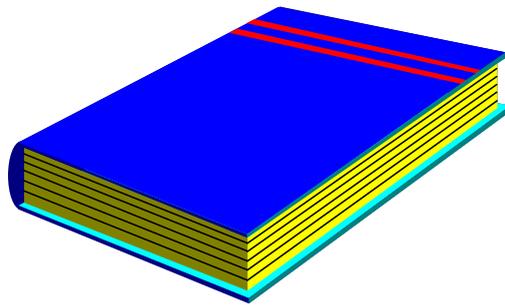


THEWORD

BIBLE TRAINING COURSE FOR LEADERS



FIRM FOUNDATIONS COURSE

PARTSEVEN

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

“I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11)

Repent and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)

The object of this study is

TO DISCOVER AND PROVE:-

That baptism is a spiritual seal of an inward reality that has already taken place in the life of a believer.

On completion of this study you will have:-

- Discovered the meaning of Baptism
 - Looked at the Biblical principles of Baptism
 - Understood who should be baptised
 - Proved that Baptism is for believers only
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NOTES

There are four practical aspects to these courses; exercises, Bible reading, learning and questions. The following notes are for your guidance:-

1. **Exercises** are to be written in your own words and returned to the Course Administrator through whom this course was given to you or returned to the address below.
2. **Bible reading** is to be done at the point of the course where you are asked to read. Do not just read the passage but meditate upon it before continuing.
3. **Learning.** These are usually short passages of the Bible for you to learn so that you are able to speak them without reference to the Bible.
4. **Questions** are listed at the end of each study and are to be answered when you are satisfied that you have completed the study. Your answers can be sent back to your Course Administrator or e-mailed or posted to the address below.

Once you have completed the work you can e-mail it to stangain@btinternet.com for assessment. On successful completion of the whole course a certificate will be sent to you.

If you were given this course by your Course Administrator then return your work only to him. If this course came to you direct from London then please post your work to:-

Stan Gain
The Word Bible Training Course
285 Montrose Avenue
Welling
Kent DA16 2QU
ENGLAND

The Meaning of the “Word Baptise”

To fully understand the practice of baptism it is important to know the meaning of the word. A wrong understanding of the word has led to a wrong practice of Baptism in the greater part of the church.

The word “baptise” is not an English or Swahili or French word but a Greek word that has been added directly into our languages without translation. The reason for this is linked to English History. The practice of the church was to sprinkle water on the heads of initiates into the church. The meaning of the Greek word **BAPTO** “is to dip”. This translation would have caused many problems for the Church and the translators and so they kept the Greek word without translation. Therefore the church could continue with the practice of sprinkling without being challenged by the true meaning of the word.

The challenge of the word **BAPTO** has such a clear meaning that to translate it clearly would have challenged the church with its practice of infant baptism and challenged its teaching that it is baptism that is the way of salvation. This is against the teaching of the bible which clearly shows that it is only through faith in Jesus Christ that we are saved and that baptism follows an acknowledged faith IN HIM.

The Practice of Baptism

Why would there have been so much upset? Because the Greek word **BAPTO** has a very plain meaning. This meaning can be very plainly seen when we look at the same word when used in the Bible in other contexts. (It is always a safe practice to interpret the Bible with the Bible.)

Read the following three stories and you will see that there is something that all three passages show in connection with this study:-

Luke 16:19-31 John 13: 21-30 Revelation 19:11-16

There is one word that is found in each passage, the Greek word **BAPTO** translated into each passage as “**DIP**”. Let us look closely:-

- In Luke 16:24 the rich man asked that Lazarus should “baptise” (dip) his finger into cool water
- In John 13: 26 Jesus said it is the one to whom he will give the bread after he has “baptised” (dipped) it into the dish.
- In Revelation 19:13 Jesus is wearing a robe that is “baptised” (dipped) in blood.

In all these examples something has been dipped into liquid and taken out again. There is no possibility that it could be translated as sprinkle or pouring out. It would appear from these interpretations of the Greek word **BAPTO** has a clear meaning:

Learn - Baptism is to dip a person into water and lift them out again.

Had the early translators made an accurate translation of the word **BAPTO**, they would have written for example in Acts 2:38 when Peter responds to the question of the crowd “What shall we do?”

“Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be **dipped** in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”

The clear meaning of Baptism then is that something is submerged in water and then removed again. This is the meaning of the word Baptise and this should be the practice of the church. There is no authority in The Bible for the sprinkling of unbelievers and children and giving them the false hope that they are Christian. Many people have been sent to hell because they have been denied the opportunity of salvation since they are under a false understanding that the practice of baptism makes them a Christian.

Learn In talking about salvation and the name of Jesus, Peter says:-

“There is salvation in no other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12

Exercise 1. Write in your own words your understanding about the meaning of the Greek word BAPTO. From your understanding how does this affect your understanding of the practice of baptism as it should be in the Church today?

Four different types of Baptism in the New Testament

Our foundation verses for this Foundation Course are Hebrews 6:1-2. If we look at this verse we read:-

“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundations of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instructions about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement.”

Notice what the writer says. In talking about baptism he does not use a singular word but a plural. Included in the ‘elementary teachings and foundations’ we read that there are baptisms and not just one baptism. This does not mean that we should be baptised in water more than once but that there are many different types of baptism. In fact from the Bible we find four. These can be found in the following passages:-

Read and Study the following four passages which each indicate a different type of baptism:-

1. Mark 4:1-8
2. Luke 12:49-53
3. Matthew 28:16-20
4. Acts 1:4-5

- 1) **Mark 4:1-8** This is the Baptism preached and practised by John the Baptist. This was a Baptism in water and is directly connected to the act and experience of repentance.
- 2) **Luke 12:49-53** This is a Baptism that can be referred to as a Baptism of suffering. When Jesus says “I have a Baptism to be baptised with and how distressed I am until it is accomplished” He is not talking about water baptism. (This He has already received.) Jesus is plainly talking about a physical and spiritual surrender to the appointed will of God on the Cross as the Lamb of God. He was to carry the sin, guilt, sickness and suffering of the world in his own body on the cross(1 Peter 2:24). The baptism of suffering is for all who would follow Jesus in total surrender.
- 3) **Matthew 28:16-20** In this passage is revealed what we now today call Christian Baptism - this is again in water. Jesus said in verse 19 Jesus said, “Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The feature that makes this Baptism different from that of John is that now it is given all authority in heaven and on earth.
- 4) **Acts 4:1-5** This Baptism is the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. In this passage Jesus clearly separates this from water Baptism. “John baptised in water, but you shall be baptised in the Holy Spirit in not many days from now.” Clearly this is a separate baptism

NOTE: In this study we are looking at the actual meaning of words used. Although many translations talk about baptism ‘with’ water and baptism ‘with’ the Holy Spirit I believe that as we understand the truth it will change our thinking. As we change our thinking it will change the words that we use. From the meaning of the word BAPTO it is clear that it is necessary to dip something into something else. Therefore with this understanding it is good to use the expressions “Baptism IN water” and “Baptism IN the Holy Spirit” These words express the understanding of being dipped into or fully immersed into. “Baptism IN water” is an immersion into water of one man by another. “Baptism IN the Holy Spirit” is an immersion by Jesus into the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

This series of studies is about Christian Foundations. The subject of suffering has a place in a deeper series of studies and we will not deal with it in this course. Similarly the Baptism in the Holy Spirit will be dealt with in detail when we look in our later studies into the Person and doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

(FOR YOUR OWN REFLECTION AND NOT FOR SUBMISSION TO YOUR COURSE ADMINISTRATOR.)
Reflect on your current understanding of Baptism in Suffering as a physical and spiritual surrender to the appointed will of God. Is your life fully surrendered to God? What areas are not submitted? Are you willing to share in the sufferings of Christ. (See Philippians 3:10). If not seek the counsel of a trusted brother and ask him to pray with you.

Let us now look at the difference between John's Baptism and Christian Baptism.

The Baptism of John the Baptist

Read Acts 19:1-5. This is the best definition found in Scripture of John's Baptism.

At first, Paul took these people to be disciples but they were only disciples of John the Baptist. They had heard John's message of repentance and accepted the form of Baptism that went with it, but it would appear that they had not responded to the direct message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. After Paul had explained this to them they were baptised again in the Name of the Lord Jesus.

This shows that there is a clear difference between the Baptism of John and Christian Baptism. Those that had received John's baptism were required to be baptised again. John's Baptism was for a limited period of time and served the purpose of preparing the hearts of the people of Israel for the coming of their long awaited messiah, Jesus Christ.

In fulfilling this purpose, John's ministry was for a short period only. Those who were willing to meet the requirements of his message of repentance and the confession of sins were baptised as a public testimony of their repentance.

In Matthew 3:7-8 we see that John wanted to see that there was 'fruit of repentance' before he would baptise them:-

“When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his Baptism, he said to them “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.”

This is consistent with our understanding that Baptism follows the outward change. That is repentance first - baptism second. Not baptism as a means of repentance. This is the misunderstanding of those who insist on the baptism of infants.

Learn the following statement:-

The act of Baptism is an outward sealing that gives assurance of an inward change that has already taken place.

This is an important principle of interpretation that should be applied when looking at Christian Baptism and Baptism in the Holy Spirit. It was therefore those who met the conditions of who were baptised. The changes had already taken place. Baptism did not bring about those changes.

Exercise 2. Before going on with this study, write out in your own words exactly what you understand Christian Baptism to be. Do not read on in this study until you have finished this exercise. What are the conditions that need to be met before a Church leader should agree to baptise a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Christian Baptism

It is obvious that John's Baptism is not complete and therefore another Baptism is needed. If this were not so then Paul would not have baptised the disciples at Ephesus again. They had received a Baptism of repentance from John but that was not what was required. It is the Baptism which Paul gave to those disciples that we know today as Christian baptism. This has replaced the Baptism of John. The passage which shows the establishing of Christian baptism is found in the following study passage.

Study Matthew 3:13-17 very carefully.

We have already seen that John's baptism was one of Repentance. John was looking for the fruit of repentance before he would baptise the Pharisees and Sadducees. Unless he was sure that there was an inner change - an inner reality - he would not baptise them.

Now he has a new problem. Let us look at this problem step by step.....

- a) He recognised Jesus as the 'Lamb of God' without sin
- b) He knew that Jesus had no need for his Baptism of repentance
- c) Jesus had not sinned and therefore had no need of repentance
- d) Therefore as there was no need of an inner reality of repentance there was no need of an outward expression of Baptism
- e) John knew that there was an inner reality in Jesus but it was not of repentance
- f) **This inner reality was Righteousness**
- g) John recognised this when he said "I have need to be baptised by you."
- h) Jesus said to John "You are right! My inner reality is righteousness. Therefore baptise me to fulfil that righteousness."
- i) Therefore the Baptism of Jesus was not a Baptism of repentance but a **Baptism of Righteousness**

CONCLUSION: The disciples of John repented and were baptised as an outward sign of the inner reality of repentance. Therefore John's Baptism was a Baptism of repentance.

Jesus was baptised as an outward sign of an inner reality of righteousness. Therefore the Baptism of Jesus is a Baptism of Righteousness.

Jesus was baptised to fulfil all righteousness. In this He was setting a pattern of Baptism that He wanted his disciples to follow. What did He mean when He said “to fulfil all righteousness”?

Because he was without sin he had an inner condition of heart that was righteous. By allowing himself to be baptised he demonstrated the inner reality of righteousness by an outward act of obedience. Just as there needed to be an inner attitude of repentance for the baptism of John so there is need for an inner condition of righteousness before Christian Baptism can be entered into.

Christians are not baptised because they have confessed and repented of their sin. This would mean that they are receiving the Baptism of John. They have passed beyond this and have come into something much fuller and greater than was ever possible for the disciples of John.

Exercise 3. This is a tough exercise and will require more than just a quick read. Before starting this study ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your heart for understanding. Read Romans Chapters 3, 5, 6 and 8. The purpose is to understand that we are justified (justified means to be declared righteous in God’s sight). If we are justified we are righteous in God’s sight. If we are righteous in God’s sight then we have an inner reality of righteousness and are able to receive Christian Baptism. For this exercise, having studied the above chapters of Romans’ **write out every verse that shows us that God has declared us righteous and free from the penalty of sin. What other verses do you know from the Old testament**

True Christians have done more than confess and repent. This was the position of the disciples of John. They have also come to put their trust and faith in the atoning death and sacrifice and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ who has made them righteous by faith. The righteousness of Jesus Christ has been given to them - has been credited to them by God on the basis of faith.

When a Christian is baptised, he is following Jesus Christ in obedience, not because of confession and repentance, but because of righteousness. In Christian Baptism they are following the example of Jesus and are fulfilling righteousness.

This is why Paul could not accept the Baptism of John for all those who desired to be true disciples of Jesus. He desired that they should be baptised again to fulfil righteousness.

Who Should be Baptised?

There would appear to be three steps that are necessary for a person to have taken to be certain to be in a position to receive Christian Baptism. These are all linked with the elementary actions of becoming a Christian and setting out on the Christian life.

Exercise 4. Read the following three passages and from them write down the three steps that they indicate are necessary elementary actions of the new Christian.

1. Acts 2:36-39
2. Mark 16:14-18
3. Matthew 28:16-20

STEP 1: As we have seen already in this study - Baptism is for those who **REPENT** and confess their sins. Acts 2:38. 'Repent and be baptised'

STEP 2: Christian Baptism is for those who **BELIEVE** in the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark 16:16 'Believe and be baptised'

STEP 3: Baptism is for **DISCIPLES**. It is for those who having repented and believed and decide to be a fully devoted followers of Jesus. Matthew 28:19 'Make disciples and baptise them' Baptism is often the first step of discipleship.

Should we Baptise Infants?

If we take the three steps mentioned above then it can be seen very clearly that infants cannot qualify for Baptism. By the very nature of an infant it cannot repent; it cannot believe and it cannot become a disciple.

It is sometimes suggested that there are examples in the New Testament where whole families are baptised and it is said by some that it is probable that infants were included in the Baptism. Let us look at two such examples:-

Read Acts Chapter 10 and Acts 11:1-18 - The Story of Cornelius
Acts 16: 16-34 - The story of the Philippian Jailer

In the first story we are told that Peter was preaching the gospel when the Holy Spirit fell upon those who heard the Word. This suggests that all those present were capable of hearing the Word. As we read the Cornelius account we discover:-

- a) all of them were God-fearing
- b) all of them heard Peter's message
- c) all of them received the Holy Spirit
- d) all of them spoke with other tongues
- e) all of them were saved

In fact all of them were capable of fulfilling the necessary conditions to be baptised. This would not be so if there were infants present.

Exercise 5. Having read the story of the Philippian jailer above, compare the story with that of Cornelius and write down what similarities you see between the two stories.

IMPORTANT NOTE Many parents rightly want their children to be presented to God and to hold a thanksgiving to Him for their children. In Luke 2:22-24 we see that when Jesus was only eight days old he was taken to the temple by his parents to be presented to God. Until a child is old enough to understand these things for himself it is sufficient for his parents to present him to God in a service of dedication. At this time a child is placed into the care and trust of Jesus until he is old enough to make a decision for himself. This is the biblical model and will satisfy parents who wish to honour God with their children.

What About Teaching About Baptism?

Whilst it is important that people have an understanding about the purpose and principles of Baptism it is not necessary to have a deep theological knowledge before being baptised. In some churches great long sessions of teaching and ‘catechism’ are required. Of course it is essential for some teaching but how much teaching is required?

In Acts chapter 2, on the Day of Pentecost there were three thousand people added to the number of the church. We read that they were baptised on the same day as they believed. From being unbelieving Jews to becoming believers and being baptised could have only taken a few hours. There could not have been a long period of time for instruction.

Read the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts chapter 8.

He was at the beginning a non-believer and had no training in the things of God. He did not understand what he was reading in the book of Isaiah. Philip preached the gospel to him and as they passed some water he was baptised. From ignorance of the gospel to baptised believer on the same day. No great time for in depth teaching. We have already seen in the stories of Cornelius and the Philippian jailer that they believed and were baptised on the same day.

There is therefore in the New Testament, clear evidence that shortly after people believed they were baptised. First they heard and accepted the gospel, then they were baptised and then the process of serious discipleship began.

“And they (the baptised believers) devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teaching, and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

IMPORTANT NOTE It is important that new believers understand what is the purpose of Baptism but it is equally important that they are baptised soon after their conversion. It is not necessary for them to understand everything about the Christian life first. This will come as they take this first step of discipleship and continue to follow Jesus.

The Spiritual Significance of Baptism

To complete this study it is necessary to look at the spiritual purpose of baptism.

Exercise 6. Study carefully Romans 6:1-14. Now, before moving on in this study write in your own words what this passage teaches you about Baptism.

Through faith, as we accept Jesus Christ and His new life we enter into newness of life. It can now be said that we are dead to sin. It no longer has a hold over us. It is possible for us to live according to the Spirit and not to the flesh. We are to count ourselves as dead to sin.

Therefore, if we are to count ourselves dead to sin (Romans 6:11, and if we died with Christ (Romans 6:8) and if we have been crucified with Him (Galatians 2:20), then it is necessary to bury the body!

Paul writes that our identity with Christ in into His death is deepened in Baptism. We are buried with Christ in Baptism for the purpose of being raised up with him in His resurrection as we come back up out of the water. This enables us to live a new life free from the power and the bondage of sin.

We don't need to keep going back to God to confess the same old sins week after week. This is the practice in so many churches that do not baptise according to the Bible because they do not have the symbolic identification of being buried with Christ and being raised up with Him. No inward transformation is experienced or expected. This is further lost when Baptism is denied to those who have been superstitiously sprinkled as infants.

- Baptism is the burial service of the old nature - dead to sin
- Baptism is the resurrection of the new man - alive to God

Colossians 2:12 also underlines these truths: "having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God."

These passages of study give us three additional important facts about Baptism:-

- 1) Although water is used we are baptised into Christ himself and not into any particular church or sect.
- 2) The benefits of Baptism come from our personal faith. It is faith in the working of God. Without this faith the process of Baptism is of no effect,
- 3) The believer, in being raised up from the grave with Jesus does not do this in his own strength but by the power of God - who raised Jesus by that same power

Therefore, the believer who is baptised is identifying with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and is committing himself to a life lived in obedience and dependence on Him through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Questions - Part 7

1. What do you understand by the Greek word BAPTO?
2. Do we receive salvation when we are baptised?
3. Where in the Bible can you find examples of people who were baptised by sprinkling of water on the head?
4. What are the four different Baptisms that are found in the New Testament?
5. For what purpose was the baptism of John?
6. What was the inner reality that John was looking for before he would baptise?
7. Did the Baptism of John bring salvation?
8. What reply did Jesus give to John the Baptist that enabled him to baptise Jesus?
9. What is the inner reality that is present when a Christian is baptised?
10. Who should be baptised?
11. Is it right to baptise those who are too young to understand?
12. What three steps are usually taken that lead to baptism?
13. How is a man justified?
14. If I am baptised will I become a Christian?
15. If infants are too young to be baptised, what can Christian parents do to present their children to Jesus in faith?
16. How soon after conversion should a new Christian be baptised?
17. If we died with Christ then how do we bury the body?
18. Although we are baptised in water, into which person are we also baptised?
19. Are we baptised into a local church or denomination?
20. In which names are we commanded to be baptised?

Remember: When you return the answers to these questions please return the answers to the 4 Exercises that are included in this study.

Write your name here.....