make a solid, intelligent decision that will last.

While we're in Acts, let's answer another question: What about re-baptism? Does the Bible give reason for it? **Acts 19:1- 5, "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost, And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."** We have a group of people who had been baptized by John the Baptist. They were sincere, but they had left before Jesus came. Therefore they had not heard all the truth, especially about Jesus the Messiah, or the Holy Spirit. They had open hearts and as Paul taught them they received the truth with joy, and were baptized again to show their love and recommitment to follow all truth. Many times sincere people ask to be re-baptized after learning new truth, and this can be a very beautiful step in recommitment to Christ. Baptism or re-baptism is like a wedding, a "marriage" to Christ, In **2 Corinthians 11:2** we read of this close relationship between God and his people. **"For I am jealous over you**

with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Here we come to another important point. When two people fall in love and pledge their love and faithfulness to each other they are not perfect. They make mistakes. Many times a husband has to say to his wife "forgive me." But when you love someone, you *grow* in that love. Together you mature into a strong bond that nothing can sever. If two people waited to unite together until they were *perfect*, they would never marry! It's the same with Christ and our union with Him by baptism. You don't wait to become perfect before being baptized. If you waited until you were perfect to be baptized, you never would be! Baptism is being born again. When you rise from the water, you're just a babe in Christ. You will make mistakes, you will sin. There will be times you have to say to the Lord. "forgive me," but you grow! And united with Jesus, your love matures daily. If you have a willing heart, and choose to forsake sin, if you have a knowledge of truth and love for Christ, then today He invites you to prepare for that joyful step of baptism. In **Galatians 3:27** it says we have "put on Christ." **"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."** When I married my wife her name was Tamara *Fields*, but when she became mine, she put on my name. Tamara *Schreven*. Now she belongs to me! Just as in marriage, your hearts found love, so it is with Christ.

And as your relation grows, you begin to love Him, and as in marriage, you find "Him whom your soul loves." When you become prepared and mature, you then have the ceremony-baptism, before God and man showing you have put on Christ. And you know, I have never been to a sad wedding. It's always happy! Baptism is equally as beautiful as a wedding, seeing men and women uniting with Jesus! Christ today is longing for us to unite with Him. As you

take this step, you can anticipate the joy of knowing all your sin, guilt, and past is washed away. As you rise from the water, you can rejoice knowing you are spotless--as though you never sinned. God the Father looks down upon you and says, "This is my beloved son or daughter, in whom I am well pleased" (**Matthew 3:17**).