

BAPTISM CLASS NOTES - EXAMPLE

INTRODUCTION

According to the Bible, baptism is an important event in a person's life.

It is a significant declaration that those being baptised are making it publicly known that they are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are coming out in the open with their faith.

Many churches practice infant baptism where the baby is taken to a baptismal font, we prefer to dedicate babies to God and allow people to choose for themselves when they want to get baptised.

WHAT THEN IS BAPTISM?

- The origin of the word means 'to plunge, to immerse'. It involves the process of immersion, submersion and emergence. The Greek philosopher, Plato, used the word to describe being 'overwhelmed'.
- The biblical pattern for baptism is descending into, being submerged in and emerging from the water, as opposed to 'sprinkling'.

WHO IS BAPTISM FOR?

The obvious answer is that baptism is for those who have given their lives to Christ and have begun to follow him. There are three things that the Bible teaches in this context:

• Belief comes before baptism.

In Acts. 2:38 it says...

'And Peter said to them, repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'

Here in this passage repentance and faith in Christ are needed before baptism.

In this context, therefore, it is difficult to see how newly born babies can be baptised. In the story of Philip and the eunuch it is recorded that '... as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptised?" And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptised him.' (Acts.8:35-39)

It is then for those who have already believed in Jesus.

• Jesus Himself was baptised, thus paving the way for us to follow.

A lot of people ask why it was necessary for Jesus to be baptised. When Jesus consented to being baptised, it was in order that he would fully identify with us. Jesus felt that it was important, and so, if he felt it important then so should we. John the apostle later wrote, 'whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.' (1.Jn.2:6)

• It is a command of Jesus.

We read at the end of Matthew's gospel that Jesus told the disciples, '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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' (Matt.28:18-20) This was an express command from the Master himself, and so, in this context, baptism is an act of obedience for a disciple of Christ.

Talk through being baptised then ask the group if they are happy to share their testimony / personal journey

WHAT DOES BAPTISM SIGNIFY?

• **The 'death' of our old way of life.** Paul the apostle wrote, 'That's what baptism into the life of Jesus means. When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus; when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus. Each of us is raised into a light-filled world by our Father so that we can see where we're going in our new grace-sovereign country.' (Romans 6:3-5 MSG)

• **It is a public testimony.** Baptism is your public recognition of you turning away from

your old ways and progressing forward with God.

- **It is a cleansing bath.** 'And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.' (Acts 22:16)
- **It leads to the expectation of 'new life' in Christ.** We rise into a newness of life. The act of obedience releases us into a new level of living with Christ.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT?

After he was baptised, Jesus experience three things.

- **Anointing.** The Spirit of God descended on him in the form of a dove. He was anointed for service.
- **Affirming.** There came the Father's voice out of heaven, affirming him.
- **Testing.** He was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, who tried everything to make Him doubt who he was, and to try to distract Him. You are making a major step forward, the level of challenge that may come your way can never be ignored or underestimated.

As we take this step of obedience, understanding what it means, expect God to meet with you in anointing you, affirming you, and putting to the test all that he has said to you. OBEDIENCE GETS GODS ATTENTION

CONCLUSION

This is an exciting event. It's a moment to testify of all that God has done and your commitment to Him and to show others the difference that he has made to your life. As you stand and make that statement, there is power that can change the lives of others.

PRACTICAL DETAILS

Bring a change of clothing! Don't forget the towel too! Make sure what you wear is suitable and come dressed in the clothes that you are going to get wet, and go into the pool barefoot.

FINALLY...

Spend time preparing your heart. It is a serious thing that you are doing. You are coming out in the open with your faith. It is a major step forward in your walk with the Lord. Think about unconverted friends and relatives who may be attending the service, and be in prayer for them. Baptismal services are powerful visual aids to the power of the gospel.

PICK A PRAYER PARTNER - ASK SOMEONE TO JOURNEY THROUGH THESE NEXT FEW WEEKS WITH YOU, COMMITTING TO PRAY FOR YOU EACH DAY

EXAMPLE ORDER OF SERVICE

Your name will come up on the screen, and then your 'testimony' will appear. You will then descend into the pool, and cross your chest with your arms. Your baptismal text will then appear on the screen. This is a text that we will give to you.

You will be asked the question, 'Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that He died for your sins?' to which you will answer 'yes' or 'I do'.

The people baptising you will then say to you 'upon confession of your faith, we now baptise you in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.' They will then take hold of your arms, and your back, and gently lean you back into the water until you are totally submerged, and then immediately bring you back up again.

At that point, do not try to help us bring you up. The downward pull is stronger than the upward pull, and if you do attempt to 'help', we'll all be swimming in the pool! The baptisers are strong, and the water itself will 'throw you' back up.

You will then be helped up out of the pool to where someone will be waiting with your towel. Some folks go straight away to dry themselves and change into their dry clothes, others may want to linger a little to watch a spouse of a friend go through the waters.