

## Sermon

### Why Water Baptism?

*Matthew 3:13-17 (NASB)*

<sup>13</sup> *Then Jesus \*arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him.*

<sup>14</sup> *But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"*

<sup>15</sup> *But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he \*permitted Him.*

<sup>16</sup> *After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him,*

<sup>17</sup> *and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."*

**Summary: An important look at our first act of obedience to Jesus**

**The act of water baptism (being immersed in water in response to receiving salvation) is a very important first step in the Christian life.**

In the scriptures we just read, we see the Lord Jesus Himself coming to His cousin John to be baptized, in order to *"fulfill all righteousness."*

He then went on to establish baptism as an eternal ordinance for His church, calling every believer to follow in His footsteps

*Matthew 28:19 (NASB)*

<sup>19</sup> *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

In our modernized, "comfort zone Christianity," we do, sad to say, tend to take God's commandments far too lightly.

Chuck Colson puts it this way:

*"Most Westerners take baptism for granted, but for many in the world the act requires immense courage. In countries like Nepal it once meant imprisonment. For Soviet or Chinese or Eastern bloc believers, it was like signing their own death warrant."*

1. A wedding ring is an outward sign that a person is married.
2. A military uniform is an outward sign that a person is involved in that particular branch of service.
3. Similarly, water baptism is a symbol designed by God to identify a person as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

However, I use the word "symbol" here with caution. To say that it is "just a symbol" takes away from the depth and beauty of water baptism. Baptism is a symbol, but it is so much more than that.

When we are saved, we are spiritually baptized into Christ

*Galatians 3:27 (NASB)*

<sup>27</sup> *For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

And into His Body , the Church:

***1 Corinthians 12:13 (NASB)***

***<sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.***

Baptism in water is an outward representation of these inward realities.

In Biblical symbolism, water represents inner cleansing:

***Ephesians 5:25-26 (NASB)***

***<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,***

***<sup>26</sup> so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,***

***Hebrews 10:22 (NASB)***

***<sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.***

And spiritual rebirth:

***John 3:5 (NASB)***

***<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.***

Both of which are central themes of baptism.

Water baptism is, in essence, a funeral.

It is an act of faith in which we testify, both to God and to the world, that the person we were before is dead and buried, and we are raised as a new creation in Christ.

This is beautifully illustrated by these Scriptures:

***"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."- Romans 6:4***

And then again:

***"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."-Colossians 2:12***

**Being baptized is a command from God, not an option.**

**It is an act that God requires of every believer. In fact, among Jesus' last recorded words on earth were:**

***"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...." (Mark 16:16.)***

Think about that for a moment. Jesus' very call to believe on Him includes a call to be baptized. The Lord sees baptism as important as an act of obedience to Him.

In fact, baptism always followed a person's salvation.

## In Acts we read:

Acts 2: 38. When the people respond to Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, the first thing he instructs them to do is *"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."*

We further read in *verse 41* that they *"gladly received his word and were baptized...."*

Also, we read:

*Acts 8:26-40-* This is the account of Phillip leading the Ethiopian eunuch to Christ. As they finish their discussion, the eunuch enthusiastically asks, *"What is hindering me from being baptized?"* to which Phillip replies *"If you believe with all your heart, you may." Then they come to a body of water, and Philip promptly baptizes him.*

## Concerning the Apostle Paul:

*Acts 22:12-16 (NASB)*

<sup>12</sup> *"A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well-spoken of by all the Jews who lived there,*

<sup>13</sup> *came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him.*

<sup>14</sup> *"And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth.*

<sup>15</sup> *'For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.*

<sup>16</sup> *'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'*

There are a number of other instances we could look at as well and in each of these cases, there is a sense of urgency that is attached to baptism.

These people all responded to Jesus in simple faith. However, they didn't see their faith as complete until they had obeyed God by being baptized.

Keep in mind, "**that faith without works (corresponding action) is dead**" according to James.

A living faith produces an obedient heart (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6: 46; 1 John 2:3-4) and water baptism is to be our first act of obedience.

Christians who do not follow Jesus in water baptism have a much higher rate of backsliding than those who do.

After all, if our walk with God didn't begin with the most basic act of obedience, it got off to a faulty foundation in the first place. This will make it more difficult to walk obediently in other areas of our lives.

When we receive God's saving grace, it is no accident that He calls us to identify with Him in a way that makes it real to us.

Are you struggling with guilt over your past?

It may be because you haven't yet given the person you once were a proper burial!

Water baptism is a very powerful reminder of God's wonderful grace. The person we were before is dead forever, and we are raised with Jesus as a totally new creation:

*"Therefore, if any person is (ingrafted) in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old (previous moral and spiritual condition) has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come!- (2 Corinthians 5:17 Amplified Bible)*

**As you can see, you have absolutely nothing to lose, and everything to gain by following Jesus in water baptism. Ultimately, it all goes back to Jesus' statement in John 14:15.**

*"If you love me, keep my commandments."*

Baptism is a simple, but profound act of obedience that you will carry with you for the rest of your life. If you have not yet taken this step, I strongly encourage you to do so as soon as possible.

Of course, we cannot take baptism without first embracing the reality that it represents: A living relationship with Jesus Christ. Without this, baptism is simply getting wet. If you have not given your heart to Him, why not do it now?