

New Creation Bible Fellowship



The Importance of Baptism

First, let's take a look at the true meaning of baptism from a Biblical perspective. Without question, the best explanation is given to us in **Romans 6**. In order to get the context, let's begin in **verse 1**, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection" (**Romans 6:1-5**).

We find that baptism is full of significance! Paul teaches us that the Christian is supposed to go through a similar experience to what Jesus went through in His death, burial, and resurrection. The difference is that Jesus died physically and actually came back to life; we're to die to our sin, self, and old ways, and then rise again to live a holy life through the power of Jesus. As Paul said in **verses 6-13** of that same chapter, "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no

more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." **(Romans 6:6-13)**

In other words, baptism is an outward symbol of an inner change and transformation that is supposed to take place beforehand. It's very important to emphasize the fact that this can only be accomplished through the power and strength of Jesus! It's not that we have to completely overcome sin before we can be baptized, but we need to repent of our past sins **(Acts 2:28)** and have our mind made up that we want to overcome sin, as we will allow God to give us the victory.

In the same way that Jesus went down into that grave, we go down into the water of baptism, which represents our death to sin and the burial of our old life. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." **(1 Corinthians 5:17)** Sin needs to "die" and "pass away" in our life and Jesus will take it's place. This doesn't mean that we'll never sin again, because sin has a way of coming back to life, but it does mean, like Paul said, "that we should no longer be slaves of sin" and that we should "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts." Sin will no longer dominate or control our lives and we will strive to "be holy even as He is holy" **(1 Peter 1:15-16)**, as the Lord works in us "both to will and to do His good pleasure." **(Philippians 2:13)**

Here are some more verses that speak of "dying" to a sinful lifestyle:

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." **(Galatians 2:20)**

Jesus said "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." **(Luke 9:23)**

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors -- not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." **(Romans 8:12-14)**

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."
(Colossians 3:5)

How Important is Baptism?

Now that we've discovered the real meaning of baptism, let's look at its importance. It's essential to understand that baptism does not guarantee anyone a trip to heaven. Salvation comes only through the death and forgiveness of Jesus Christ and there's nothing we can do to earn it. Unless true conversion comes first, then baptism is just a meaningless ceremony.

Now let's look at what Jesus said about this subject:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." **(Mark 16:16)**

From this statement, we see that Baptism is very important to Jesus, which means that it should be just as important for all of His followers today. If we believe in Jesus, then we should take part in baptism. Jesus is our example **(1 John 2:6)** and He was baptized **(Matthew 3:13-17)**, which means that we should follow His leading in this matter.

We know that baptism means a lot to Christ, especially since He emphasized its importance in His closing words here on 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 always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." **(Matthew 28:19-20)**

In **Acts 2:37-38**, the people who wanted to be right with God asked this question "What shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." So we see that

everyone who wants to give their heart to Jesus and please Him will follow through with God's plan of baptism.

In **Acts 8:12** and **Acts 16:30-33**, we find again that baptism follows conversion and acceptance of Jesus. (**See also Acts 8:35-38** and **Acts 22:10-16**)

Necessary for Salvation?

But do you have to be baptized to be saved? The Bible is clear: Christians should be baptized. It's not something we do in order to be saved, but it's something we do because we are saved. We can't earn salvation (**Ephesians 2:8-9**, **Galatians 2:21**), but if someone knows what the Bible says about baptism and how important it is to God, then they certainly will want to be baptized. Otherwise, if they deliberately disobey the Lord in a major matter such as baptism, then *are they really* a "born again" Christian? (Remember that those that have accepted Jesus and love Him will want to obey Him; see **Hebrews 5:9**, **John 14:15**, **Ephesians 2:10**, **1 John 3:18**)

This is a very difficult question because of the simple fact that we are not God and we don't decide who gets into heaven and who doesn't. God is the great Judge and He knows everyone's heart and intentions.

But we need to keep in mind that there will probably be people in heaven that were never baptized because they didn't have the opportunity or they didn't know any better. The Bible never mentions the thief on the cross getting baptized, yet Jesus promised Him eternal life (**Luke 23:39-43**).

Oftentimes, the outward act of baptism is emphasized, but it's the inward change that we truly need to focus on. The Bible clearly states that we are saved "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which is shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (**Titus 5:6**) This "washing" is what baptism represents, but it's only Jesus who can wash us. Our own actions simply cannot bring us salvation. But if we are walking with God and seeking to do His will, then why wouldn't we want to be baptized? **1 Peter 3:21** tells us that baptism is "an answer of a good conscience towards God" which means that it's what God wants us to do since it's one of the important steps we take in the Christian walk.