Tenets of the Faith – Week 10

Water Baptism

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Definition:

The Greek word baptidzo literally means to dip or to immerse. In **Romans 6:3-4,** the Apostle Paul puts the matter this way: **Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.** Notice the strength of the expressions baptized into Christ, baptized into His death, and buried with Him in baptism. It is your personal identification with the greatest act of human history—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**Acts 2:38 says repent and be baptized**... meaning that baptism is not required but a physical next step to take after the spiritual step. **Mark 16:6 whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned**. Baptism is stated as a natural next step after the spiritual belief. Water baptism is certainly important; however, the New Testament does not teach that baptism is necessary for salvation.

**Baptism means identification.** In New Testament baptism it involves identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. Being baptized in the name of Christ**. Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.** Peter commanded that his hearers should first repent, then be baptized. Only those who heard the gospel (Good News), understood, and responded to it through faith and repentance, then could be baptized. **Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ**. Every believer should understand and be water baptized. Yet water baptism does not save – but is only for those already saved. The blood of Jesus saves – upon repentance and faith.

In short, water baptism symbolizes/illustrates the life in Christ we now have – where daily, we are dying and buried and risen in new life with Christ. Water baptism is an outward expression of our salvation, which comes by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Being baptized in water, in and of itself, does not save us, but our saving faith is exercised in, and demonstrated by, the act of water baptism. **Hebrews 6:1-2 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.**

• **Outward sign of an inward regeneration by the Holy Spirit.**

Baptism is the outward act that symbolizes the inward phenomenon of coming to and accepting Jesus Christ as real, as God incarnate, as the sacrificial means by which those who believe in him can be forever reconciled to God. The purpose of baptism is to give visual testimony of our commitment to Christ. It is the first step of discipleship.

Acts 8:26-39 And the angel of the Lord spoke unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understands thou what thou read? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaks the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believe with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

Baptism is a testimony of our faith and a public declaration that we believe in Jesus Christ. **The Scriptures tell us that we have eternal life the moment we believe. John 5:24,** and belief always comes before being baptized. We are saved when we believe. The Bible never says that if one is not baptized then he is not saved.

Throughout the Bible we see that at the point of faith a believer possesses all the promises and blessings of salvation (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; 6:47; 20:31; Acts 10:43; 13:39; 16:31). When one believes, he has eternal life, does not come under judgment, and has passed from death into life. John 5:24—all before being baptized.

• **The immersion or dipping of a believer in water symbolizing the complete renewal and**

**change in the believer’s life and testifying to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus**

**Christ as the way of salvation.** The symbolism of baptism is that, just as Christ died and was buried, so the baptized person is submerged in water. And just as Christ rose again from beneath the earth, so the baptized person rises again from the water.

**Matthew 3:16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him.**

**Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**

**Water Baptism is an Outward Sign of Dying and Resurrecting With Christ**

**Romans 6:3-6 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, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.** Water baptism is also a perfect, symbolic act of our old man and old life dying with Christ and our new life resurrecting with Christ.

In water baptism the old man, the body of sin, is going in the water in the same way that Jesus physical body went into the grave after He was crucified. And just as Jesus resurrected on the third day from His death, in the same way the pastor raising us up out of the water represents us being resurrected into a new and better life in Jesus.

**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.** As a result of dying and resurrecting with Jesus, we have now all become new creations in Him. And because of becoming new creations in the Lord, all the old things of our past have now fully passed away. And because of all the old things in our lives having passed away, all things have now become brand new. In other words, we are now being given a brand-new life with a brand-new fresh start.

**Colossians 2:12-14 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. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all your trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.**

**Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.** We are now able to become brand new creations is because we have now put on Christ as a result of being baptized into Jesus through the Holy Spirit. This is a powerful and profound revelation being given to us by our Lord.

Signifying Our New, Inner Union With the Lord

When we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we immediately receive the Holy Spirit on the inside of our human spirits. As a result of receiving the Holy Spirit on the inside of us, we now have a new, direct, spiritual union with both God and Jesus on the inside of our beings since the Holy Spirit is the One who divinely connects us to both God and Jesus in heaven. The reality of all the ways that the Bible pictures our human connectedness to Christ, in which He is indispensable for every good that we enjoy.

These good riches include the following: (What do we have to look forward to)

• being chosen by God and given new life (Ephesians 1:4; 2:4–5, 10)

• justification (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:8–9)

• sanctification: having a new life that obeys God (Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3:16–17; 4:16; 1 Corinthians 1:30; John 15:4–5; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

• a new identity in this life and the next (Romans 14:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 14:13)

• the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter (John 14:16–17; 1 Corinthians 3:16)

• preservation/perseverance in the faith (John 10:27–28; Romans 8:38–39)

• bodily resurrection in the future (Colossians 3:1; 1 Corinthians 15:22)

• glorification in the future (Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

**Saved by Grace through Faith**

Salvation by grace through faith is at the heart of the Christianity**. Ephesians 2:8–9** **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.** The statement has three parts— salvation, grace, and faith—and they are equally important. The three together constitute a basic tenet of Christianity. We are saved by grace through our faith in Jesus – *not* by any type of water baptism. Water baptism is still works at hand. We are not saved by any type of works, but only by grace through our faith in Jesus. Water baptism is still a form of works, and as a result, is not an essential or required part of the salvation.

In Acts 15 and Romans 4 that no external act is necessary for salvation. Salvation is by divine grace through faith alone (Romans 3:22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30; 4:5; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 3:9, etc.). The Bible says we are saved by faith alone. Abraham was saved by faith, and we are saved by faith. Romans 4:1-25; Galatians 3:6-22.

In **1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.**  Paul gives a concise summary of the gospel message he preached. There is no mention of baptism. In **1 Corinthians 1:17, Paul states that Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel,** thus clearly differentiating the gospel from baptism.

If baptism were part of the gospel itself, necessary for salvation, what good would it have done Paul to preach the gospel, but not baptize? No one would have been saved. The penitent woman Luke 7:37-50, the paralytic man Matthew 9:2, the publican Luke 18:13-14, and the thief on the cross Luke 23:39-43 all experienced forgiveness of sins apart from baptism. For that matter, we have no record of the apostles’ being baptized, yet Jesus pronounced them clean of their sins. John 15:3—note that the Word of God, not baptism, is what cleansed them.

Throughout the Bible, in every dispensation, people have been saved without being baptized. Every believer in the Old Testament (e.g., Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon) was saved but not baptized. The thief on the cross was saved but not baptized. Cornelius was saved before he was baptized. Acts 10:44-46.

There are some who believe in what is called baptismal regeneration. Baptismal regeneration is the belief that baptism is necessary for salvation, or, more precisely, that regeneration does not occur until a person is water baptized. Baptismal regeneration is a tenet of numerous Christian denominations but is most strenuously promoted by churches in the Restoration Movement, specifically the Church of Christ and the International Church of Christ. As with any single verse or passage, we discern what it teaches through careful consideration of the language and context of the verse. We also filter it through what we know the Bible teaches elsewhere on the subject. In the case of baptism and salvation, the Bible is clear that **salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, not by works of any kind, including baptism. Ephesians 2:8-9**. So, any interpretation which concludes that baptism, or any other act, is necessary for salvation is a faulty interpretation. **Ephesians 1:7 We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.**

**Romans 10:9 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 to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.** Tells us exactly how we are to receive the gift of salvation – and that is by making a public confession with our mouths that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead by God the Father, and that He came down to our earth in the flesh to die on a cross for all of our sins. In other words, we have to believe in our hearts who Jesus really is, and then be willing to confess out loud with our mouths the basics of our salvation as to who He really is, and exactly what He has personally done for us with His sacrificial death on the cross.

**John 3:3,5 I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.** Water baptism has is not essential part of the actual salvation experience. This third verse says that we have to be born of water and the Holy Spirit. Born of the water in this verse means the Word of God. This is more clear when we compare **John 1:26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there stands one among you, whom ye know not**; the Messiah baptized with the Holy Ghost. **John 1:33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptized with the Holy Ghost.** The word referenced in v5 was Jesus and he is the Word of God. **John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.**

If by chance someone died before they could have been baptized with water, they would still go straight to heaven and have eternal life. **1 Corinthians 15:55-57 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ and by paying our ransom we have been made free from death.** We believe that on the cross, Jesus conquered sin and death. **1 Peter 1:18-20 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers.**  **But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world but was manifest in these last times for you.** When you are being saved through your faith in Jesus, all of your past, present, and future sins are now being fully forgiven. All of your sins are actually washed away by the blood of Jesus.

**There is Only One Baptism**

The first thing you need to know is that there is only one Baptism. **Ephesians 4:4-5 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism.**

**John 1:26-37 I baptize with water, John replied, but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.** John the Baptist is saying that he was baptizing people with water, but that when Jesus would come, He would be baptizing people with the Holy Spirit. What is actually being baptized in this one baptism is our human spirits are being baptized with the Holy Spirit, since the Holy Spirit immediately enters in and takes up residence in our human spirits at the moment of our conversions to the Lord. **Mark 1:8 I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.**

**At What Age Should People Get Baptized?**

Another area of debate among some of the different denominations is at what age should people go through the rite of water baptism. There are no explicit age requirements for baptism in Scripture. Baptism follows belief and repentance, so it is likely meant for those old enough to understand the Gospel. Infant baptism is not explicitly found in the Bible. The New Testament records baptisms only of those old enough to profess faith.

Some denominations like to baptize infants with water shortly after their births. Others will argue that water baptism should only be done when a person is old enough, ready enough, intelligent enough, and mature enough to make a public profession of faith to the Lord.

In other words, when they are ready to make an eternal commitment to accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. **Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 10:48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.**  **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.**

The Great Commission instructs baptism for all nations without age restrictions. Matthew 28:19. Peter called for baptism of the crowd at Pentecost without age limitations. Acts 2:38.

Examples of baptisms in Acts are of adults, but this does not exclude children. No minimum age is specified anywhere for baptism candidates.

**Conclusion on Water Baptism**

This powerful demonstration will signify and symbolize with our Lord:

* To signify our new inner union with the Lord
* To identify with the death and resurrection of Jesus
* To symbolize the death of our old life and old man, the inward regeneration of the Holy

Spirit, and the resurrection into a brand-new life with the Lord