

Study Four



Christian Baptism

Read the lesson carefully, and fill in the Bible references before coming to the study.

Becoming a Christian is the most important step of your life. Your sins have been forgiven. You have peace with God. And the Holy Spirit is within you to help you live a new life.

Being a Christian means belonging to God’s family, so you should also join a Christian Church (we will consider this in detail in our next study). Many societies have a special ceremony by which they receive new members. When you join a church, you will normally go through a ceremony called Believer’s Baptism. You may be invited to make a public statement of your faith in Jesus Christ, after which you will be immersed in water (and brought back up again!). Let us explore what this is all about by asking four questions:

1. Why Be Baptised?

Christians are baptised because Jesus commanded this to be the mark that identifies them as His followers!

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Matthew 28:19

As Christians, we should be baptised to obey Jesus’ instruction.

2. Who Can Be Baptised?

Baptism is only for true disciples, that is, followers of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19). No-one should be baptised who has not first repented of their sin.

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Acts 2:38

And then believed on Christ:

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Acts 8:12

It is important to note that *only* believers should be baptised. This is why we do not baptise babies who are too young to believe. Instead, for children, we do as Jesus did: we bless them.

3. Why Immersion?

Because we believe that when the first Christians baptised people they did so by immersing the whole body in water – not just a part of it. In the Greek language, in which the New Testament was written, the word translated “baptise” actually means “to dip” or “to immerse”. Believers were not sprinkled with water. It is clear from the baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:36-39) that a great deal of water was involved. Like all travellers the Eunuch carried drinking water. He could easily have spared a few drops to be sprinkled with. Instead, he waited until he came to a suitable pool to be baptised in.

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Acts 8:36

In addition, immersion is a vivid picture of what it means to become a Christian. It illustrates our death to sin and our resurrection to new life in Christ. This point will become clearer as we consider our next question.

4. What Does Baptism Signify?

Baptism is like a bath. When we take a bath, we wash away dirt from our bodies. Baptism reminds us that, in becoming Christians, our sins are washed away. They will never be counted against us by God.

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Acts 22:16

Baptism is a helpful picture of cleansing from sin, but be careful! We ought not to think that the water of baptism cleanses us. Only the blood of Christ can remove our sins, and this happens when we turn to Christ and walk with Him.

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1 John 1:7

Baptism is like a burial. That does not sound very cheerful, but in fact it is good news! For in becoming a Christian we have turned away from wrong doing – we want to die to it. As we go into the waters of baptism, we show that we are burying our old life.

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Colossians 2:12

Christians are no longer the old person they once were.

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Colossians 3:9

Baptism is like a birth. When God raised Jesus from the dead, He opened the way to a new life. As we come up from the water, we show that we are beginning a new life with Christ. The old life has been buried; the new life has begun! In this way, baptism is like a birth.

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Romans 6:4

A Christian is a new person in Christ.

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Colossians 3:10

Baptism is like a badge. People wear badges when they want to make a statement to the world. Baptism is our way of telling everyone that we are now followers of Jesus Christ. It is the visible declaration of our allegiance to Him, since we are baptised in His Name (Matthew 28:19, see earlier).

Jesus does not want secret disciples. He requires us to own Him before others. If we are ashamed of Him, He will be ashamed of us.

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Mark 8:38

Baptism is like a bond. We cannot have Christ without His Church. If we want to be joined to Christ, we must be joined to His people too. Baptism shows we are linked to other Christians with the same “badge”.

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Ephesians 4:5-6

5. Summary

So we see that baptism is a rich symbol of what Christ has done for us and of what commitment to Him involves. Are you a true Christian and following Christ? Then you should be baptised!