

WHY GET BAPTIZED?

We read in the Bible about a man named John, who was baptizing people. He was baptizing them in the Jordan River. Many people were coming to John to get baptized. Among them was Jesus. Although Jesus wanted John to baptize Him, John did not want to (Matthew 3:14). John felt that he was not worthy to baptize Jesus; but Jesus insisted and John baptized Him.

Jesus' baptism was different from other people's baptism, because Jesus had committed no sins (Hebrews 4:15). Everybody else has committed sins (Romans 3:23), and their sins need to be washed away (Acts 22:16).

WHAT ARE SOME BAD THINGS THAT PEOPLE DO?

Well, there are many kinds of bad things. Some of them are: lying, cheating, getting drunk, using drugs, stealing, being disobedient to parents (Ephesians 6:1-3), talking ugly, using dirty language, and looking at dirty pictures. Also, hitting people, hurting people, and hating people are sins.

We asked our granddaughter, Heidi, who was a young teenager at that time, if she thought a person would go to hell for doing sins like those. Heidi replied, "Yes, if a person knows better than to do those things."

Heidi was right. People who do these bad things will not go to heaven (Revelation 22:15), unless they get God's forgiveness for what they have done.

BAPTISM IS IMPORTANT IN GETTING FORGIVENESS

The Apostle Peter told people how to get forgiveness. He said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins." (Acts 2:38)

Notice that the Apostle Peter used the words, "every one of you." That meant that all of those people, who heard him speak needed to get baptized. Peter also said that they should be baptized "in the name of Jesus." That meant that they should get baptized upon Jesus' authority, that is, because Jesus said so. Peter also told the people how baptism would help them. They would get "the forgiveness" of their "sins."

BAPTISM SAVES

Another thing that baptism does is to help save people. Not that baptism alone saves people, but it is one of the things that God has worked out for people to do, by which He saves people. The Apostle Peter wrote about Noah's ark and said,

“In it only a few people,
eight in all, were saved through water,
and this water symbolizes baptism
that now saves you also.”

1 Peter 3:20-21

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

If you become a child of God, you will get many blessings. One of the blessings that you get is a special gift that God alone gives. The Apostle Peter told what that gift is. He said, “And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

People get the Holy Spirit when they are baptized, because God sends the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). The Holy Spirit is a wonderful gift. He brings happiness and many other good things into a person’s life (Galatians 5:22-23).

THE NEW BIRTH

When a person gets baptized, it changes his relationship to God. The change is so great that it is like being born all over again. Jesus said,

“I tell you the truth,
no one can see the kingdom of God
unless he is born again.”

John 3:3 NIV

Notice that Jesus said that unless a person “is born again,” he can not even “see” the kingdom of God. Jesus explained what He meant by that. He said,

“I tell you the truth,
no one can enter the kingdom of God
unless he is born
of water and the Spirit.”

John 3:5 NIV

From Jesus’ explanation we learn that “born again” is the same as being “born of water and the Spirit.”

In these verses, Jesus said that two things are involved in being “born again.” A person has to be “born of water” and of “the Spirit.” That is to say, a person must go down into the water of baptism and come out clean, before God sends the Holy Spirit into His heart. We see, then, that both water and the Holy Spirit are involved in the new birth. After a person has been born again in this way, he is in the kingdom of God.

GOD’S FAMILY

When a person is born again, he comes into God’s family. This makes him a child of God in a new and special way. The Apostle Paul wrote,

“You are all sons of God
through faith in Christ Jesus,

for all of you
who were baptized into Christ
have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

Galatians 3:26-27 NIV

According to these Bible verses, when a person has “faith in Jesus Christ” and is “baptized into Christ,” two things happen:

- (1) He or she clothes himself or herself with Christ and
- (2) He or she becomes God’s child.

Since God is a great King, all who become His children are royal people (1 Peter 2:9). They are royal because they belong to the King’s family. This makes them very important and it is something to be happy about.

YOU GET HELP IN FIGHTING AGAINST SIN

The devil does not like for people to be baptized; because after they are baptized, they get help in fighting against the devil.

In baptism, they put on the “helmet of salvation” (Ephesians 6:17). This helmet helps to protect them so the devil can’t hurt them. If God’s children are faithful to Him, He will not allow the devil to force them to do bad things (Romans 7:24-8:2). This makes it a lot easier for them to get through the teenage-years, without getting into trouble.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID

When our son Harold was fourteen years old, he went on a camping trip to Yugoslavia. The campers were sleeping in small tents. One night, there was a thunderstorm. Harold was in a tent with several campers and with David Gatewood, the camp leader. Rain was coming down, the thunder was very loud. Lightening could be seen through the tent. It was very scary, but David Gatewood said, "We don't need to be afraid. We are all Christians here. We have all been baptized." Then our son Harold, a young teenager, piped up and said, "But I haven't." The next day he decided to get baptized.

A Christian does not need to be afraid, not even of dying. He knows that God will raise him up from among the dead at the Last Day. God will raise him up when Jesus comes again. Baptism has something to do with our resurrection, for the Apostle Paul wrote:

"If we have been united with him
like this in his death,
we will certainly also
be united with him
in his resurrection."

Romans 6:5 NIV

The Apostle Paul said in this verse that when a person goes down into the water in baptism, he gets united with the death of Jesus. If this happens, that

person will also be united with Jesus' resurrection. That is to say, when Jesus comes again, a person that has been united with Jesus in baptism will be raised from the dead like Jesus was.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE BAPTISM

You are thinking about baptism. That is good, but there are some things you need to know before you get baptized. Here are some of them:

- 1.) There is a God.

You need to understand that there is a God. You probably already know this, and that is good. You probably also know that God is the one who made the world and everything in it (Genesis 1:1).

- 2.) God loves you.

God loves you. That is why God wants to save you. The Bible says,

“For God so loved the world
that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him
shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:16 NIV

- 3.) Jesus is God's Son.

The verse that was just read says that God “gave his one and only Son.” You need to know that the one whom God “gave” is Jesus. When Jesus was baptized, God spoke with a voice from heaven and said,

“You are my Son,
whom I love;
with you I am well pleased.”

Mark 1:11 NIV

4.) Jesus died for you.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

“But God demonstrates
his own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners,
Christ died for us.”

Romans 5:8 NIV

4.) Jesus is Lord.

To say that Jesus is “Lord” is the same as saying that He is “the King.” You need to believe that Jesus is “the King” before you are baptized. For Peter said, “...be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ...” (Acts 2:38)

Jesus is called “Christ” (the anointed one) because God anointed Him to be King. To be

baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ” means that you do it because the King has asked you to do it. After Jesus’ death and resurrection, God raised Jesus up and made Him sit at God’s own right hand (Acts 2:33). From this place, Jesus rules over the church (Ephesians 1:22).

5.) You have sinned

Peter also said, “Repent and be baptized...” (Acts 2:38). Unless you know that you have done something wrong, you can’t “repent;” because “to repent” means that you are sorry for something you did. It also means that you don’t want to do it again. You are supposed to “repent” before you are baptized.

6.) A personal decision

You need to know that baptism is a personal decision. It is not a decision that someone else can make for you. You are the one who has to make it. It is your faith that makes baptism work (Colossians 2:12). Jesus said,

“Whoever believes and is baptized
will be saved.”

Mark 16:16 NIV

7.) A challenge

It is not always easy to live the Christian life, but God will help you. The Apostle Paul wrote, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13)

8.) A life-time commitment

You shouldn't be baptized and then forget about it. Baptism is only the start of a life that is lived with God.

THERE ARE SOME WRONG REASONS FOR GETTING BAPTIZED

Sometimes people get baptized for the wrong reasons. This is particularly true of young people. Sometimes they have a desire to get baptized, but their reasons have not been thought out carefully. Here are some wrong reasons for getting baptized:

1.) Getting baptized just because your friends are getting baptized

This is called "peer pressure." That means that people sometimes do things just because everyone else is doing them; but baptism is not a group activity. It requires a personal decision.

It is all right, of course, for several people to be baptized at the same time. On the Day of Pentecost, for example, after Jesus' resurrection, 3,000 people were baptized (immersed). That

was all right, because each one of them had made his (or her) own decision. Peter had said,

“Repent and be baptized,
every one of you...
for the forgiveness of your sins”

Acts 2:38 NIV

So, everyone has to see to it that he or she gets baptized. It is his or her responsibility. He or she has to make the decision. He or she has to request baptism. No one should decide for another.

2.) Getting baptized just because your friends want you to

It is nice to have friends that want good things for you. They want you to be saved and go to heaven. They want to have you in the church with them. That is good, but it is not sufficient a reason for you to get baptized. You have to decide for yourself whether or not you want to follow Jesus. The Bible says, “...whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (Revelation 22:17). That means that you yourself have to desire salvation.

3.) Getting baptized just because your Bible teacher wants you to

It is good that your Bible teacher loves you and has taught you about baptism; but the Bible teacher must decide for himself (or herself) and you must decide for yourself. Jesus said, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved...” (Mark 16:16). True belief in Jesus has to go before baptism.

4.) Getting baptized just so that you can get in on the church’s activities

Being a member of the church is a wonderful thing and there is a lot of joy that comes from it; but true joy comes only as a result of a real commitment. The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers...
to offer your bodies as living sacrifices,
holy and pleasing to God”

Romans 12:1 NIV

5.) Getting baptized just so you can eat the communion bread and drink the grape juice

Partaking of the communion on Sunday mornings is enjoyable, but the privilege of doing this comes as a result of a true commitment to Jesus. The desire to partake of the communion is not an adequate reason for getting baptized.

6.) Getting baptized just because your parents

want you to

It is nice that you have parents, who love you and want the best for you; but they cannot make the decision for you, nor do they want to make the decision for you. You have to decide for yourself whether or not you love Jesus and want to be His follower. Jesus said,

“If anyone would come after me,
he must deny himself
and take up his cross
and follow me.”

Matthew 16:24 NIV

AM I READY FOR BAPTISM?

Some children want to get baptized before they are ready; and some teenagers, on the other hand, wait longer than necessary. So, some one might ask, “How can I know if I am ready for baptism?” Here are some questions that may help you decide.

1.) Do you believe in God?

The book of Hebrews says,

“And without faith
it is impossible to please God,
because anyone who comes to him
must believe that he exists

**and that he rewards those
who earnestly seek him.”**

Hebrews 11:6 NIV

- 2.) Do you believe that Jesus is God’s Son and
your Lord (King)?**

The Apostle Paul wrote in the Book of Romans:

**“That if you confess with your mouth,
‘Jesus is Lord,’
and believe in your heart
that God raised him from the dead,
you will be saved.”**

Romans 10:9 NIV

- 3.) Do you think that you have learned the
difference between right and wrong?**

**Are you old enough to know that some things are
o.k. and some things are not o.k.? That doesn’t
mean that you have to know all about everything,
because there are many things that you will still
need to learn after you are baptized. But if you
feel that you really don’t know which things you
ought to do and which you ought not to do, that is
probably a sign that you may not be ready to start
living the Christian life. You may need to mature
just a little more, before getting baptized.**

- 4.) Do you realize that you have done some bad things? Are you sorry for them? Would you like to avoid doing them in the future?

Repentance is an important part of becoming a Christian. Without repentance it doesn't make much sense to get baptized for the forgiveness of sins; and if you are not aware that you have done any sins, you should wait to get baptized. If you don't desire God's help in avoiding sin in the future, you are definitely not ready.

- 5.) Do you yourself feel that you are ready to get baptized?

This is important to know, because it could happen that other people think you are ready; but you know that you are not ready. Advice from others is helpful; but, basically, you are the one to make the final decision. You should not be baptized unless you want it with all your heart.

- 6.) Do your parents think you are ready?

Your parents know you better than anyone else knows you. If they think you are not old enough, or mature enough, to fully understand what is involved in baptism, then perhaps you should wait a while, and continue to study the Bible. But if you are convinced that you are ready, and your

parents agree, then there is no reason to wait. Go ahead and get baptized.

- 7.) One test you might give yourself is to ask: “Do I love God more than I love my parents?” This is a hard test, but you have to decide who is most important in your life. Jesus said,

“If anyone comes to me
and does not hate
his father and mother,
his wife and children,
his brothers and sisters—
yes, even his own life—
he cannot be my disciple.”

Luke 14:26 NIV

If your parents are opposed to your getting baptized, not because they think you are not ready but because they simply don't like the idea, you may have to decide whom you are going to obey, whether God or your parents. The likelihood, however, that they will be opposed is slight; but if they are, the Apostle Peter and other apostles said,

“We must obey God
rather than men!”

Acts 5:29 NIV

- 8.) Another test is, “Are you willing to follow Jesus, even if your parents should stop following Him?”

You hope, of course, that your parents will always love Jesus. You have to decide, however, whether you want to be a follower of Jesus simply because your parents follow Him, or because you intend follow Him all the days of your life, no matter what your parents do.

WHAT BAPTISM IS LIKE

Being baptized is very serious. It has a deep meaning. It is not something to be done lightly. Here are some thoughts to help you to grasp what baptism is like. These thought are not all that can be said about baptism. They are only a few things to help you get an idea of what baptism is all about.

- 1.) Baptism is sad.

In one way, baptism is sad. That is because it reminds you of Jesus’ death. Jesus had to die, so that you can live. In a way, have to die too. That is, you die to sin, when you are baptized (Romans 6:1-3).

- 2.) Baptism is also happy.

Baptism is happy because it reminds you of Jesus' resurrection. He arose from the grave. Death could not hold Him; and you, too, arise out of the water of baptism to a new life (Romans 6:4).

3.) Baptism is like being born again.

In baptism you get a chance to start all over again. Although you have made mistakes in the past, they will not be held against you. You come out of the water of baptism as innocent as a little baby. You have the chance to be a new person (2 Corinthians 5:17).

4.) Baptism is like being rescued from danger.

The devil is like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8); but Jesus saves you from the devil. Jesus takes you out of this present evil age (Galatians 1:4) and puts you into His Kingdom, where you are safe.

5.) Baptism is like being freed from slavery.

Before you give your life to Jesus, you are, in a way, a slave to sin; but after you are baptized, you are freed from being a slave to sin. That means that you are not forced to sin anymore (Romans 6:17-18).

- 6.) **Baptism is like having a new guest come to live with you.**

When you are baptized, the Holy Spirit comes to live in your heart (Acts 2:38). If the Holy Spirit is in your heart, Jesus and the Father (God) are there, too. You are not alone anymore.

- 7.) **Baptism is like coming into a new family.**

When you have faith in Jesus and are baptized, you become God's child (Galatians 3:26-27). This puts you into God's family (the church). That means that you have all the rights and privileges of that family.

- 8.) **Baptism is like getting married.**

When you come into the church, you become a part of the "bride of Christ;" for the church is His bride (Ephesians 5:25-27). That means that you belong to Christ and that you must be faithful to Him.

- 9.) **Baptism is like joining an army.**

All of Christ's people are engaged in a great battle against Satan (Ephesians 6:12). They are soldiers of Christ; and they have to put on the right armor, so they can fight and win (Ephesians 6:13).

10.) Baptism is like starting to school.

When you start out being a Christian, there are many things you have still to learn. After you are baptized, Jesus becomes your teacher and you learn to be more like Him (Ephesians 4:20-24).

WHAT IS EXPECTED AFTER BAPTISM?

Here are some suggestions for things to do after you become a Christian:

1.) Read God's Word.

You need to keep reading the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15). You will not grow unless you do (1 Peter 2:2). In the Bible, God speaks to you. He tells you what He wants you to do.

2.) Take the Lord's Supper regularly.

Christians are to meet together on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). They meet in order to "break bread," that is, to celebrate the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). By doing this, they remember the Lord's death (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). They are to keep doing this until Jesus comes again (1 Corinthians 11:26). If you keep going to church, it will hold you in the family of God's people; and you will hear good things.

3.) Pray to God often.

God is your Father, and He wants you to talk to Him (1 Thessalonians 5:17). You can tell Him all your problems, because He care for you (1 Peter 5:7). You can even ask Him for things (Luke 11:9-10), but you must ask in faith (James 1:6-7). When you ask, do it in the name of Jesus (John 15:16); and don't forget to thank God for what He has done for you (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

4.) Lead a pure life.

Jesus wants His young people to be examples for the other members of the congregation (1 Timothy 4:12). He wants you to learn to walk in His footsteps (1 Peter 2:21).

5.) Do good to others.

One way to show your parents that you are sincere about being a Christian is to cooperate with them in the family. After your baptism, you should cooperate with them even better than you did before (Ephesians 6:1-3). Look for ways you can help them (Galatians 6:10).

If you have brothers or sisters in the family, show them that you love them (Romans 12:10). Try to get along with them better than you did before.

6.) Be generous with what you have.

Remember, “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). You are happier if you give than if you get things (Acts 20:35).

7.) Become a witness for Jesus.

God wants you to learn how to share your faith. You don't have to wait until you are grown to become active in the work of the church.