

## **Baptism:**

The ordinance of baptism is firmly rooted in historical Christianity. Difficulties and differences regarding baptism seldom focus on the importance of the ordinance for the believer in Christ, but rather they usually revolve around questions of the significance and the mode of baptism. The following discussion will help you understand what we believe regarding baptism and why.

### **What is the purpose of baptism?**

Baptism is a means by which one publicly identifies himself with the message of the baptizer. Jesus was baptized by John (Matthew 3:13-17) in order to identify with the message of John as the forerunner of the Messiah. Jesus later stressed the vital importance of baptism for those who would believe in Him when He commissioned His followers to baptize all those who became Christians. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". Matthew 28:19

### **What does baptism symbolize?**

Baptism in water signifies the spiritual union with Christ which takes place when one repents and believes in Him. This internal, spiritual baptism is described in Romans 6:3-7. "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin."

When we believe in Christ, we are spiritually united with Christ and His redeeming work on our behalf: His death, burial and resurrection. Paul pictured our sinful self, under eternal condemnation, as being put to death with Christ on the cross, buried in the tomb with Him, and our new self, clothed with the righteousness of Christ, being raised from the tomb with Him. Baptism in water then, is an outward, symbolic, act of obedience in which the one who believes in Christ outwardly and publicly affirms his identification with the message of Christ and the inward transaction of spirit baptism that has already taken place in his heart.

### **Who should be baptized?**

All Christians are admonished to be baptized. Baptism is far more than a ritual or religious exercise. It is intended to be an essential part of the spiritual foundation of all new Christians. Jesus stressed its importance when He said: "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved." Mark 16:16 Peter,

fulfilling Christ's command, preached: "Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." Acts 2:38. Peter also commanded it: "And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ ..." Acts 10:48

### **Is it necessary for you to be baptized in order to be a Christian?**

No! The biblical reason for being baptized is to publicly testify to your belief in Christ. The Bible says: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9. The work of baptism is not a prerequisite for spiritual birth. Repentance and faith are the universal conditions for spiritual birth. Paul said to the Philippian jailer "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved ..." Acts 16:31. Numerous other passages present belief in Christ as the sole criteria for salvation. However, baptism is presented as the initial expression of that salvation, so closely tied in some passages that they are considered in conjunction with each other (e.g., Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

### **How important is being baptized? If it is not required for salvation, is it really necessary?**

In the passages above which associate believing and being baptized, following Christ in baptism is the rudimentary obedience of the new believer, and it is simply assumed. If you repent of your rejection of Christ, the next logical step is to publicly identify your acceptance of Him. Baptism, the apostles asserted, is the appropriate response to repentance and belief in Him. "And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commands." 1 John 2:3.

### **When should you be baptized?**

Immediately after you: Repent - turn away from sin to follow Jesus. Believe - completely trust in Christ's death and resurrection for your salvation. "And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?' And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.'" Acts 8:36-37. There is a pattern of immediacy about baptism in Scripture. No instance is recorded in which baptism does not immediately follow spiritual birth.

### **If you were baptized as a baby, is that enough?**

No. Baptism is an ordinance intended for those who repent of their sins and believe in Christ. Obviously, a little baby cannot make a commitment to repent and believe. Baptism must follow your spiritual birth in order to have the meaning which Christ intended.

### **Should infants be baptized?**

No. Infant baptism is not explicitly taught in Scripture. Those who practice infant baptism suggest that baptism under the New Covenant took the place of

circumcision under the Old Covenant. Jewish boys were circumcised as infants; therefore, infants are likewise introduced into the community of faith through infant baptism.

The practice, however, lacks for clear biblical support. There are no commands or instructions regarding infant baptism in the New Testament, nor are there instances of an infant being baptized (although some would appeal to passages in which entire households were baptized, e.g. Acts 15:15). In contrast, the New Testament both commands baptism for those who have believed in Christ and offers many examples of belief followed by baptism.

### **Should a child be baptized?**

A child who is mature enough to repent and believe in Christ can and should be water baptized.

### **How should you be baptized?**

Jesus told His disciples to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Matthew 28:19. In the Book of Acts Christians were water baptized in: "the name of Jesus Christ" Acts 2:38; "the name of the Lord Jesus" Acts 8:16; "the name of the Jesus Christ" Acts 10:48; "the name of the Lord Jesus" Acts 19:5.

Being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, is an essential part of our baptism. As in an earthly marriage, when a bride takes the name of the groom, so also Christians are baptized in the name of their heavenly bridegroom in water baptism.

### **What is the biblical mode of baptism, immersion or sprinkling?**

Although many churches practice sprinkling, we believe that the biblical mode of baptism is immersion for the following reasons: First, the word baptism is the transliteration of the Greek word baptizo, which means to dip, immerse, or submerge. This term is used in the New Testament to relate the idea of immersion; the "baptism" of Israel under the cloud and the sea (1 Corinthians 10:2), and the description of Jesus' death as a baptism (Mark 10:38). The root word for baptizo is bapto which means to dip in John 13:26, Luke 16:24, and Revelation 19:13. Second, Scripture pictures baptism as being administered in the water: "And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there..." Matthew 3:16 "... and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water..." Acts 8:38-39.

Immersion alone can adequately symbolize the act for which it represents: the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Just as Christ was laid in the belly of the earth in death and was raised to life, so by immersion the believer signifies the death of his old self, and by being lifted from the water, his resurrection to new life. (Romans 6:3-5)

## **Can anyone baptize another?**

Although Scripture does not restrict baptism to the context of the local church (e.g. Matthew 28:19, Acts 8:36), it is clear that baptism signifies one's identification with the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), of which the local church is representative. Therefore, the common practice is for the leadership of a local Church to baptize new believers in Christ.

Baptism within a local church allows the new believer to publicly express his identification with Christ to the members of his new spiritual family.

## **What is the difference between water baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit?**

### *Water Baptism:*

In obedience to Christ's command a new Christian is immersed in water in the name of the Lord. He is thus separated from his old sinful life and makes a commitment to serve Jesus. The baptism signifies the old man going into the water and the "new creation" coming out of the water. It is a testimony to others of your faith in and obedience to Christ.

### *Baptism in the Holy Spirit:*

Every Christian from the moment he believes in Christ is baptized by the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13 reveals: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."

Christians do not need to seek baptism by the Spirit subsequent to salvation. Rather they need to seek to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), in other words, yielding himself to the control of the Spirit so that he can manifest the fruits of the Spirit. Each Christian has all the Spirit, but he must seek to let the Spirit have all of him.

## **If I was baptized, and then later discovered I was not a Christian and subsequently believed in Christ, should I be baptized again?**

Yes. Spiritual birth must precede water baptism. Many people, for example, have looked back on childhood experiences with a great deal of skepticism about whether they were born spiritually then or at a later time. If you are unsure, you should search out the matter with the Lord and determine before Him whether your spiritual birth preceded your baptism.

### **Summary**

- Baptism signifies publicly the believer's identification with Christ.
- All Christians should be baptized.
- Although we are not saved by being baptized, God nevertheless commands us to do so.
- Someone may be baptized after he has repented and believed in Jesus.

- Baptism should be an immediate response of obedience when a person believes in Christ.
- Children who have made a commitment to Christ should be baptized.
- A believer should be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- Immersion is the scriptural mode of baptism and the only mode practiced at Cornerstone. (If you were baptized after placing your faith in Christ for salvation but baptized by a mode other than immersion, any of our teaching pastors or other elders will be glad to visit with you to discuss your individual circumstances.)

### **Conclusion**

Baptism was instituted by God to be an essential foundation of a Christian's new life in Christ. If you have not been baptized you need to follow Christ in the obedience of baptism. "And now why do you delay? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." Acts 22:16