

Application for Water Baptism

Why Water Baptism

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In looking at the many interesting stories in the Bible concerning persons who prepared their hearts for heaven, we note that the thief on the cross (Luke 23:43) had no church home, did not pay tithes, did not have a life of prayer or testimony, and was not baptized. We read that in his dying moments this thief was saved by acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus and by asking the Lord Jesus to have mercy on him.

Through the years many have accepted Christ during the last days of their earthly lives and have had no opportunity to be baptized in water. What then is the point of baptism, and why is it commanded in the Bible?

Let us note a few basic truths first. After a careful reading of scripture we are assured that water baptism will not save anyone, for "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11)

We learn also that water baptism is only for believers, not unbelievers; for in the Word the people were told to repent of their sins before they were baptized (Acts 2:38).

Furthermore, water baptism is not for infants, for no scripture passage can be found where an infant or a young child was baptized. In every instance it was implied that the candidates understood their relationship to God and comprehended the significance of what they were doing. In Acts 8:12 it is specifically stated that men and women (not infants) were baptized during the revival in Samaria.

Through the years a number of Christians have come to me and said, "Pastor, I was baptized when I was a child, but it had no spiritual significance to me. I was baptized because others in my church were being baptized. Should I be baptized over again?"

My answer invariably has been, "Every act of obedience to the commands of Christ should be meaningful to you.

If your water baptism seemed light and frivolous or of no spiritual significance, and if you are now wanting to follow the Lord in a sincere manner, you should do it over."

The letter to the church at Ephesus, recorded in Revelation 2, rebuked them for having left their first love and told them to repent and do the first works. That meant to lay a fresh foundation of obedience to God.

Water is not a cleansing agent for sin. Waters of baptism will not solve the sin problem in the heart any more than the water on Pilate's hands could wash away his guilt (Matthew 27:24).

A careful look at John the Baptist's ministry shows that he used baptism to call attention to the holiness of the kingdom of God.

Knowing that the King's arrival was imminent, he declared, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). He baptized the believers unto repentance.

John's cry to the people was, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:8). To the publicans he cried, "Exact no more than that which is appointed to you." To the soldiers he declared, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." In whatever field of labour he found his candidates, he required of them a change of life to holy living.

Again, John used baptism to introduce the Messiah. He said, referring to the Christ, "I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water" (John 1:31)

To the individual Christian, baptism symbolizes a death to the old life of sin and a resurrection to newness of life. In burial a body is placed into an element in which it cannot live, usually the earth. In baptism the candidate is placed for a moment under water, an element in which he cannot live. His coming up out of that element symbolizes a resurrection.

We read in Matthew 3:16, "Jesus went up straightaway out of the water." In John 3:23 it states, "And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there" enough to symbolize burial.

Jesus spoke of baptism as an act of righteousness (Matthew 3:13 - 15). He had no sin himself; therefore He did not need to repent, and He had no "old life" to bury; but He wanted John to baptize Him because "thus it cometh us to fulfill all righteousness." He set an example that we should follow.

In 1 Peter 3:21 baptism is spoken of as "the answer of a good conscience toward God."

Perhaps the best illustration of this is the story of the Ethiopian recorded in Acts 8:26 – 39. Upon hearing the gospel from the lips of Philip, he was anxious to obey the Lord in every way possible. Coming to a pool of water in the desert, the Ethiopian said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?"

The evangelist asked him if he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart. Hearing a positive testimony of acceptance of Christ, he went down with him into the pool and baptized the Ethiopian.

The man wanted a good conscience by obeying the commands of the Lord quickly – so quickly, in fact, that he did not wait until he got home.

Baptism is a recognition of the Holy Trinity. The Jews were great believers in God the Father, and in the Holy Ghost (for their writings of the Old Testament were permeated with stories of the power of the Spirit working miracles through the prophets), but they rejected Jesus as the Son of God. Consequently when they became Christians, they were baptized simply "in the name of Jesus," for He was the One they had refused to recognize.

But the Gentiles of the world, to whom Jesus referred as "all nations" in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20) knew nothing about the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost.

In Ephesians 2:12 they are spoken of as "aliens of the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers

from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” Therefore, in their baptism Jesus commanded that they be baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” a recognition of the three members of the Godhead.

The Bible holds out to us many beautiful areas of character development. We are taught the joys of tithing and giving, the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of sanctification, the blessings of the gifts of the Spirit, the winsomeness of the fruit of the Spirit. None of these is ever set forth as being optional to the believer. Nothing that God sets forth as being essential and useful for our spiritual growth is unimportant.

It is wrong for any believer to say, “I can take it or leave it.” The same is true of water baptism.

When you obey the commands of the Lord, you are walking in the light; but if you refuse to walk in the light, it will become darkness to you (Luke 11:35)

God asks for humility and meekness in many areas of our lives. We must bend to His will in all things. Only thus can the Holy Spirit develop the lovely nature of Christ within us, and that is the goal of His dealings with us. The ugliness of the old nature, unbent and unburied, cannot be taken into God’s heaven. Only a new nature produced by the new birth and developed by obedience to God’s will can bring us into that beautiful fellowship which He wants to enjoy with us.

Matthew 28:19 “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 6:3-5 “Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus 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. If we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection.”

Colossians 2:12 “For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ.”

Do you agree with the following? If yes, please sign below.

1. I have accepted Jesus Christ as my savior and I believe that I am born again by the power of God.
2. I desire to be obedient to the command of Jesus to be baptized in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Matthew 28:19**
3. I believe that immersion is the Biblical method of baptism as the ordinance represents burial and resurrection with our Lord Jesus Christ. **Romans 6:3-5**
4. I understand that being baptized does not obligate me to become a member of Kingston Gospel Temple but rather that it is a public confession of my faith in Jesus Christ.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian consent (if applicant is under 16): _____

