

BAPTISM – THE FACTS
by Andy Manning

I want to talk to you about the first step of Christian obedience – baptism. People have many questions when it comes to baptism. How should I be baptized? Should I be dipped, or dunked, or sprinkled, or poured? Should we baptize adults or infants? Do you have to be baptized to go to heaven? Should I be baptized again if I was already baptized as an infant? These are all good questions, and so I want to give you 4 facts about baptism.

4 Facts About Baptism

1. Baptism means to be dipped.

Different churches baptize people different ways. Some sprinkle, some splash, some pour, and some immerse. But we have a core value at Church Acadiana that we hold to very firmly. We always look first to the Bible to get our instructions for life. Everything we do at Church Acadiana is Biblically based. What does the Bible say about how we should be baptized?

At Church Acadiana, we believe that the Biblical way to baptize people is by immersion – by dipping them under the water.

First, the word “Baptism” in the Bible means “to dip or to plunge under water, to be immersed, or to be destroyed.”

To be destroyed? When you hold someone under water long enough, they are destroyed. When a ship sinks and goes under water it is destroyed. Baptism is actually a picture of going under the water.

Second, when you look at the symbol that baptism presents, it supports baptism by immersion or by dipping. Let’s look at Romans 6:4 to find this symbol.

Romans 6:4

For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. NLT

Baptism by immersion (or by dipping) is a powerful symbol of what happens to us when we become Christians. Going under the water represents death. When you become a Christian, you die to your old life, your old way of living. Coming out of the water represents resurrection. Becoming a Christian not only means dying to your old way of living, but beginning a new life as a follower, disciple, and learner of Jesus Christ. It’s a whole new life; a whole new way of living.

There’s a second way that baptism symbolizes salvation. When you accept Jesus Christ into your life, he instantly washes away your sins and baptizes you with the Holy Spirit (places the Holy Spirit inside of you). Water baptism presents a beautiful, visible picture of this invisible work of Christ. Pouring and sprinkling don’t quite symbolize the true nature of salvation. Only dipping or immersion do the symbols justice.

And it's interesting to note that the earliest Christian teachings outside the New Testament – the Didache and Tertullian, both written within 100 years of the New Testament – teach baptism by immersion. Also, you might want to know that both Martin Luther, who founded the Lutheran Church, and John Calvin, founder of the Presbyterian Church, believed in baptism by immersion.

So at Church Acadiana, we believe baptism should be by immersion. If you were sprinkled, or poured on, does it mean that it wasn't real? No. Does it mean that it wasn't effective? No. But we just want to encourage you to do it the Biblical way.

2. Baptism is not necessary for eternal life.

Do you have to be baptized to go to heaven? If you die without being baptized, are you going to hell? Some churches and denominations teach Baptismal Regeneration. In other words, they teach that baptism is necessary for someone to be saved and become a Christian. Is that true? Does the Bible really teach that you will go to hell if you aren't baptized?

No. Baptism is not necessary for salvation. First of all, let's take a look at a few very important passages of scripture. These passages all speak about how to be saved, how to have eternal life, how to go to heaven.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. NLT

Notice that Jesus didn't say, "everyone who believes in him and is baptized will not perish but have eternal life." He says that everyone who *believes* in him will have eternal life. Look at the next verse.

Acts 16:31

They replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved." NLT

Now, how does a person get saved and receive eternal life? Does it say, "get baptized and believe and you will be saved"? No, it says to *believe* on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. Let's move on.

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. NLT

Alright, now you're getting the picture. God saves people when they *believe*. It's a gift. Salvation has nothing to do with baptism. Baptism is not necessary for salvation.

Also, the only time Jesus ever mentioned baptism is in the passage known as the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. Now, if baptism was essential and necessary for one to have a right relationship with God and go to heaven, don't you think Jesus would have spoke of it more often and would have made it crystal clear?

And the apostles who wrote most of the New Testament – Peter, John, and Paul – they never teach that baptism is necessary for salvation. Some people take their words out of context and try to make them say what they are not saying, but the passages they use are very controversial. Again, if baptism were necessary for salvation, I think Jesus and the writers of the New Testament would have made it very clear, leaving no doubt. But they don't. In fact, they do the opposite.

Anybody who says that baptism is necessary for eternal life is still living on the performance plan. They are still trying to gain eternal life by their performance, their good works, by what they do. But eternal life is a free gift to those who believe in Jesus (see Ephesians 2:8-9).

And what about the people who trusted in Christ on their death bed and didn't have time to be baptized? Did they go to hell? What if someone reads a Christian book on a plane and right there becomes a believer in Jesus, but the plane crashes and they die? Do they go to hell because they weren't baptized? Of course not. Do you remember the story of the thief on the cross next to Jesus? He becomes a believer in Jesus while being crucified, and he asks Jesus to remember him in heaven. Did Jesus say, "Well, you're going to have to be baptized somehow. Sorry."? No. He said this, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

You see, baptism is like the Christian's wedding ring. If a single person buys a wedding ring, does that mean they are all of the sudden married? Or if a married person takes their ring off, does that mean they are all of the sudden divorced? No. The ring is a symbol of what marriage is about. It's a public reminder to them and to everyone they encounter that they belong to their spouse, till death do us part.

It's the same way with baptism. Baptism doesn't save you. It's simply a symbol, a public reminder to you and to the world that you are now a Christ-follower. You have died to your old way of life and are now living for Jesus. In short, Baptism is a public declaration of a new association. It is your opportunity to announce publicly that you are now a follower of Jesus Christ, and a member of his church.

3. Baptism is a step of obedience.

Baptism is an important step of obedience in the Christian life. In fact, it's the first step of obedience in the Christian life. In the New Testament, as soon as someone became a believer in Jesus Christ, they were immediately baptized. Look at the next verse.

Acts 2:41

Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church — about three thousand in all. NLT

Peter just finished a sermon about Jesus to a large crowd. And notice it says that people first believed, and then they were baptized, and then they were added to the church. We do the same thing here at Church Acadiana. We lead people to believe and then get baptized. And then we lead them to belong to the Church by becoming a participating member.

At Church Acadiana, we don't allow a person to become a member of the Church until they are baptized by immersion. Why? This is the way it was done in the Bible. Baptism is such an elementary, basic, and easy step of obedience. If a person won't obey and follow Christ in baptism, then they will surely have trouble obeying Him in the bigger areas of the Christian life.

Some of you are having trouble moving on in your Christian walk. You are having trouble going deeper in your journey with God. It might be because you haven't been baptized.

Some of you may be struggling to figure out God's will for your life. And God is saying to you, "I've already revealed my will. I want you to get baptized. When you obey me in that, I'll show you the next step." Look at Jesus' words in Matthew 28.

Matt 28:19

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. NLT

A Christian, you see, is a disciple, a follower of Jesus Christ. And Jesus commands us as disciples to be baptized. That's the first step of following Christ. You may have been a Christian for many years, but you've never been baptized by immersion. I encourage you to do so. I've seen this many times. It's a wonderful way to start over, to renew your commitment to Christ, and to encourage other believers. Baptism is a step of obedience.

4. Baptism is only for believers.

There are some churches and denomination that baptize infants. This is called paedobaptism, or infant baptism. The reason they believe this is because they believe in the doctrine of original guilt. They believe that a baby is born sinful, and that God holds that baby accountable for its sin from the very beginning. And the only way the baby can be saved is by baptizing it. If you don't baptize the baby and it dies, it goes to hell.

We don't believe that the Bible teaches this. We believe in believer's baptism. In the Bible, the only people who are baptized are believers. I don't believe God holds someone accountable for their sin until they are able to make a conscious decision to accept or reject Christ.

In every baptism found in the Bible, the person had already put their faith in Christ. There is no example of infant baptism in the Bible. I believe that babies who die go to heaven. God doesn't hold us responsible for our sins until we reach the age of accountability. And that age differs for every child, because some children mature faster than others.

The only reason you would baptize an infant is if you believed that baptism would save it from hell. We don't believe that. We believe that all babies go to heaven. And the Bible teaches believers baptism. So at Church Acadiana, we baptize someone after they have made a faith decision in Jesus Christ.

Now we do offer baby dedication at Church Acadiana. We do a ceremony for parents and their children in which the parents devote their children to God, and they commit to being godly parents. But we don't do infant baptism, simply because it isn't found in the Bible, and because baptism isn't necessary for salvation.

Let me refer again to Matthew 28.

Matt 28:19

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. NLT

You see, the only people who are to be baptized are Christ-followers. Once you become a Christ-follower, you need to be baptized. If you were baptized as a baby, but not since you became a Christ-follower, I encourage you to be baptized again – the Biblical way.

Conclusion

I want to encourage you to be baptized the Biblical way. It doesn't matter if you're twelve or 72, you need to be baptized. And it's simple. Many people hesitate when it comes to baptism because they are afraid. They don't know what to wear. They can't swim. Let me explain how we baptize at Church Acadiana.

First of all, the water in the baptistery is waist deep, so you don't have to swim. We'll let you wear a t-shirt and some shorts. Once you are in the baptistery, I'll ask you if you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and King. After you say yes, I'll dip you under the water and pick you up, all in one complete motion. We'll invite the whole church and any of your family and friends that you wish. And we'll have a party. It'll be a blast.

Baptism is like the Christian's wedding ceremony. Do you have to have a wedding to get married? No. Does a wedding automatically mean that the two people are truly committed to each other? No. The wedding is simply announcing and celebrating to the world that starting today, we belong to each other. From this day forward, we are married to one another, till death do us part.

I like to call baptism the coming out party of the Christian life. When you get baptized, you're basically saying to the world, "Hey, starting today, I'm a Christ-follower. Starting today, I'm one of them. I'm a Christian. Today, I'm giving up my old life, my old way of living, and I'm living for Christ. Starting today, I belong to Him."

Would you sign up for baptism today? Contact the church today for more information.