THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

Many believers ask, "Just what is baptism, anyway?" "Why have such a practice?" "What is the purpose behind it all?"

These are significant basic questions. The Bible gives answers!

Baptism is a symbol. Jesus knew that symbols would help us understand and remember spiritual truths, so He gave ordinances just before His death. An ordinance is a physical act that symbolizes a spiritual reality. Baptism is an ordinance that symbolizes salvation. Baptism can be compared to the candlelight service performed in many weddings today. After the bride and groom are pronounced husband and wife, they each take one of the outside candles and light the center candle. They extinguish their separate candles. They are symbolizing two lives united into one.

Baptism is also a symbol. It pictures the salvation experience of the person being baptized and his awareness of ownership. He now is under the management of a triune God; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Baptism identifies us with a triune God. It says that you are a Trinitarian. Jesus commands us to be baptized after our salvation experience.

God the Father - Approved Salvation - The Source
James 1:17, 1 John 4:14, John 14:26
God the Son - Achieved Salvation - The Channel
1 Peter 3:18, John 14:6, Isaiah 53:6, Romans 6:3-6 John 5:21, 15:6
God the Holy Spirit - Applied Salvation - The Agent
1 Corinthians 12:13, Titus 3:5, John 3:5

Questions:
1. What is an ordinance?
2. What does baptism symbolize?
3. Who are the three persons of God mentioned in baptism?
4. Why do we dip/immerse you forward three times?

BAPTISM IS TO FOLLOW CONVERSION

Since baptism is a symbol, it follows that it should always occur after the salvation experience. Every New Testament passage shows that baptism followed conversion.

Notice the following passages:
"... those who had received His Word were baptized." Acts 2:41
"... those who had received the Holy Spirit... he ordered them baptized." Acts 10:47-48
"... hearts open to the Lord and the entire household was baptized." Acts 16:14, 15
"... when they heard and believed, they were baptized." Acts 18:8

BAPTISM IS ONLY FOR GENUINE BELIEVERS

Religion is commonplace and many people have head knowledge of the work of Christ. Since baptism is a symbol, it follows that it should always occur after the salvation experience. Every New Testament passage shows that baptism followed conversion. wever, only true heart acceptance of Christ results in salvation. In Acts 8:13, we have recorded that "Simon himself believed" and was "baptized." However, it was only an understanding of the facts, not a personal trust in the Lord. Thus, he tried to buy the power of the Spirit, and Peter told Simon he would perish (v.20); had no part in this teaching (v.21); his heart was not right before God (v.22); and he was in the bondage of sin (v.23). Simon was baptized, but not really born again.

One dear saint said that at her first baptism she, "went down into the water a dry unbeliever and came up a wet unbeliever!" She then related how she later trusted in Christ and was baptized again after her conversion.

Questions:
1. Who should be baptized and when?
2. What must a person do before they can be baptized?
3. If you were baptized before you were saved, what should you do?

BAPTISM IS A TESTIMONY TO OTHERS

Baptism gives testimony of faith in Christ to the baptizer and any others watching the service. The degree of privacy or publicity in Acts is not stressed, yet there is no attempt to baptize in secrecy. Acts 2:41 seems to indicate a crowd. Acts 8:38 seems to show only a few. Obviously, there
BAPTISM IS A STEP IN OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST

When a believer is baptized, he is obeying His Lord. The believer is saying in action, "I will do whatever the Lord asks - even getting immersed in water." Baptism is a beginning of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. "Be baptized," in Acts 22:16 is a permissive middle tense in the Greek language meaning, "allow yourself to be baptized." Because of the importance of the baptismal testimony (both to the believer and the church), baptism was always encouraged immediately upon conversion in Acts. Evidently the full teaching concerning the meaning and significance was done after the experience.

The principle for today is that we should not be concerned that one being baptized knows all the doctrine on baptism before he can be baptized. Some basic teaching is important, but much of the understanding will follow the experience. This can be compared to salvation. One usually trusts in Christ, knowing only the fundamentals, then later discovers more fully the wonderful doctrine (teaching) of salvation. Obedience, not complete understanding, is what matters most to God.

Questions:
1. Who is baptism for? Baptism shows the excitement of whom?
2. When a person is baptized, whom are they obeying?
3. When should you be baptized?
4. God is not so much concerned with our total understanding as He is with our...

WHO DOES THE BAPTIZING?

The emphasis is not on the person who is doing the baptizing, but on the person being baptized. The baptizer must be a believer. It is always an honor for every pastor to baptize people who are in his care, however the Bible never says he is the only one in the church who can do the baptizing. Perhaps a loving father, a mentor, or even the one who had the opportunity to lead the person being baptized to the Lord might want to play a part in the baptism. The pastoral staff is open to the possible options that might arise as we look at each individual being baptized.

Question: 1. Who may do the baptizing?

WHAT IF I HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED SOME OTHER WAY?

It is never the intention to undermine the significant steps a believer takes in following and obeying the Lord. The word, "Baptism," is the word, "Baptidzo," in the original language. This word means to "immerse" and quite possibly means a multiple action, as well. We want to be as true to the text as possible, therefore we practice immersion here. Concerning three times forward, one must look at the grammar of the text. The command is to baptize and is evidenced in three actions. If I tell my son to pick up his toys, the command is to, "Pick up his toys." If I add the words to my command, "Pick up your toys 'in the living room,' and 'in the basement,' and 'in your bedroom,'" and he only picks up his toys in one of the rooms, has he completely obeyed?

We encourage all believers involved in Gateway Church to be triune immersed. It will be a positive and great experience in your life and in the life of the Church family. The body of Christ functions best in unity. Every partner at Gateway Church is encouraged to be baptized by immersion after their salvation experience.

Question: 1. If I have been baptized by some other mode, what should I do?

NOW THAT I'M READY - WHAT SHOULD I DO?

If you've read over the information in this brochure and desire to follow Christ in baptism, sign up at GTWY.life and complete the pre-baptism worksheet.