

WHY YOU MUST BE BAPTIZED IN WATER

Now that you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you need to be baptized in water. In order to understand the meaning of water baptism correctly, we need to take a trip to the past, to the beginning when everything started. God created man on the earth because He wanted to have communion with him. When Adam sinned, his relationship with God was broken. After this, God dealt with man through covenants He made with righteous men that were confirmed through signs.

The rainbow was a sign of the covenant between man and God indicating that God would never again destroy the world by water. However, God searched for a man with whom He could make a more intimate and lasting covenant. In Ur of the Chaldees God found such a man: Abraham, the first human being with whom He made a *Covenant of Relationship*....

A. The Circumcision

The circumcision was a covenant through which man would put a mark in his own body indicating that he was separated unto God and that he belonged to God (**Genesis 17:9-14**). This was an unbreakable blood covenant that made the Jewish people different to any other group of people in the world. Even when God decided to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He considered the covenant He had made with His servant Abraham and consulted with him first.

This covenant was practiced by all the descendants of Abraham until God made another covenant with the Jews on Mount Sinai, the *Ten Commandments* (**Exodus 24:7-8, Daniel 9:4, Nehemiah 1:5, Psalms 195:8-9**). Under the Old Covenant made with Abraham and later with Moses, the Jews had to shed the blood of animals in sacrifices and do the rite of circumcision to enter into a covenant with God. This continued until the coming of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ who established a New Covenant with His twelve apostles (**John 1:29, Mathew 26:26-29, Daniel 9:27**).

B. The New Covenant

After the *New Covenant* was instituted, the blood of animals in sacrifices and circumcision were not necessary anymore. That's why the early church abolished those rites for the believers (**Acts 15**). To enter into a New Covenant with God, a new rite of initiation is required, different to the others. This *New Covenant* was established by the Lord Jesus Christ through His death, burial and resurrection (**Luke 22:19, Hebrews 9:15**).

What is the rite of initiation to enter into the *New Covenant*? In order to enter into a New Covenant with God we must become partaker of the death (repentance), burial (water baptism), and resurrection (Holy Spirit) of the Lord Jesus Christ (**Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3-4, Luke 3:16-17**). While natural Israel had to be circumcised in the flesh, and blood was shed when a cut was made into the flesh, those who are born again today (spiritual Israel) are circumcised in the heart (*heart surgery*). Without

this operation in the heart, man is incapable of loving God. The sinful nature, the enmity against God is removed and replaced by a love for God. You are changed in the very depths of your heart. You now desire to obey and please God and can truly worship Him from your heart.

Can any person be considered a member of the Church of Jesus Christ if he has not been baptized in water? Not more than any Jew could enter into the Old Covenant without being circumcised. What happened in Samaria when Phillip preached the gospel? (*Acts 8:12*). What was the eunuch's answer when he heard Phillip's preaching? (*Acts 8:36-38*). How was the apostle Paul initiated to the church by Ananias? (*Acts 22:16*).

C. The Baptism in Water

The baptism in water is a sacred covenant instituted by Jesus Christ through which we are baptized into Christ and into His death. Baptism takes the place of the rite of circumcision of the Old Covenant. (*Mathew 28:18-20, Romans 6:3-7*).

The Greek word for baptism means to *submerge, cover completely*. It is obvious from these descriptions that those that were baptized in the early church in the book of Acts, were immersed in water. There are two extreme sets of beliefs today in reference to water baptism. One says that if a person is not baptized, he is not saved. The other one does not place much emphasis in water baptism saying it does not matter. *Both are incorrect*. The Bible teaches us that salvation is by grace (you cannot do anything to earn it), through faith; and even faith you have, is a gift from God. Not by works so that no one may glory in it. (*Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 3:24, 4:16, 5:2, 11:6*).

In the book of *Romans 4:1-12* we can read that *Abraham was justified before God by faith, not by anything he did*. In *verses 10-11* we also read that Abraham obtained righteousness before God through his faith, when he was not yet circumcised. He received the circumcision afterward as a sign, a seal of righteousness of the faith that he had obtained when he was yet uncircumcised. In Other words, Abraham was justified before God through his faith, and he was circumcised years later as a sign, a seal of that righteousness that he had already received before through his faith.

Likewise, when a person believes in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and repents, he is forgiven of all his sins and justified before God. Nevertheless, such a person must be baptized in water after his conversion as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he received before from God through his faith. Many believers have been filled with the Holy Spirit when they heard and believed the gospel by faith before they were baptized in water. In *Acts 10:44-48* we read how Cornelius and all his house received the Holy Spirit when they heard Peter share with them the gospel of Jesus Christ. Afterwards, Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In my own experience I have seen many people filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking in other tongues when they heard the gospel of salvation, and then consequently were baptized. Every person that confesses Jesus Christ as their savior

and repents of his sins must be baptized in water to enter the New Covenant that Jesus established through His blood, and be called a Christian.

When our hearts are circumcised, God puts His seal of righteousness over us, making us the heirs of all the promises of Abraham. While in the Old Testament the Jews were circumcised in the flesh, in the New Covenant the circumcision is in the heart, through the Holy Spirit. The enmity against God and our corruptible nature is removed and replaced by a love for God (***Deuteronomy 30:6; Colossians 1:12-14; 2:11-12 and Romans 2:28-29, 5:10, 6:16***). Our own nature is changed. Now we don't resist the Holy Spirit, but are free to obey Him and please Him from our hearts. The Bible teaches us that when we are circumcised in our hearts, the Holy Spirit immerses us in Christ and gives us His nature, making us members of His body, the Church (***1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 2:28-29; Galatians 3:27***).

When a person is born again of the water (baptism in water) and the spirit, there is a transformation in the spirit of the person that is the same as a second birth, and the old Adamic nature is removed and replaced by the nature of Christ. This is what is commonly known as *Born Again* (***John 3:5-7***). Without this change in the heart, man can't love God or have an intimate relationship with Him (***Ezequiel 11:19-20, 1 Peter 3:21; 2 Peter 1:2-4***).

D. What Happens At Baptism?

When a person is baptized in water, he is identified with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ that He experienced in our place, and the *enmity against God* that was in us due to original sin (the corruption of our fallen nature, spiritual blindness and death), is removed. At baptism we are circumcised in our hearts (heart surgery) so that we are free to love God and able to have fellowship with Him. We are initiated into the *New Covenant* and become the property of God. This makes us accountable to Him for how we live our lives, but also as part of the New Covenant, we have the right to all the benefits and promises contained in the Bible.

Everyone that believes and confesses that Jesus is the Christ needs to be baptized in water. To be able to be baptized in water, there must be evidence of genuine repentance of sins and faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (***Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Romans 6:5; Acts 8:36-38***). Children should only be baptized when the Holy Spirit has revealed Jesus Christ in their hearts, and they have fully understood the meaning of baptism in water. *Babies must not be baptized*. Baptism in water is only for believers that have repented of their sins and understood the gospel. A baby does not have the faculty of understanding the gospel and repenting. People have to believe and then be baptized, not the other way around (***Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38***).

E. How Should I Be Baptized?

Baptism in water must be by immersion, and it must be done in the name of the Triune God, the *Lord Jesus Christ*. That is the name of the *Triune God*. *Lord* (the *JHVH* of the Old Testament), *Jesus* (the earthly, human name, son of God), and *Christ* (the name of the Holy Spirit, the anointing, the Messiah). The apostles

obeyed the Lord and baptized all the believers in this manner (*Mathew 28:19; Acts 8:14-16; 10:48; 19:1-5; 22:16; Philippians 2:9; Colossians 3:17*).

It is possible to be baptized in water and not be circumcised in the heart if the believer did not prepare himself adequately. When this happens, baptism becomes just a religious ritual where someone goes in dry and comes out wet, and not a real, personal experience. If you have been baptized in the past but you do not feel that you have had a genuine experience in your heart, or you were baptized when you were a baby, pray to God and ask the Holy Spirit to show you what you must do. If you feel the Lord is guiding you to be baptized again, obey Him and be re-baptized. Water baptism is a commandment from the Lord that must be obeyed (*Ephesians 4:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:13*).