



BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

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BUILDING BLOCKS OF FAITH PART 5 : "The Sacraments"

August 14, 2005 Study 14 : "Baptism"

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

"Building Blocks of Faith" is a series of basic Christian beliefs. The studies will be kept as simple as possible. Those who are considering following Jesus will have the main issues of the Christian Faith explained. New Christians will gain an insight into what God has done in their life ... and why. Older Christians need to revisit the basics from time to time in order to check that what they are building is consistent with the blueprints! Part 1 of the Series; "Three Little Words" - Grace, Mercy and Peace. Part 2 - Two Studies on "Understanding God;" Part 3, three Studies on "Understanding Man;" Part 4, five Studies on "Understanding Reconciliation."

Today is the first Study in the final part of the Series - "Understanding The Sacraments" This morning we will be studying Baptism and next Sunday Pastor Jennifer will lead a Study on "Communion."

The concluding Study of the Series on August 28 stands alone - the idea that Worship is not just an activity that occupies a short time on one day of the week, but that its all that we do in response to the love of God.

INTRODUCTION TO TODAY'S STUDY

During the Feast of Pentecost, 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus, Peter stood in Jerusalem and told the crowd about the death of Jesus, their responsibility for it and how God had raised him to life :

"... this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for him to be held in its power." Acts 2:23-24

Then Peter made this declaration :

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified." Acts 2:36

Under conviction, some in the crowd asked what they should do. Peter responded :

"Repent, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2 :38

2000 years of Church History have passed. As a consequence, a wide range of answers are given as to what Baptism means, As in all things, the Scriptures are primary and authoritative; so to them we turn -

A. THE SYMBOLISM OF BAPTISM

1. Up Until John the Baptist

Water is the commonly used agent for cleansing. As the Jewish faith and practice developed, ritual washing was required for "religious purification" based on the commands in Leviticus 15. That Jesus did not adhere to the strict schedule of "religious washings" was of great concern to the Pharisees.

A Pharisee invited Jesus to dine with him; so he went in and took his place at the table. The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not first wash before dinner. The Lord said to him, "You clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and herbs, and neglect justice and the love of God...." Luke 11:37-42

PRINCIPLE 1 : Symbolism without the REALITY is pointless.

"Ritual washing" led to baptism as the ideas of "being clean" were associated with repentance and a new beginning before God - gentile converts to the Jewish faith were baptised by the time of Jesus.

John encouraged baptism for those who were already Jews as the sign of repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. *"I baptise you with water for repentance ..."* Mat3:11

(Notice John's insistence that baptism was no empty symbol. Repentance must lead to lasting change. See Luke 3:7-14)

PRINCIPLE 2 : Baptism is the symbol for REPENTANCE

2. Following The Death And Resurrection Of Jesus

Principles 1 & 2, already existing to this point, did not change. Note Acts 2:36 again.

"Repent, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

"Repentance" and "Forgiveness" are still central to the idea of baptism. What has been added?

PRINCIPLE 3 : Baptism is associated with the PRESENCE and ACTIVITY of the Holy Spirit.
With this principle Christian Baptism takes its unique form.

B. BAPTISM AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. Identified WITH CHRIST.

All of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus have been baptised into his death. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. Rom6:3-5

One of Paul's most used phrases is *"in Christ"* - shorthand for the larger passage, above. These verses are a theological explanation of Jesus' words to Nicodemus, *"You must be born again"* Jesus goes on to explain to him that this radical new beginning is the work of the Holy Spirit . (See Jn3:3-8)

PRINCIPLE 3a : Baptism is the Sign of my NEW LIFE; that I have been born again.

2. Incorporated Into the BODY OF CHRIST

For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 1Cor12:13

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptised into Christ have been clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise Gal3:26-29

1Cor12:13 makes clear that this is the work of the Spirit of God. The Gal3 reference uses the phrase *"baptised into Christ"* - indicating that this work of the Spirit is closely related with B1 above.

PRINCIPLE 3b : Baptism is the Sign of my new IDENTITY; "I belong to the people of God."

NOTE : The word "baptism" in all of the references in Section B does not refer to a Christian's literal baptism - as in, " when I am physically baptised I am reborn and made a part of the people of God."

OR, "my physical baptism accomplishes these things." The word "baptism" is being used metaphorically (as in Mk10:38 where Jesus speaks of his death as a baptism) Baptism does not save. Only Jesus' death saves! See "Principle 1" and Eph2:4-22

**PRINCIPLE 3c. : Our physical Baptism is the sign of the SPIRITUAL REALITY
of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.**

C. WHY BE BAPTISED?

The following reasons are often given. (and they are not all wrong) but they fall short as Biblical reasons for being Baptism

1. Because JESUS was baptised Yes he was, but both John and Jesus were unique, as was Jesus' Baptism. His "example" is never given as a reason in the NT
2. As a WITNESS to my faith before others Yes, it is by it's very nature, but those baptised in Acts were baptised at the moment of professing faith in Christ; no one waited to call a larger group of people together.
3. When you are / "I think you are" READY. There is no such subjective test in the NT. See "2" above.

The Biblical reason? Because it's the authorised way to RESPOND to the claims of Jesus on your life. It is a COMMAND to be obeyed if we have confessed Jesus as Lord and Saviour. (Again, see Acts 2:38) This rules out all subjective reasoning ("Am I ready to be baptised?") and simply asks the question, "Will I obey?"