

The Amazing Beauty of Bible Baptism



Sightseers viewing the foundations of first century private houses, outside Jerusalem's temple compound.

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Hewn into the bedrock of each house is a baptistry.

A guide explained how, when devout Jews arrived home, they would totally immerse in water, themselves and anything purchased for purification. That would even include immersing bed-mats.*

Someone remarked that baptism was immersion, to which another onlooker responded that they don't practise immersion for baptism.

However the word "baptism" is from a Greek word meaning immersion.

Did John the Baptist Simply Adopt Baptism from Jewish culture?

Jewish baptism was immersion in water. But there the similarity ends:

- 1 Jewish baptism in water was a ritual to remove physical contamination, contracted by contact with things outside their home. But neither John nor Jesus' followers baptised people in water to remove physical dirt,² They baptised for "the forgiveness of sins."¹³
- 2 Jews immersed themselves. But, those who believed John the Baptist and after Jesus' resurrection, those who believed in Him did not immerse themselves. They submitted to being immersed.

So what is so wonderfully distinctive about Bible baptism?

Please read on about the amazing beauty of baptism in Jesus' name:-

*[Mark 7:4. "bed-mats" or "tables". Greek κλινη cp. with Mark 9:2-7 & Luke 5:18-25.]

The Amazing Beauty of Scriptural Baptism.

John's Baptism

In those days, Jews flocked to hear that great prophet, John the Baptist. Many were eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and set up His Kingdom. John was telling them His arrival was imminent, so they must repent and be baptised in water.¹

Many obeyed John, acknowledging their sins and deciding to amend their lifestyle. However, unlike Jewish baptism, they did not immerse themselves; they submitted to John to be immersed. Also, it was not for physical purification but for their sins to be forgiven.²

John went where there was "much water" in order to immerse people, because baptism requires "much water". It says that he baptised at "Aenon near Salim because there was much water there."³

Even though Jesus was sinless, baptism was so important to Him that He persuaded John to baptise Him, saying they should do everything that is right. So Jesus allowed John to immerse Him in water.⁴

As John raised Him out of the water, the Holy Spirit alighted like a dove on Jesus and a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved son..."⁵

This convinced John that Jesus was the Messiah. Then John declared Jesus to be "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."⁶

Jesus also persuaded people to repent because the Kingdom of God was imminent and they were also immersed.⁷ They were baptised in anticipation of Jesus becoming king. His kingdom would be an eternal spiritual kingdom, not an earthly kingdom.⁸

Consider with awe, how in those days, numerous Jews repenting and submitting to being immersed in water, for their sins to be forgiven, in preparation for the imminent establishment of the Messiah's kingdom.

Baptism in Jesus' Name

As we know, Jesus was eventually executed, but three days later he rose out of the grave, endowed with all authority in heaven and on earth, as King of kings.⁹ So John's baptism was no longer valid because Jesus was enthroned as king over His kingdom. From that time baptism has to be in Jesus' name, that is, with his authority.¹⁰

For the next few weeks He taught His apostles (i.e. envoys) more about His kingdom. and told them to "go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." Then He returned to heaven. But before leaving them, He commissioned them to "go into all the world and

preach the good news to all the creation.” So this is for everybody in the world. To us this means that those who believe and submit to being immersed into* the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, will be saved. Sadly those who disbelieve will be condemned.¹¹

* [NOTE: “into (Greek εἰς) the name.” The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit have one name. This means that repentant, baptised believers are brought into such a close relationship with the Almighty, that they are “called the children of God.” How amazing this is!]¹²

Soon after, Peter took the first opportunity to declare to Jews assembled in the temple courtyard that Jesus whom they had crucified was risen and is at God’s right hand. Many were smitten to the heart and wanted to know what they should do. Peter told those convicted believers that they should repent and be baptised for their sins to be forgiven and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. He said that this promise was made to everybody who hears the call of the Gospel message. Even Gentile believers were baptised,¹³ first - Cornelius and his neighbours,¹⁴ later - the Philippian jailer.¹⁵ Jew or Gentile, all nations - there was and is no difference.¹⁶

The Lord Jesus added to His church those who believed, repented and were baptised.¹⁷ Thus began His kingdom on earth¹⁸ and His church was established. From then on, numerous people throughout the world have repented of their sins, been baptised in water and been raised to live new lives, devoted to Jesus. They meet together in groups and strive to base their faith and practice on New Testament principles.

Why did they attach so much importance to the immersion in water of repentant believers? Even the apostle Paul was baptised to wash away his sins “calling on the name of the Lord.”¹⁹ Peter says it is because baptism is a good conscience’s appeal to God.² Moreover Paul wrote to the Roman church that baptism is the point at which we become dead to sin being buried with Christ and risen with him to live a new life.²⁰

Valid Baptism

Baptism in water displays the beauty of the Gospel: that the Lord Jesus died for us, was buried, then rose triumphant from the dead, giving us the assurance of eternal life. Other “baptisms” do not do that.

Now consider the wondrous beauty of baptism in water, when a repentant believer, confessing their faith in Jesus before witnesses, is burying their old lifestyle, receiving forgiveness of sins, being buried with Jesus and rising with Him, to begin a new life with Him.^{11,20}

Immersion in water displays, as no alternative ritual does, the death and burial of the old life and the birth into a new life of a repentant

believer, as well as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It is being buried and raised with him.²¹

Maybe you are asking “What is to stop me from being baptised?”

I suggest you read in the Bible from Acts 8:26-39, about an Ethiopian who asked the same question. Then read the passage he was reading, in Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12, about what would happen to Jesus, written some 700 years before He was born.

The significance or validity of baptism does not depend on:

- The standing of the one who does the baptism.
(Though it is wise that it is done by capable baptised believer.)
- Where it is done, whether in a place of worship or elsewhere..
(As long as it is done decently and in an orderly manner.)
- It being dedicated water.
(Though it should be enough water to be immersed in.)
- A special formula of words being used.
(Though it is wise that the witnesses understand what is being done.)

What makes your baptism valid and significant:

- That you repent of your sins, deciding to strive not to sin again.
- That you believe with all your heart that the Jesus who died for you and rose from the dead is the Christ the Son of the living God.
This should be confessed before witnesses.
- That you are lowered under the water and raised from the water.

If you want to know more please contact:-

BIBLE REFERENCES:

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| 1 Matthew 3:1-6 | 8 cp. John 18:33 & 36. | 15 Acts 16:30-34 |
| 2 1.Peter:3:21,22 | Daniel 7:14. Luke 17:20,21. | 16 Genesis 22:18. |
| επερωτημα: request, | 9 Matthew 28:18. Revelation 19:16 | Acts 3:25 |
| appeal. cp. with Acts | 10 cp. Acts 2:38 with 19:1-5 | Galatians 3:26-29 |
| 22:16 & Romans 1:4 | 11 Matthew 28:18-20. Mark 16:15-16. | 17 Acts 2:41-47 |
| 3 John 3:23 | 1.Corinthians 15:1-11. | 18 Colossians1:13. |
| 4 Matthew 3:13-15 | Luke 24:46-47. Acts 1:3, | Revelation 1:9. |
| 5 Matthew 3:16-17 | 12 Matthew 28:19.Exodus 3:14-15 | 1.Corinthians 15:25 |
| 6 John 1:29-36 | 1.John 3:1 | 19 Acts 22:16 |
| 7 Matthew 4:12-17. | 13 Acts 2:36-39, Ephesians 2:12,13, | 20 Romans 6:1-5 |
| Mark 1:14,15. | 2.Thessalonians 2:14 | Colossians 2:12 |
| John 3:22, 4:1-2 | 14 Acts10:33,47-48, 11:14 | 21 John 3:3-5. |
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