

Baptism: the Disciples' Testimony



"Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 2:38

A HEART GIVEN OVER TO CHRIST JESUS

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TITLE: **BAPTISM: THE DISCIPLES' TESTIMONY**

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CONTENTS

Preface	3
Introduction	4
Model and Teacher	9
Death and Life	13
Created and Clothed	18
Identification and Testimony	22
Growth and Fellowship	26
Instructed and Commanded	31
Commissioned and Proclaimed	36
Conclusion	40
Application	41
Meditation	41
Memorization	41
Prayer	42
Discipleship Reflections	43
Discipleship / Leadership Booklets	47
Project L.A.M.B.S. International	48

BAPTISM: THE DISCIPLES' TESTIMONY

PREFACE

Welcome to the discipleship / leadership series. These little booklets were designed to give basic information concerning various topics about our Christian faith in Christ Jesus.

The purpose of this series is to stimulate thought and to foster a clearer understanding of discipleship and servant leadership. These booklets can be used as a discussion tool for personal study, family devotion, youth meetings or in cell groups. Our hope is that this information will stir the readers and encourage them to go deeper into personal research and study.

Our desire is that these booklets will be a blessing to the reader and a tool that can be shared with others as a gift of encouragement.

Please feel free to mail or e-mail us for more copies or to just write to us with any feedback concerning the content of these studies. We hope you enjoy this offering of knowledge and experience. We pray that Christ will draw you into an ever deeper personal relationship with Himself as you study.

Your servants in Christ,

Rev. Dr. James and Hkaw Win Humphries

BAPTISM: THE DISCIPLES' TESTIMONY

*"Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be **baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Acts 2:38

Introduction

The Bible tells us that if we are entrusted with little things and are found trustworthy, God will give us greater things to handle. More responsibility is given to us as we mature. Baptism is one of these growing steps to maturity. This is why Christians that are not baptized really don't have a vibrant growing spiritual life. They have not been obedient to the small areas in their Christian walk. Again, it is important to remember that this is not a testimony that these people have arrived and are now are mature in the things of God. It is only a testimony of a commitment they have made to Jesus Christ to die to self and live for Christ.

The next step after believing and repentance is making a public identification with Christ and commitment to follow Him. Baptism is only a beginner's step in the Christian walk to obedience and maturity. If you are not faithful in little things you cannot be trusted with greater things. Many times the little things, or steps, can be the hardest to take.

FOCUS AND TARGET FOR TEACHER & STUDENTS

TEACHER: As the teacher of this course it is important that one teaches, this discipleship concept as a step. Baptism is the beginning of a process of commitment and testimony. It follows very closely after confession of sin and invitation of Christ as Lord and Saviour into one's life. It is symbolic in picturing Christ's death and

BAPTISM: THE DISCIPLES' TESTIMONY

resurrection.

STUDENT: The student will understand the implication of why the disciple of Christ is commanded to be baptized. It is not salvation or redemption in itself but a testimony of a changed heart, a picture of Christ's death and resurrection. It is a beginning step of walking with Christ as one's personal Saviour and Lord.

DEFINITION AND SYNONYMS

Understanding the meaning of words is the heart to understanding Scripture. Words are the bridge that can help us to understand more about ourselves and about God and His word the Bible. Please take time to meditate and reflect on the broad and narrow view of each word as defined, along with its synonyms.

Baptism: Greek word – "Baptismos", to dip in water completely, idea of "bath" or "wash", to be totally covered over. Synonyms: initiation, introduction, inauguration, launch, beginning, rite of passage.

Emersion: the process or state of emerging from or being out of water after being submerged, to plunge. Synonyms: bathe, douse, soak, marinate, drench, submerge, flood.

SCRIPTURE

For this chapter, study this portion of Scripture. It is the key to a good biblical foundation and it is the next step to help you as a disciple to mature in Christ. Please look up and read it in its entirety. Take into account the author who wrote it, who it was written to and the context in which it relates to the other verses and chapters around it.

"Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be

BAPTISM: THE DISCIPLES' TESTIMONY

baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 2:38

STUDY

It would be appropriate at this time to explain what baptism means. The word baptism here is a translation of the Greek word which means immerse or put under. Baptism is an act that symbolizes or indicates the acceptance of a teacher and his message and a decision to fellowship with other disciples. The word “baptism” can also mean “disciple-identification” and “fellowship.” It also gives testimony to others of our commitment to Christ; that we have died to self and now live for Him. Peter tells the people to first repent and then be baptized because through Christ they have the remission of sins. Also, it opens the door to receiving the Holy Spirit into one's life who will teach, guide and comfort us.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

The Bible is full of examples showing how God speaks to His people concerning the importance of water baptism. Take time to look up and reflect on how God can speak to us through these people. Just as He used them He desires to use us as His vessels for service.

The Ethiopian Eunuch: On a journey back from a pilgrimage from Jerusalem (while riding in his chariot), the Eunuch was reading the scroll of Isaiah. God brought Philip to speak to him about Christ. The Eunuch asked Philip to explain to him what he was reading. He then believed and repented and desired to be baptized. They stopped at some water and there he was baptized. Afterward, he continued on his journey rejoicing in the Lord (Acts 8:26-39).

Paul: Saul (Paul) was a Pharisee who went out and

BAPTISM: THE DISCIPLES' TESTIMONY

persecuted the church, imprisoning all the believers he could find. But one day he encountered Christ Jesus on the road. He fell to the ground, God blinded Him and spoke about what he was doing against Christ and His followers. At the same time, God was preparing another person named Ananaius to speak to Saul. Saul repented, received the Holy Spirit, was healed of his blindness and immediately got baptized (Acts 9:1-19).

Cornelius Centurion: He was an army commander, a Gentile devoted to God; but he did not know about Jesus Christ. He was committed to praying and giving to the needy. God sent Peter to go and speak to him and to tell him about Christ. While Peter was testifying the Holy Spirit came upon all of those who were listening. That day those new believers went out and were all baptized (Acts 10:47-48).

Lydia, Seller of Purple: While on his travels, Paul stopped in at Philippi and met a group of ladies down by the river. One lady was Lydia (a seller of purple cloth) from Thyatira. They opened their hearts and responded to Paul's message. They immediately wanted to be baptized, including her household. They persuaded Paul to stay longer to teach and be with them (Acts 16:15).

Jailor: This man was put in charge of guarding Paul and Silas because they had set a slave girl free from an evil spirit. While in jail, a violent earthquake took place. All the doors opened and people's chains fell off. The jailor was in a panic and called out to Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?" The jailor then took them to his house. After hearing the word of God, he and his family repented and were baptized (Acts 16:33).

These are people with normal lives. God revealed

BAPTISM: THE DISCIPLES' TESTIMONY

Himself in a variety of ways, calling ordinary people to do extraordinary things for His glory. Baptism was the beginning step that allowed the power of God to flow through their lives, in order to touch and encourage others both in their present time and for generations to come.

OBJECT LESSON

Seed: A grain of seed after being planted in the ground must die to its original state and become broken open before it can produce fruit.

Baptism demonstrates that we to are going down into the waters of death so we can come up in the newness of Christ Jesus. Baptism creates a picture of a change that has now taken place. Our lives now reflect that we are Christ's disciples. We have died to self and are now broken to grow in the newness of Christ.

Transition:

Baptism can be broken down into at least seven areas that can help the disciple understand the importance in following through with this commitment.

MODEL AND TEACHER

In Matthew 3:13-17 we have the baptism of our Lord Jesus. Matthew explains that one day Christ came to John the Baptist seeking to be baptized by him. John felt that he was not worthy of such an honour. But after Jesus gives an explanation why he should, John baptizes Him. When Jesus is baptized we hear the Father speak from heaven about how Jesus is His beloved Son and at the same time the Holy Spirit comes upon Christ in the form of a dove.

DEFINITION AND SYNONYMS

Model: a system or thing used as an example to follow or imitate. Synonyms: type, version, style; mould, template, framework, pattern, design, guide, blueprint, paradigm; sample, example.

Teacher: one who instructs another; one who communicate information through speaking or actions. Synonyms: educator, tutor, instructor, schoolteacher, schoolmaster, schoolmistress, master, governess, coach, trainer; lecturer, professor, fellow, reader, academic; guide, mentor, counsellor.

KEY SCRIPTURE

*Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be **baptized** by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be **baptized** by You, and do You come to me?" But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. After being **baptized**, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God*

BAPTISM: THE DISCIPLES' TESTIMONY

descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

Matthew 3:13-17

CONTEXT

- The ministry of John the Baptist.
- John challenges people to produce fruit in keeping with repentance.
- He tells all who hear that he baptizes with water but another will come who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.
- He warns the people that the "day of judgment" is coming. God is ready to put in the winnowing fork to separate the wheat from the chaff.

INSIGHTS

Baptism by immersion is a step all believers must do. Jesus models it for the disciples and taught on its importance for all believers. It was part of the plan of God in the Old Testament. God was going to use baptism to symbolize the work that Christ was going to do in our lives if we would confess our sin and submit to His Lordship. It would no longer be our will but His will for our lives.

God's plan was to first send John as a forerunner for Christ. He would be the last of the Old Testament prophets who would speak about Jesus' coming. He spoke how he baptized people with water but Christ would baptize people with the Holy Spirit and fire. John's ministry was in the wilderness. His dress and food were simple but his message was of the weighty matters of repentance and baptism. This is what eventually cost him his life – he stood for truth and righteousness. John struggled with Jesus' request to baptize Him but John remained

BAPTISM: THE DISCIPLES' TESTIMONY

faithful to his call by God.

Once Jesus was baptized we are told that He was driven out into the wilderness where He was tempted by the enemy three times. Victory can sometimes be followed by great challenges and valleys. This shows our faithfulness and commitment to Him.

All that Jesus did was to become a picture and model that we as disciple are to follow. We learn from His life so that we can call others to discipleship through the waters of baptism. It is something that we should be teaching those that desire to give their lives to Christ.

RELEVANCE

As Christ has become a personal example to us we also need to become a testimony and example to others; baptism's roots are discipleship identification. It shows that we have surrendered all to Jesus. It tells that we have died to self and are alive in Christ through His resurrection power. John taught it. Jesus modelled it. Now we are to go out and proclaim it to a lost world. We all have to be obedient in this step if we are to remain true and faithful to everything that Christ calls us to do.

REFLECTION

When should people be baptized? Was I baptized on confession of my faith in Christ or some other reason?

RELATED SCRIPTURES FOR THE LESSON

*In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was **baptized** by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into*

BAPTISM: THE DISCIPLES' TESTIMONY

the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him. Mark 1: 9-13

*Now when all the people were **baptized**, Jesus was also **baptized**, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." Luke 3: 21-22*

*For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow **in His steps**... 1 Peter 2:21*

RELATED RESEARCH FOR THE LESSON

Different methods of Baptizing

Different kinds of Baptisms