

Basic Discipleship

A Course On New Testament Discipleship

Topic #3

New Testament Baptism

Objectives: As a result of the study of this topic we want to be able to:

- 1. Understand the meaning of baptism and its relationship to the Great Commission.**
- 2. Examine the various uses of the term baptism in the New Testament.**
- 3. Analyze those Scriptures that have been used erroneously to teach that baptism contributes to one's salvation.**
- 4. Distinguish between paedobaptism and credobaptism.**
- 5. Discern from the Bible the timing & the mode of baptism is to be practiced.**
- 6. Ask and answer commonly asked questions about the practice of baptism.**
- 7. Memorize a verse of Scripture on baptism.**

Introduction

Very often baptism is described simply in terms of what some church or denomination teaches. You will hear people speak of the "Baptist doctrine" or the "Catholic or Methodist doctrine" or "the doctrine of our church." However, the only thing that matters is what the Bible teaches about baptism. God's people should be baptized because God commanded it, not because some church requires it. They should be baptized a certain way, because that is the way the Bible teaches and it should have a certain meaning, the meaning which God gave to baptism. People need to remember what the Lord says about baptism, and then do what He says, because He said so.

I. What is the meaning of baptism and how does it relate to the Great Commission?

A. Definition of the Greek verb for baptism (βαπτίζω).

- 1. A lexical study of "baptizo" indicates it means, "to dip or to immerse."**
- 2. When used in relation to water, the word is used in first century Greek literature of a sinking ship, of someone sinking in mud, and of a fuller dying a piece of cloth by immersing it into the die.**

3. This study will demonstrate that when the Christian is being immersed in the water, he is proclaiming that Christ died and was buried for him.
4. The action of coming out of the water pictures Christ's resurrection.
5. By symbolism they are saying that they believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as the way of salvation.

B. Baptism is important because it is part of the Great Commission.

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

1. After people were initially converted or became disciples, as new believers they were to be baptized in the name of the Triune God.
2. The order is always the same in the Bible — first believe, and then after conversion, after a person is made a disciple, they are to be baptized.
3. A failure not to offer and encourage new believers to be baptized is a failure to obey a critical dimension of the Great Commission.

II. Does baptism have any part in salvation?

People have often been deceived into believing that they can rely on their good works for salvation. Some trust in their morality, some depend upon confessions to priests, some on their church membership, and still others trust in their baptism to save them. However, the unanimous voice of all Scripture is that people are saved by simple faith in Christ as Lord and not by any works.

A. Baptism does not save or help save a person.

1. Baptism is defined as a work and works do not save a person.
2. Jesus describes baptism as an "**act of righteousness**" (Matthew 3:15), and Christ through His apostles specifically said that such acts of righteousness do not save (Titus 3:5).
3. Salvation is a gift of God, which is not deserved, is not bought, and cannot be paid for (Ephesians 2:8&9).
4. We are plainly told in Scripture that the one who trusts in Christ immediately has eternal life (John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47).

5. Anyone who teaches that baptism saves, or helps to save, is teaching a works righteousness and thus a different gospel (Galatians 1:8&9).

B. Illustrations of people who are saved apart from baptism.

1. The immoral woman — of whom we are told, “**her sins**” were “**many**” was immediately forgiven by her “**faith**” in Christ’s power & promise to forgive and save apart from her being baptized (Luke 7:37-50).

50 And He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace”

2. In Christ’s parable of two men going up to the temple to pray, the tax collector who relied on God’s mercy alone was said to saved by his faith apart from being baptism, (Luke 18:10-14).

14 “I tell you, this man went to his house justified . . .”

3. The thief on the cross simply turned to Christ in faith and without ever having been baptized he was promised that he would, that very day, be with Christ in Paradise (Luke 23:39-43).

43 And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

4. The Philippian jailor was told to simply “believe in the Lord Jesus” and he would be saved & then after He received Jesus his baptism followed his salvation—but did it not save him (Acts 16:22-34).

31 They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . .

C. Baptism is separated from the plan of salvation.

1. We are told in the Bible that the gospel is the power of God to save an individual (Romans 1:16).
2. The Bible defines the gospel—as the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-3).
3. When writing the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul distinctly separated the gospel from water baptism when he said that Jesus did not send him, “**to baptize, but to preach the gospel**” (1 Corinthians 1:17).
4. If baptism were necessary to salvation, then the Apostle Paul would not have made such a statement separating the two.

III. What verses do people use to teach that baptism saves?

To add ANYTHING to the Gospel is to say that Jesus' death on the cross was not sufficient to purchase our salvation. To teach that we must be baptized in order to be saved, is to invalidate the sufficiency of the saving power of Christ's death and resurrection (Galatians 2:21). Any verses that are used to try to prove that baptism saves, must be understood in the broader context of the Bible. Since the Bible never contradicts itself, the diligent student of Scripture will discover there is always a clear explanation for verses people apply to falsely teach that baptism saves.

A. Acts 2:38 does not contradict Ephesians 2:8&9. utilize

38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

1. The term, “**for the forgiveness of sins**” sometimes has been used erroneously to justify water baptism as a means to salvation.
2. However—when one uses the word “**for**” in this passage, much like it is used every day in conversational English, we can easily understand and apply what Peter meant.
3. When we state, “**A man is arrested for stealing**” or that one is “**grateful for a favor**” or that one is “**blamed for carelessness**” or “**commended for bravery**” — how are we using the word — “**for**” in English?
4. Certainly we do not mean, “**one is commended in order to be brave**” but rather that — “**one is commended — because he is brave.**”
5. Even so, the word “**for**” does not mean *in order to secure* the forgiveness of sins and it is not rendered that way—in any translation of the Bible.
6. The Greek word **eis** (εἰς), here translated “**for**” is sometimes translated in the Bible “**against, among, at, upon, unto,**” etc.
7. For instance, in Luke 11:32 we are told that the people of Nineveh repented “**at**” (εἰς), or “**because of**” — the preaching of Jonah.

32 “The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at (εἰς) the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

8. Likewise, we are to be baptized “**for the forgiveness of sins**” meaning, not “**in order to be forgiven**” but rather “**because we are forgiven.**”

9. We are baptized as a public expression of our faith to say that we are unashamed of the death, burial & resurrection of our Lord & Savior.
10. The misuse of the word “for” is an issue only in the English Bible, for when other languages—across the world translate Acts 2:28 it is crystal clear that baptism in no way contributes to our salvation.
11. Interestingly, when the plural and singular aspects of the verbs & nouns are isolated from the Greek translation — it become impossible to say that baptism — is a means to receiving — “the forgiveness of sins.”

38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

12. “Repent” is a second person plural verb whose plural meaning in this context means:

“All of you Jews who are listening need to repent or change your mind what you said about Jesus for you said He was only a man when He the Scripture just preached reveals that in reality the God-Man.”

13. All of you need to “repent for (meaning for the purpose of) the forgiveness of your sins, and you (all) will receive the Spirit.”
14. Then based on — the Greek grammar — Peter adds parenthetically, “And each of you (singular) be baptized” (as a testimony to your faith).
15. Clearly, in this context and in the context of Acts & the rest of the Bible, “forgiveness of sins” is linked to repentance & not to the act of baptism.
16. In mentioning baptism “in the name of Jesus” Peter is not denying the baptismal formula issued by Christ (Matthew 28:19) but emphasizing to these people their need to acknowledge Jesus whom they denied.

B. Mark 16:16 does not make baptism a requirement to be saved.

“He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”

1. Jesus was not teaching that baptism saves you—for then the verse would have read, “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved *and not been baptized* shall be condemned.”
2. Clearly, this was a combined promise of salvation and a warning.

3. Jesus did not say that condemnation belonged to the one who was not baptized but only to the one who does not believe.
4. The Lord never mentions baptism as a basis of condemnation for the simple reason that salvation is based on our faith in Jesus who by His grace — already has paid for our sins.
5. A shallow reading of Mark 16:16 will conclude that lost people must be baptized to be saved — because Christ’s emphasis is on believing which causes this *misinterpretation & misapplication* of this verse to disappear.
6. If a person does not believe in the Lord Jesus then & only then is he condemned — even if he has — been baptized.
7. The Lord Jesus assumed a child of God—would publicly—confess their faith (Matthew 10:32)—which in the first century was done by baptism.
8. Certainly, there are people today who have been saved, but who have never confessed their faith by believer’s baptism—not because they are rebellious but because they do not understand its importance.
9. It is unfortunate that God’s order—to believe and then be baptized has been—totally reversed by some believers—who baptize infants, and then later when they hear the gospel—they ask them to believe.
10. With all this said, it would be *terribly wrong* to minimize the importance of baptism as “**non-essential**” because while baptism is “**non-essential**” to one’s salvation — it is absolutely essential to one’s obedience.
11. Since the Lord Jesus told the true believer to be baptized after he believes — we must do it — because He commands it.

C. 1 Peter 3:21 does not teach that baptism removes sin.

21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

1. The key to understanding this is the phrase “**corresponding to that**” because the word “**corresponding**” is the Greek word “**antitupos**” (ἀντίτυπος) which gives us our English word “**antitype**” a word used in some translations like the KJV, NKJV & the YLT.

21 There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (New Kings James)

2. Baptism, immersion, is an “**antitype**” or a mirror image of an earlier type — namely Noah’s ark in the Flood — a type or a picture or a typological prophecy of the death, burial & resurrection of Jesus.
3. Peter does not say that baptism saves us — but that baptism “**corresponds**” (ESV/HCSB) or “**prefigures**” (NET) in that it pictures or symbolizes an antitype of that which does save us.
4. This is further clarified by the words that follow — “**not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**”
5. Peter is very careful to note that it is not the actual water of baptism that saves us but rather the spiritual reality behind the immersion.
6. Water on the body, or the body placed in water, cannot remove the stain of sin — only the blood of Christ can do that (1 John 1:7–2:2).
7. It is not your baptism that saves you, but appealing to God in faith for new life provided through the death and resurrection of Christ.
8. When a person is baptized or immersed—they picture this great truth.

D. Acts 22:16 does not teach baptism washes away sin.

16 And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.’

1. Knowing that Paul did not receive the gospel from Ananias but directly from Christ — Galatians 1:11-12 tells me that the Apostle Paul had already heard the plan of salvation on the road to Damascus.

11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

2. The phrase, “**wash away your sins**” is not grammatically connected to, “**arise and be baptized**” but to, “**calling on the name of the Lord.**”
3. The actual washing away of Saul’s “**sins**” came the moment he called in faith “**on the name of the Lord**” Jesus Christ — such that his baptism is a symbolic act — which depicts that cleansing.

4. The “**calling on the name of the Lord**” is synonymous — with faith in Christ as taught in Romans 10:13&14 — such that it was Saul’s faith that effected the washing away of his sins — and not his baptism.

5. Capturing this thought, the New Living Translation writes:

16 What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.’

6. In this case, Paul’s calling on Christ’s name (**for salvation**) preceded his water baptism (**in Acts 9:17 that Paul was filled with the Spirit before he was baptized indicating that he was already born again**).

7. In his Expanded Translation of the New Testament, the Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest puts it, “**Having arisen, be baptized and wash away your sins, having previously called upon His Name.**”

8. We are saved by “**calling on the name of the Lord**” by faith (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13) & we give evidence of that faith by being baptized such that it is the “**calling**” & not the baptizing — that effects the cleansing.

9. The agent of spiritual cleansing is faith in Christ & so Paul referred to faith in here in Acts 22:16 as “calling on His name” (cf. Joel 2:32).

10. Paul evidently experienced regeneration on the Damascus road when he believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the promise Messiah predicted in the Old Testament (Acts 22:10; cf. Galatians 1:11-12; Acts 9:17-18).

11. He experienced believer’s baptism in water after he called on the Lord.

12. We know that the Apostle Paul was saved on the Damascus Road, and not at the encounter he had with Ananias for several reasons.

13. First, as noted above, Galatians 1:11-12 tells me the gospel was given to Paul directly by Christ and not later on by Ananias.

14. Second, in verse 10 by the question Paul asks, “**What shall I do Lord?**” it is clear — that he had already submitted — in faith to Christ.

15. Third, for you linguists the Greek aorist participle (epikalesamenos) translated, “**calling on His name**” refers — either to action which is simultaneous with or before that of the main verb & so it means:

**“Having arisen, be baptized and wash away your sins,
having previously called upon His Name.”**

16. Through believer's baptism the Saul of Tarsus gave evidence of his in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus the Messiah.
17. It is the calling/believing & not the baptizing that effects the cleansing.

IV. Who were the subjects of baptism in the Bible?

In the New Testament the only people we ever find that are water baptized are those who have exercised faith in Christ. The Bible is clear that people are to be converted first & then be baptized. Many refer to this as credobaptism/post conversion or believer's baptism because the order is always first believe and then be baptized.

A. Christ taught believer's baptism in the Great Commission.

1. **"Disciples"** or **'converts'** were first to be made or won to Christ & then these disciples were to be baptized and instructed (Matthew 28:18-20).
2. Christ's order is clearly conversion first and then baptism.
3. He also taught that His command and promise applied to the **"the end of the age"** (i.e. His Second Coming), which tells me this was not binding only on first generation believers.
4. Significantly, when Christ told them to go to **"all the nations,"** He did not tell them to circumcise those who became disciples.
5. Instead — they were to baptize them — suggesting a clear break with traditional Judaism and any Old Testament parallels to circumcision.
6. Notice too, that they were baptized **"into the name"** implying both the Triunity of God and an allegiance to the Father, Son & Spirit.

B. The early church always and only baptized new believers.

1. New believers were baptized at Pentecost (Acts 2:38).
2. Philip baptized new converts in Samaria (Acts 8:12,13).
3. The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized at conversion (Acts 8:37-39).
4. The Apostle Paul was baptized after conversion (Acts 9:18).
5. Peter baptized Cornelius at conversion (Acts 10:44-48).
6. Lydia and her household had believer's baptism (Acts 16:13-15).

7. The Philippian jailer and his household all believed & were baptized, and Crispus and his household along with other Corinthians were baptized after they believed (Acts 16:31-34; 18:8).
8. All the examples in the New Testament indicate that believers were baptized right after they believed (e.g. Acts 16:33).

V. Were infants ever baptized in the Bible?

There is not a single verse in the entire New Testament that teaches infant baptism or even suggests that local churches should baptize infants. The first possible record of infant baptism dates to around 197 AD & we know that this practice did not become a widespread practice until the late fifth century. A major motivation in the early centuries for infant baptism was the high infant mortality rate. The average Christian could not search the Scriptures as we can today because it was in the language of the scholar & there were limited copies to study and so Paul's admonition in 1 Timothy 4:13 not to ignore the public reading of Scripture. The Bible is very clear, as we will address later in this course, that little children who die before being able to believe, go home to be with the Lord.

A. Some argue for infant baptism (*pedobaptism*) based on circumcision.

1. Protestants who practice infant baptism reason that just like infants in the nation Israel were circumcised and brought into the believing community, so infant baptism is the counterpart of circumcision, bringing infants into the Christian community.
2. They reason that as the 1st generation of men circumcised were adults & after these infants (Gen. 17:22), but to establish from this Jewish rite a pattern for infant baptism is fraught with many problems.
3. First, baptism is the “**initiatory symbol**” — into a believing community, whereas circumcision brought men & infants into a theocracy, namely, the nation of Israel — which had both believers and unbelievers in it.
4. Second, circumcision was obviously for male infants and for adult men, whereas baptism is for both sexes alike.
5. Third, circumcision was a sign for the nation of Israel only, whereas baptism is for all nation & peoples who have trusted in Jesus Christ.
6. To justify infant baptism on the basis of the old covenant practice of infant circumcision — is to confuse the truth — that Israel and the Church fulfilled different purposes in their respective purposes.

7. Fourth, the equation between the circumcision of male infants under the old covenant & the baptism of born-again believers under the new covenant (*much less of infants*) is never made in the Bible.
8. Clearly, after God had the first generation of Jewish men circumcised, He specifically commanded them to circumcise their infant boys in (Genesis 17:9-12) — but He gave no such command for baptism.

B. Some argue for infant baptism based on the household baptisms.

1. From the four household baptisms in the **Book of Acts** (Acts 10:48; 16:15; 16:33; 18:8) and the one passage in **1 Corinthians** (1:16), it is presumed by some that infants must have been present in each of these homes — thus legitimizing infant baptism.
2. The problem with this position is that inferences should not be taken as dogmas when there are other clear passages that instruct us that faith must first precede baptism (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:37-38; 8:36-37).
3. If faith, is a prerequisite to baptism, since an unaccountable infant is unable to understand the gospel & thus unable to exercise true faith in Christ — they should therefore — not be baptized.
4. While the age of children is never mentioned in any of the so-called “**household baptisms**” — we do learn that with Cornelius’ house, the jailor’s house & Crispus’ house — that all in the households heard and believed the gospel (Acts 10:44-45; 16:32-34; 18:8).
5. If there were any children present — then they were of an age that they could hear with comprehension such that they could believe.
6. To assume from Stephanas’ & Lydia’s households (1 Corinthians 1:17; Acts 16:14-15) — that there must have been infants that were baptized because these passages do not say specifically indicate that every single person in the house believed — is not to exercise sound hermeneutics.

C. Biblically, infant baptism is no substitute for believer’s baptism.

1. In the Bible, we find parents bringing their children to Jesus where He held them, prayed for them & commanded us to welcome them, yet He never baptized them — nor did He command anyone else to baptize them (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17).
2. Baptism is for those who have made a personal decision to trust Christ alone for their salvation & so Cornelius house did not have to become Jewish proselytes or be baptized before being born again (10:44-48).

3. As noted earlier, if baptism is necessary for salvation — for either an infant or for an adult—then why would Paul have said, “**I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius**” (1 Cor. 1:14)?
4. And if baptism is necessary for salvation — for either an infant or for an adult—then why would Paul have said, “**For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void**” (1 Cor. 1:17)?
5. And if baptism is necessary for salvation — for either an infant or for an adult—then how could Paul possibly say, “**I am thankful that I did not baptize**” or “**For Christ did not send me to baptize**” if indeed baptism is a necessary component for a person’s salvation?
6. While some take infant baptism as salvific — those who take it as a covenant between — the parents and God — are still infusing into baptism meaning that cannot clearly be exegeted from the Bible.
7. If you were baptized as a child and it was the intent of your parents that you would one day be a follower of Jesus, you might view your post-conversion baptism as the fulfillment of your parents’ wishes.
8. However, ultimately you need to be baptized, not to please or displease your parents (Matthew 10:34-39), but to obey & please Jesus Christ.