



21 The Joy of Joining One's Will to Jesus

Doing this or doing that does not earn salvation. The Bible teaches that people are saved only by faith in Christ. Knowing this is true, many wonder why it is so necessary to be baptized. If one is saved by faith, why is a "work" like baptism so important? Would God actually keep a repentant person out of His Kingdom if he/she were not baptized?

Could it be that baptism is an outmoded relic of a superstitious past? If we interpret Jesus' teachings in a more modern way, will we see that baptism is no longer necessary for Christians?

Can we invent an easier method of baptism than the old-fashioned way of being "buried" in the water? Is sprinkling a good substitute? Why not?

Is it ever right to be baptized a second time? Why is it that some people who are baptized never really become good Christians? What is the real reason behind Jesus' idea of baptism? Why did He command it? What lesson does it teach? What does baptism do for one? What change does it make? Perhaps you have never been baptized, and you want to know what it means. Perhaps you have already been baptized but you want to understand the "why" more clearly.

1. How did baptism begin? What was the real problem of John's hearers? Matthew 3:1-6.

ANSWER: _____

These people saw that sin is a disease with very deep roots. They were common people who were honest and open, willing to confess their need.

2. Look at John's message in Matthew 3:7-12 and find the answers to these questions:

(a) What was the problem, these people also had (verse 8)?

ANSWER: "Bring forth therefore _____ meet for _____"

(b) Where does God begin to help with our sin problem? (verse 10).

ANSWER: "The axe is laid unto the _____ of the _____"

(c) What two kinds of baptism are mentioned? (verse 11).

ANSWER: "I... baptize you with _____ ... with the _____ Ghost..."

3. *Why do you think that the sinless Jesus submitted to be baptized? Doesn't baptism mean confession and repentance for sin? Matthew 3:13-15.*

ANSWER: "And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to _____

It is true that Jesus had Himself done no sin (see 1 Peter 2:21-23). But the Sinless One mingled with sinners because He loved them and came to save them. We all deserve a cross ourselves, but He took our cross instead. He put Himself in our place and felt as we feel (compare 1 Peter 2:24). Have you felt guilty, polluted, "dirty" with sin? Jesus carried that burden for you, and knows how you feel. He took our sin upon Himself. He was baptized as an Example to us. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

4. *What happiness came to Jesus after He was baptized? Matthew 3:16,17.*

ANSWER: He heard a voice from heaven saying, "This is _____, in whom _____

Everyone who will go through the same steps will most surely hear the same voice from heaven saying: "This is My own dear son (or daughter)."

5. *What three steps prepare one for baptism?*

ANSWER:

(a) Mark 16:15,16. _____.

(b) Acts 2:37, 38. _____.

(c) Matthew 28:19, 20. _____.

To "believe" means more than a mental assent, like saying $2 + 2 = 4$. It means to appreciate the sacrifice that Jesus made for us (see Romans 10:10 and Galatians 5:6). Faith is the same as believing. It is one's heart-response of appreciation for God's love. It brings a new life into one's soul. You say, "What is sin, that it should require such a sacrifice for the redemption of its victim? Was all this love, all this suffering, all this humiliation {of Christ} demanded, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life?" *Happiness Digest*, p. 11.

This is true New Testament "faith," and leads one directly into repentance, the second step. One begins to learn to hate sin. Then one turns away from it because he does not wish to add to Christ's sufferings. This repentance is a gift of God (see Acts 5:31). It leads directly to the third step—obedience. Faith means the heart is reconciled to God; and since it is impossible to be reconciled to God and not at the same time be reconciled to His holy law, faith makes the believer obedient to all of God's commandments. When one invites the Holy Spirit into his heart, it becomes the easiest thing in the world to obey them. The Holy Spirit writes that holy law in the heart, and we actually delight to obey.

6. *If one refuses to believe, what lies before him? Mark 16:16, last part; compare John 3:16-20.*

ANSWER: "He that believeth not is _____ already, because he hath not _____ in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

7. *What do you believe is the right method of baptism? Matthew 3:6; John 3:23; Acts 8:36-39.*

ANSWER (check one): () To be infused (poured); () to be sprinkled; () to be "buried" in the water.

8. *What is the deeper meaning of baptism? Romans 6:3,4.*

ANSWER: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into _____ were _____ into _____?"
"Therefore we are _____ by _____ into _____: that like as Christ was _____ up from the _____ by the glory of the Father, even so we also should _____ in _____."

9. *But what does "death" mean here? How do we share Christ's death? Romans 6:5-7.*

ANSWER: "Knowing this, that _____ is _____, that the body of sin _____, that henceforth we should not _____ sin."

Here is the secret! The old sinful self is not to be beaten or punished, but is to die with Christ, and to be buried so no one sees it again. (This is why baptism is a symbol of burial—it must be immersion or it has no meaning.) No one can possibly live with Christ until he first surrenders himself to die with Him. This is how the power of the sinful self is destroyed. This is putting the axe at the root of the tree. To let "self die with Christ is the same thing as joining our will (or choice) to Him (Matthew 26:39; John 6:38).

10. *Does this mean that any of us are perfect after we are baptized? Philippians 3:12-14.*

ANSWER: "But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which _____, and reaching forth unto those things which are _____, I press toward the _____ for the prize of the _____ of God in _____"

11. *What is every newly baptized person in God's sight? 1 Peter 2: 1,2.*

ANSWER: "As _____, desire the sincere milk of the _____, that ye may grow thereby."

12. *Is a second baptism sometimes the right thing to do? Acts 19:1-5.*

YOUR ANSWER: _____.

The thief on the cross could not be baptized, yet the Lord promised him that he would be in Paradise. But if one can be baptized, it is necessary (John 3:3-5).

Nicodemus knew that Christ here referred to water baptism and the renewing of the heart by the Spirit of God. By nature the heart is evil, and "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one" (Job 14:4). No human invention can find a remedy for the sin-sick soul. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Romans 8:7; Matthew 15:19). The fountain of the heart will be purified.

13. *Are you willing to be baptized by immersion, as a sign of your union with Christ?* _____

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." 1 Peter 5:7 "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17

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