

THE NEXT STEP - BAPTISM

Acts 8:35-39

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: Baptism is the next thing a believer should do after professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the text, Philip saw a man riding along in a chariot reading the scriptures (Isaiah) and seemed to be having difficulty in understanding what he was reading. The man, by the way, was the treasurer of Queen Candace of Ethiopia, therefore a man of much authority. Philip was urged (led) by the Holy Spirit to approach the man and asked him, "do you understand what you are reading?" (Isaiah 53:32-33). Then he began to explain the gospel to the man.

Upon coming to some water, the man asked Philip to baptize him but before he did, Philip told him if he believed in Jesus with all his heart he could be baptized. The man assured Philip that he did so Philip baptized the man and they never saw each other again.

1. BAPTISM IS IMPORTANT BUT NOT ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION

1. Note: It was Jesus that Philip preached to the man, not baptism. Many have the mistaken idea that if you aren't baptized, you won't ever get to heaven.
 - Baptism is obedience and if one is going to experience joy and growth in the Christian life, obedience is necessary.
2. Jesus began His public ministry by being baptized and he ended His ministry by telling His disciples to baptize others.
 - Jesus was baptized to identify Himself with us - we are baptized to identify ourselves with Him.
 - To be obedient to Jesus, then the believer needs to be baptized.

2. THE RIGHT METHOD OF BAPTISM (THE BIBLICAL METHOD)

1. Obviously it takes water to baptize. Then the person to be baptized is a believer in Jesus Christ and then baptism is the act of putting someone UNDER water. (immerse)
2. **Mark 1:9** - Jesus was baptized the same way as the man Philip baptized - they both were immersed.
3. John the Baptist was baptizing WHERE the water was, the Jordan river (**John 3:23**). If John was sprinkling he could have stayed in Jerusalem and used a tank of water, but John went to a place where there was plenty of water which was needed to immerse people.

3. THE CORRECT MEANING OF BAPTISM

1. **Romans 6:1-2** - *"...What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"*
2. When a person is saved, he/she dies to the old way of life - sin. God doesn't want believers to keep on living as they did before they were saved. *"...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?"*
"(Romans 6:3-5)

3. The past, the present and the future of the believer is shown in immersion/baptism.

4. DESCRIBING THE BELIEVER'S PAST IN BAPTISM

1. The believer has been buried with Jesus by baptism. Under the water one is buried thus a visible symbol of one's old life without Christ but it also identifies the believer with Christ's death when He took the believer's sin with Him to the cross, suffered and died for the believer, bearing the believer's sins in His own body. Jesus paid the believer's sin debt in full.
 - When Jesus died, the believer died with Him because of the believer's faith in Jesus.
 - The believer's old nature, old self was crucified with Jesus, so that the old body of sin could be destroyed and would no longer have to serve sin.
 - Baptism is a funeral for the believer's old self, old nature. It is buried and God forgets it.
 - The believer's sin is gone and guilt is no longer present.
2. Baptism is therefore a visual picture of the believer's old self going to the grave.

5. THEN THE BELIEVER'S PRESENT LIFE IS SHOWN IN BAPTISM

1. As Jesus was raised from the dead, so believers should walk in the newness of life. Thus a new way of life for the believer in Jesus Christ.
 - Jesus didn't stay in the grave, He arose. The believer didn't stay under the water, he/she came out a new person, therefore life is new, the old way is gone - the believer has been born again.
2. Coming up out of the water is a beautiful picture of the believer coming up out of his/her grave, rising to a new life in Jesus Christ. His/her old sin nature has been washed away and everything is clean and new.

6. WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR THE BELIEVER SHOWN IN BAPTISM

1. As the believer has been planted like Jesus in death, he/she shall be raised like Jesus Christ in the coming resurrection. Until Jesus comes back, believers are going to continue to die physically and their bodies placed in graves.
 - However, as the grave couldn't hold Jesus, it won't hold the believer either for he/she will be raised up just like Jesus.
2. Baptism pictures the believer's death, burial and resurrection with Jesus and God commands that believers be baptized because He wants believers to understand the beautiful transformation that takes place upon belief in Jesus Christ.
 - Baptism is a beautiful illustration of the death, burial and resurrection of the person who believes on Jesus Christ. Immersion is the way God wants it to be symbolized.
 - Sprinkling doesn't show the full meaning of baptism. Immersion does.

7. THE REASONS TO BE BAPTIZED

1. First, it proclaims one's commitment to Jesus. It's a way of saying "Lord, I am openly, publicly identifying myself with you."
 - Doing this does not make one a Christian no more than wearing a baseball cap makes a person a baseball player, but it identifies that person with a love for the sport of baseball.
 - When one is baptized, it publicly identifies that person with the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Secondly, it testifies of one's being converted to Jesus Christ. Baptism is a testimony that one is a believer in Jesus. "I'm saved and I want everybody to know it!"
 - Many have also been saved after seeing a friend or family member being baptized.
3. Thirdly, it is obedience to God's command. Baptism is not a suggestion or recommendation, it is a command from God. ***"...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 ends of the world..." (Matthew 28:19-20)***
 - Believers are to obey that command which Christ gave - be baptized.

CONCLUSION:

1. Baptism is commanded, not for one to be saved, not to complete salvation, not to keep one's salvation, but to make a public declaration.
2. Baptism is not by sprinkling or any other means than total submersion (immersion) in water.
3. Baptism is a visible identification with the Lord Jesus Christ for all to see and know of that person's belief in Jesus Christ.
4. Baptism is a picture of the believer dying to his/her old way of life of sin, being buried and then being raised up from the dead to a new way of life, free from the old nature, and life of sin, to a new life joined with the Lord Jesus Christ, an eternal life.
5. Jesus identified with us by being baptized, therefore as believers in Jesus Christ, we identify with Him through our being baptized also.