

“The Bible and Baptism”

August 31, 2025

Acts 8:26-40

I. Introduction

Since a little later in this service Ivy and Jennifer are going to be baptized, it seemed appropriate to take a break from Philippians and consider “The Bible and Baptism.” 2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” 2 Peter 1:21 adds, “For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” Because of these verses and others like them, the first sentence in our doctrinal statement is: “*We believe the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.*” As Christians first and Baptists second, we believe that the Bible is the only authority for our faith and conduct. This is why Baptists are sometimes called “People of the Book.”

According to the Book, there are 2 actions or ceremonies that Jesus told His followers to do. In religious circles, they are called “ordinances” which is just a fancy word for “established ceremonies.” The first ordinance is the one we celebrate on the first Sunday of every month—the Lord’s Table. Although the Last Supper is described in 4 different places in Scripture, no record says how often to do it, only that when we do, we are “**to do this in remembrance of**” what Jesus did for us. As a church, we have decided to celebrate Communion once a month. The frequency is up to us, but the ceremony and purpose have been established. It is a memorial service; a time of remembrance.

Does celebrating or not celebrating your birthday affect how old you are? Some of us may wish this were true, but it doesn’t. It is just a reminder of something that happened earlier—for some of us, it happened a long, long time ago. In the same way, celebrating or not celebrating Communion—the Lord’s Table doesn’t affect whether or not one is saved. It is a way of remembering something important that happened a long, long time ago—the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our salvation.

The second ceremony or ordinance is found in [Matthew 28:19](#) where Jesus said, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” This is the 2nd ordinance: baptism. Throughout the years, men and women have come up with a variety of thoughts about baptism, but as people of the Book—God’s Word—we need to ask—not what do people say, but “*What does the Bible say about baptism?*” So, this morning we are going to spend a little time looking at different Bible passages to answer questions about baptism.

II. What does the Bible say about baptism?

A. How is baptism done? First, how is baptism supposed to be done? Christianity didn’t start until after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—until then the only way to God was through the Mosaic Laws. But, although its meaning was different, baptism was already being practiced long before Jesus came on the scene. Whenever a Gentile wanted to become a follower of Jehovah, he was baptized by a Jewish priest. Then John the Baptist or John the baptizer came along, [turn to Mark 1:4-5](#). The word “*baptize*” comes from the Greek word “βαπτίζω”—“baptidzo.” The Greek word “baptidzo” literally means to “dip” or to “immerse.” That’s why John was baptizing in the Jordan River—so that he could immerse those who were repenting and seeking to follow the will of God. In [Acts 8](#), Philip and the eunuch “[went down into the water](#)” so that the eunuch could be immersed—otherwise, why get all wet?

Historically, sprinkling or pouring started during the 2nd & 3rd Centuries AD. Initially, it was done for those who weren’t able to be immersed, like someone who was bed-ridden. But, at about that same time, some early church fathers began teaching that baptism washed away sin. This meant that if someone died without being baptized then he died with his sins unforgiven and thus went to Hell. So, with the high infant mortality rate in the early centuries, the concept of baptizing babies as soon as possible became the trend. Since it isn’t good to push a baby’s head underwater, the idea of sprinkling took hold. The misunderstanding was compounded in the early 1600’s AD when the Bible was being translated into “*the King James Version of the Bible*.” By this time, the Church of England was practicing other methods of baptizing instead of immersion. So that no one would question the church, King James decreed that the translators should make

the Greek word “*baptidzo*” into a new English word and not translate it into “*immerse*” and so the word “*baptize*” was born.

Now, even though they know that the correct meaning of “*baptize*” is “*immerse*,” because it is easier and it is tradition, religious leaders sprinkle or pour instead of immersing. But for people of the Book, baptism is by immersion.

B. Who is baptized? So *according to the Bible* who is supposed to be baptized? Turn to Peter’s first sermon—the one he gave at Pentecost—Acts 2:36-41. Now turn to Acts 8:12-13; Acts 10:44-48; Acts 16:29-33; Acts 18:7-8; Acts 19:1-5. Do you see a pattern? As it says in **Acts 8:12: “Those that believed the Good News of the kingdom of God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ were baptized.”** Even John the Baptist’s disciples, who had been baptized by John before they knew who Jesus was, were baptized again after they believed. So, *according to the Bible*, who is to be baptized? Those who are saved, i.e., believers are baptized. This is why it is often called a “Believer’s Baptism.”

C. Why baptize? According to God’s Word, baptism has nothing to do with one’s salvation—**Eph. 2:8-9** says: “**For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.**” **Rom. 10:9** says: “**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.**” **John 3:36** says, “**Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.**” Even though people want to do something to “earn” their salvation, the Bible says that salvation is by grace, not by works or by doing anything. Salvation is a gift; good works are to be the results of salvation. A person is only saved from an eternity in hell by admitting that he (or she) is a sinner and by making Jesus Christ his/her Lord and Savior. Baptism isn’t even mentioned in these verses about salvation.

As the verses in Acts indicate, i.e., *according to the Bible*, it is after a person was saved—that is, believed that Jesus died and rose again for their sins—that they were immersed in water. But since they are saved already, why baptize at all? As we read in **Matthew 28:19**, Jesus said to do it and, it is modeled

throughout the Book of Acts; being baptized/immersed is an act of obedience—obeying the one who is now the Lord of your life. *Why baptize—Jesus said so.*

D. What does baptism mean? Since one isn't saved by being baptized, what does baptism mean? Just like the Lord's Table or Communion, baptism is a symbol. Turn to Romans 6:3-4. Colossians 2:12 says, “Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.“ Baptism pictures or symbolizes several things: **First**, like the elements of the Lord's Table, baptism is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. **Second**, baptism is a personal testimony to others of one's salvation. As he /she is immersed, he reconfirms that his sins are forgiven. They are buried to be seen no more. As he comes out of the water he is resurrected to live a new life in Christ. **Third**, baptism represents our personal identification with Christ. We are obeying His command. Baptism is a sign of our being identified with Jesus Christ and a new way of life.

Someone has written that baptism is like a wedding ring. We put on a wedding ring as a symbol of our commitment and devotion to our spouse. In the same way, baptism is a picture of devotion and commitment to Christ. A wedding ring reminds us and tells others that we belong to someone special. In the same way, baptism reminds us and others that we are devoted to Christ and belong to Him. He is our Lord!

III. Conclusion

At the Last Supper, Jesus changed the meaning of the Passover meal from being a reminder of the 1st Passover during Moses' time to reminding Christians of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. The baptism or immersion of John the Baptist and the Jewish priests symbolized repentance of sin and turning to God and His will. Jesus Christ changed the meaning of baptism—immersion—into an outward act of identifying with Him through faith. Baptism is a visible, public testimony that those who are baptized belong to Jesus Christ and want to obey Him. The act of immersion symbolizes the death and the burial of the old life and the resurrection to a new life.

Because of its importance, let me say it again: “*Baptism has no part in the work of salvation; baptism is a God-ordained and God-commanded action to follow salvation.*” In Mark 16:16, Jesus said, “**Whoever**

believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” “*Whoever does not believe will be condemned*”—Jesus made it clear that it is “*not believing*,” not the lack of being baptized, that keeps one from being saved. At the same time, He made it clear that salvation and baptism go together.

The Bible says that a person is saved by God’s grace alone working through a person’s faith; it is a gift of God not by any action of the person—this includes the action of being baptized. According to God’s Word, the act of baptism/immersion is His divinely designated sign of a believer’s identification with the Lord Jesus Christ. Being baptized is a divinely commanded act of obedience. The call to become a Christian is not only a call to salvation but is also a call of obedience; obeying the Lord Jesus Christ. As [Romans 10:9](#) emphasizes, Jesus is to be Savior and Lord of one’s life. One commanded act of obedience as a child of God is baptism in His name.

“The Bible and Baptism – Part 2”

In Jesus’ day immersing a person wasn’t something new or strange—John the Baptizer, Jewish priests used it to represent repentance from a way of life. This is why in the New Testament people believed on Jesus and then were immersed on the same day—they knew what baptism was and what it signified to those watching. As we read in [Romans 6](#) and [Colossians 2:12](#), the significance of baptism for Christians is that it symbolizes dying to the old life and rising to a new life in Christ. It is a testimony to others and to the person being baptized about a change that has occurred in his or her heart. Today we don’t rush into baptizing a person, first there needs to be an understanding of what immersion means and doesn’t mean.

Earlier we read what Jesus said in [Mark 16:16](#), “*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned*.” [Romans 10:9](#) says, “*If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*” The Bible makes it clear that it is “*not believing*” that keeps one from being saved. At the same time, it is clear that salvation and baptism go together. This is why in Peter’s first sermon in [Acts 2:38](#), he told those who asked what they should do to “*repent and be baptized.*”

This morning Lily Rageth and Jennifer Bhola want to be obedient to God. They want to testify to each one of you about their faith in Jesus Christ. They believe that Jesus died on the cross for their sins. They each have made Jesus their Savior and Lord. This morning, they want to obey God's command and have a believer's baptism. If you have had a believer's baptism, let this baptism be a reminder to you of what you promised to God, to those who witnessed your baptism, and to yourself.

Several years ago, I ran across a baptismal statement written by Philip Henry, a Presbyterian minister from the 1600's. It summarizes what each person being immersed is saying to God and to you as their witnesses—let me share it with you:

I take God to be my chief end and highest good.

I take God the Son to be my prince and Savior.

I take God the Holy Spirit to be my sanctifier,

teacher, guide, and comforter.

*I take the Word of God to be my rule in all my actions
and the people of God to be my people under all conditions.*

*I hereby dedicate and devote to the Lord all that I am,
all that I have,
and all I can do.*

And this I do deliberately, freely, and forever.

If you have never chosen to be baptized, then consider these words from [2 Peter 3:14](#), “**Make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him**,” I would strongly recommend that you give serious thought to obeying God and being baptized.

Jennifer---Lily-- I have 3 questions for you.

1. *Does baptism save you?*
2. *How do you know you are saved?*
3. *What does baptism mean?*

Then based on your profession of faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and in your choice to obey Him, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.