

Baptism



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Since

the creation of man, the Lord has called His chosen people to make a commitment to follow Him, be identified with Him, and be set apart from the rest of the world.

There were different ways the commitment to God was shown, but with Abraham, he and his descendants were told to do a specific ritual to show they were set apart for the Lord.



Genesis 17:9-11: And God said to Abraham: As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised. And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. NKJV

Circumcision was the cutting off of the flesh, as a sign and covenant with the Lord. It also represents the fact that God wants to be Lord of even the most intimate parts of my life.

Circumcision was an outward sign of an inward decision to dedicate oneself to the Lord. As believers in Christ, we are no longer called to be circumcised.

However, there are 3 lessons from circumcision, we can apply to our lives:

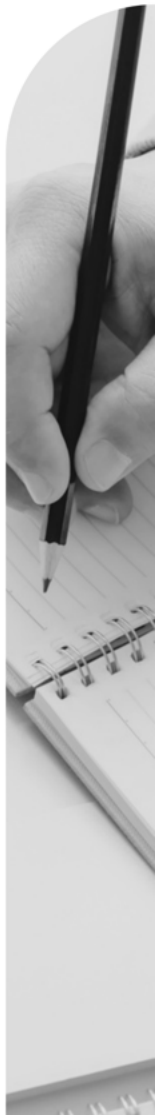
1. Our bodies belong to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. NKJV

2. True circumcision represents the cutting away of the flesh of our hearts.

Deuteronomy 30:6 The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. NKJV

Again, the sign of cutting away the flesh in circumcision was simply to be an outward sign, showing surrender and allowing the Lord to change hearts.



3. When I am weak, He is strong.

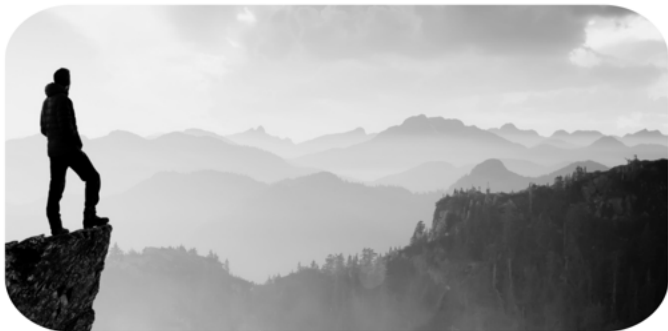
2 Corinthians 12:9 My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. NKJV

Humanly speaking, weakness is not a good thing, but when we are weak, we allow God to work, which shows His strength. Circumcision was the sign showing Abraham and his descendants were in a covenant relationship with the Lord.

Here is a question: Has anything changed for those in Jesus from the time of Abraham's call to be circumcised until now?

After Jesus paid for sin on the cross, we are no longer under the Old Covenant.

For those who have received Jesus' free gift of salvation by faith in what the Lord accomplished on the cross, we have become part of the Church and are under the New Covenant of Grace.



The sign a Christian is committed to Christ is shown in baptism.

While there are parallels between baptism and circumcision, they symbolize two very different covenant relationships.

The Old Testament rituals were mere copies and shadows, but Jesus Christ is the substance and meaning of those rituals as well as the only way to have a relationship with the Father.

The Old Covenant was temporary because man could not be perfect, as needed to commune with a Holy God.

The New Covenant is Eternal because Jesus paid the price as our mediator with God the Father and gave us eternal life.

The Lord promised in *Ezekiel 36:26-27* *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you. NKJV*

The New Covenant is ours because He who has promised is faithful and has given us a new **circumcised** heart!

When Jesus gave up His Spirit on the cross and rose again, sin was handed a death blow. By simple faith in Christ, we gain new identity, and we become Children of the Most-High God.

So, is there an identifying marker for those who are in Christ?

You can wear a WWJD bracelet, have a Christian bumper sticker on your vehicle, or even wear a cross piece of jewelry.

But what did Jesus instruct His followers to do to identify themselves with Him as a Christian?

Paul said in *Colossians 2:11* *In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ*



Curtis Vaughn said, *“Our spiritual circumcision meant the putting off of the old man.*

*“The Greek word for ‘putting off’, a double compound, denotes both stripping off and casting away. The imagery is that of discarding – or being divested of – a piece of **filthy** clothing.”*

Paul also said in *2 Corinthians 5:17* **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. NKJV**

For the person who is in Christ, the way we publicly identify ourselves with Christ is no longer through circumcision, but it happens through a Believer’s (Water) Baptism.

There are several different baptisms within scripture, so let’s cover some of them in order to remove some of the confusion.

There

are three main Baptisms in the New Testament: John's Baptism of repentance that became obsolete once Jesus was crucified, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and a Believer's (Water) Baptism.

1. John's Baptism of repentance was done before the cross.



F.F. Bruce said, *“John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, but as John's baptism pointed forward to Jesus; it became obsolete when Christ came. Christian baptism followed faith in the Lord Jesus; it was associated with His name, which was invoked by the person baptized.”*

John the Baptist told the people to believe in the promised Messiah, the one who would come after John the Baptist, who was Jesus.

John's Baptism was a symbolic representation of changing one's mind about their sinful life and then seeking the Lord instead.

Matthew 3:5-6 Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him (John the Baptist) and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. NKJV

John's Baptism demonstrated someone who recognized their sin and made a commitment to follow God, while anticipating Messiah's arrival.

2. We receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit at salvation.

J. Vernon McGee said, *“When Christ died, you and I died with Him; He took our place. And when He was raised, we were raised in Him, and we are now joined to a living Christ. It is so important to keep in mind that no outward ceremony brings us to Christ. The issue is whether or not we are born again, whether or not we know Christ as Savior.”*

Colossians 2:12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. NKJV

Biblically, baptism has a literal and figurative meaning. When a person is saved by trusting what Jesus did on the cross, they are immediately baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ.



Many people get confused between the Spiritual Baptism that happens internally at the moment of salvation compared to a Believer's Baptism, which a believer does to show their faith publicly.

Dr. John Bechtle said, *"The Bible uses "Baptism of the Spirit" to refer to one of the wonderful things God does for us the instant we trust Christ and enter His family!"*

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. NKJV

Some things about Spiritual Baptism:

A. Who receives the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized.

Who was Paul addressing? Paul wrote to Christians when he said, "We were all baptized into one body."

Paul did not say only those Christians who have reached a certain level of maturity were baptized in the Spirit.



With Spiritual Baptism, the word baptism, just like Believer's Baptism, means to immerse, submerge, or to overwhelm.

The Baptism of the Spirit was predicted by John the Baptist and by Jesus:

Acts 1:5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

The promise of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. For the first time, people were permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and the Church began.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is given to any and all people who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and it places that person into the family of God.



B. When does Baptism of the Holy Spirit take place?

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...

Dr. John Bechtle said, “Some churches believe the baptism of the Spirit is a second experience that gives a person much greater spiritual power and boldness.”

However as gotquestions.org said, “The Spirit of God places the believer into union with Christ and into union with other believers in the body of Christ at the moment of salvation.”

When Peter was preaching in Acts 10, some Gentile believers demonstrated having the Holy Spirit before they were water baptized.

Acts 10:47 Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? NKJV

Later, Paul said in *Ephesians 5:18 do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit NKJV*

Filled means controlled by...

Wiersbe wrote, “*The verb fill has nothing to do with contents or quantity, as though we were empty vessels that need a required amount of spiritual fuel to keep going.*”

The two-fold admonition: Don't be **controlled** (*drunk*) by alcohol or the old life; instead, be **controlled** (*filled*) by the Holy Spirit.

The new person in Christ is admonished to be filled, which is controlled by the Spirit. In the original language, this verse teaches us to be continuously **filled** (*controlled by*) with the Holy Spirit.

Being filled with the Spirit happens at the moment of salvation, but practically, we need to surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit; moment by moment after salvation.



Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a suggestion, but rather it is a command. As Christ-followers, we are to give control of ourselves over to the Holy Spirit.

Essentially, Paul was saying, “Do not make the decision of our will to be controlled by wine, but instead, relinquish control over to the Holy Spirit.”

C. What does Baptism of the Holy Spirit do in the life of a believer?

1 Corinthians 12:13 tells us the Baptism of the Holy Spirit makes us members of the body of Christ, and because we are members of Christ’s body, we also have **newness of life**.

The Spirit baptizes us, making us part of the body of Christ, as He becomes our power source to share the Good News of Jesus.

We receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit only once, and again, it happens at the moment we receive Jesus’ free gift of salvation.

3. A Believer's (Water) Baptism is a public announcement of a personal decision to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Some people teach a Believer's Baptism is necessary for salvation. However, if that were right, then the Bible contradicts itself because we know our salvation is not based on our works of righteousness.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. NKJV



Believer's Baptism is a public announcement of a personal decision to commit to and follow Jesus as Lord and Savior.



A Believer's Baptism is for someone who has placed their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ to be saved.

Water Baptism is shown in *Acts 8* when Phillip found a eunuch reading the OT Book of Isaiah. The men came upon some water, and the eunuch asked what prevents him from being baptized.

Acts 8:37-38 Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. NKJV

Notice the sequence of events; someone must first believe on Jesus for salvation, and then they should be immediately baptized, demonstrating their faith as an outward expression of an inward commitment to follow Christ.

Why

should someone be Water Baptized?

A Believer's (Water) Baptism is a command not only given by Jesus, but one that was obeyed by Jesus as well.

Matthew 3:16-17 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."



Believer's Baptism is a picture and representation of the washing away of sins and dying to our "old self" and old way of life. Coming up out of the water represents us rising to new life in Christ.

What

were Jesus' instructions to His followers in order to identify with Him as a Christian?

The last words of Jesus in *Matthew 28:19* *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. NKJV*

Since baptism is a representation of the decision a person has previously made to place their faith in Christ, it is not for infants or children who cannot make the commitment for themselves.

People should be baptized because of their own faith.

Again, baptism illustrates our identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus, as we commit our lives to Him.

Once saved, our old life is as good as buried, and when we go in the water, baptism illustrates that death.



Coming out of the water is a picture of being raised into new life, as we identify with the death and resurrection of Jesus publicly in a Believer's Baptism.

We have already said a Believer's Baptism is not part of someone's salvation.

We also want to make sure the person understands enough about the Gospel to realize there are no works of righteousness that can pay for their sin or pay for their entrance into heaven.

Titus 3:4-6 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior NKJV



The only time the age of a person is an issue for someone to be baptized is when they cannot understand the Gospel of Grace.

Baptism is like a TV commercial; in that, it is a public announcement of a personal decision to commit themselves to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior.

How

should someone be Water Baptized?

The Biblical meaning of the word baptize, means complete immersion and every scripture included large bodies of water.

Immersion (or submersion) is the only mode that accurately pictures Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

Paul demonstrated the picture of a Believer's Baptism through what happens at salvation in the *Book of Romans*.

Romans 6:3-5 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. NKJV



How

does Living Faith Fellowship determine whether a person is ready to be Water Baptized?

We take the Acts 8 narrative of the Ethiopian Eunuch.

Acts 8:35-37a Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." NKJV

We ask the person, "Do you believe with all of your heart that Jesus came from heaven as a baby, grew up as a man and was crucified to pay the penalty of your sin and rose again? Have you received Jesus as your Lord and Savior?"



Romans 10:9-10 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. NKJV

Since the creation of man, the Lord has called His chosen people to make a commitment to follow Him, be identified with Him, and be set apart from the rest of the world.

There were different ways the commitment to God was shown, but with Abraham, he and his descendants were told to do a specific ritual to show they were set apart for the Lord.

Circumcision was an outward sign of an inward decision made to dedicate oneself to the Lord. As believers in Christ, we are no longer called to be circumcised.



For the person in Christ, the way we publicly identify ourselves with Christ is no longer with circumcision, but through baptism.

Water Baptism is a command not only given by Jesus, but one that was obeyed by Jesus as well.

Now, for Christians, as Paul said in *Colossians 3:2-4* ***Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. NKJV***

Gotquestions.org said, *“The Christian life is defined by the believer’s identification with Jesus Christ. It is not enough to know that Jesus died for us; we must also understand that we died with Him. Because we died and were raised with Him, the power of sin over us is broken.”*

If you have received Christ as your Lord and Savior, you should obey the Lord’s command and publicly profess your faith through a Believer’s Baptism. Christ-followers identify themselves with Christ.

After receiving the free gift of salvation, the first step of obedience for a Christian is a Believer’s Baptism, showing a commitment to Jesus.





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