BAPTISM
The Patterns of Church Life

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS OF BAPTISM

A. The Word Baptism - baptizō (βαπτίζω)/baptō (βάπτω)
   1. Noun form: to immerse or to submerge; Verbal form: to dip, to dip into, or to dip into to dye.
   2. In the early Greek culture, the word baptizo was the word used in the textile industry when dying a piece of fabric. The fabric would be immersed or plunged into the liquid dye.
   3. There are other Greek words for sprinkling or pouring, but they are never used in the New Testament to refer to the act of baptism.
   4. “John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there...” (John 3:23)

B. The Jewish Practice of Baptism: The System of Proselyte Induction
   1. Background
      a) The Jewish culture was already accustomed to baptism. Gentiles who wanted to convert to Judaism had to follow certain prescribed rituals to become “Jewish”, one of which was to take a ritual bath (in Greek bapto which means immerse).
      b) This ritual was done by the person himself, not by someone else, and it symbolized dying to the old Gentile life and being raised to a new life as a Jew.
   2. Milah
      a) The act of circumcision
      b) All Gentile men desiring to be a part of God’s people had to be circumcised regardless of age
      c) Significance: the Gentile admitted his root sinfulness and demonstrated that they realized that they were sinful at the level of their very nature
   3. Tebilah
      a) Immersion into water
      b) Significance: the willingness to die to the Gentile world and live a new life
   4. Corban
      a) Gentile would offer an animal sacrifice
      b) The blood of that animal would be sprinkled on the convert
      c) Significance: cleansing from sin
II. THE NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE ON BAPTISM

A. The Baptism Ministry of John the Baptist

1. Luke 3:3, 6 – “And he went into the entire region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins...and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins” (Mark 1:4-5 [adds: “for the forgiveness of sins”]; Acts 13:24).

2. Luke 7:29-30 – “When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.”

3. Luke 3:16 – “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Acts 11:16)

4. John 1:31 – “I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.”

5. Acts 18:25 – “Though he knew only the baptism of John.”

6. Acts 19:3-5 – “And he said, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ They said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ And Paul said, ‘John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.’ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

7. Main Thoughts: The purpose of John’s baptism was very unique.

   a) The first reason that he baptized was repentance and the demonstration of the need of forgiveness of sins.

   b) The second reason was to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

   c) The kingdom was near because the Messiah was near. By being baptized with John’s baptism, they identified with the message of repentance as preparation for the coming of the kingdom.
B. The Perspective of Jesus on Baptism

1. Matthew 3:13-17 – "Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’"

2. Luke 3:23 – “So Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years old...”

3. Mark 10:38 – “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”

4. Luke 12:50 – “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!”

5. Matthew 28:18-20 – “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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.’”

6. John 3:22-23, 4:1-2 – “After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized...Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), he left Judea and departed again for Galilee.”

7. **Main Thoughts:** It seems that Jesus was baptized for three reasons:

   a) To fulfill all righteousness (a prelude to his death, burial, and resurrection). He did not get baptized because He needed to repent of anything because He was God and was the perfect man.

   b) The reception of the Spirit

   c) The beginning of his ministry. He demonstrated its importance in his practice of it during his earthly ministry and his command to continue it in the Great Commission.
C. The Perspective of the Early Church on Baptism

1. Acts 1:5 – “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now...”

2. Acts 2:38, 41 – “Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for (because of) the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit... So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”

   - The word “for” could be translated “because of” as in the case of “wanted for bank robbery.” That doesn’t mean the person is wanted for the purpose of bank robbery, it means he is wanted because he has already committed a bank robbery. (see also Matt. 12:41)

3. Acts 8:12, 36, 38 – “But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women... and as they were going on the way, they came upon a certain water, and the eunuch said, ‘Lo, water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?’... and he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they both went down to the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.”

4. Acts 10:44-48 – “While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, ‘Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.”

5. Acts 9:18 – “And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized...”

6. Acts 16:15, 33 – “And after she was baptized, and her household as well...and he was baptized at once, he and all his family...”

7. Acts 18:8 – “And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.”

8. Acts 22:16 – “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name”

9. Main Thoughts: The early church, through the work of the apostles, continued the important work of baptism, stressing its importance in every conversion.
   
a) They learned experientially of its importance in God’s giving of His Spirit associated with that act.

b) There is not one record of an unbaptized believer found anywhere in the N.T.

c) To be baptized in the name of Jesus on this day in Jerusalem was to say you were serious about being committed to the One who was recently murdered. No half hearted converts would have been baptized. The price was too high and the decision too serious. They demonstrated their belief in its essential nature in the making of a disciple.

d) Baptism is not for salvation; it is because of salvation.
D. The Perspective of Paul on Baptism

1. Romans 6:3-4 - “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

2. 1 Corinthians 12:13 - “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

3. Galatians 3:27 - “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

4. Ephesians 4:4-12 – “There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call--one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, 'When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.' In saying, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...”

5. Colossians 2:11-12 – “In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.”

6. Main Thoughts:
   a) The purpose of baptism is to publicly identify with Christ.
   b) It is the heart of the person to make an invisible reality (ones immersion into Christ) visible (baptism).
   c) Baptism is a public identification with the people of God. When an individual identifies himself with Jesus Christ, he is also identifying himself with Christ’s people.
   d) Water Baptism and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit: The baptism of the Holy Spirit is something that happens invisibly only once at the moment of salvation, and is non-experiential. The connection between water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit is that water baptism pictures outwardly what the Spirit already accomplished inwardly in the heart (1 Cor. 12:13; cf. Rom. 6:3-4; Eph. 4:5).
BAPTISM

Definition: Baptism is an initial public act of entrance for a believer that demonstrates the invisible reality of being joined with Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4), and being joined with His body—the church (1 Cor. 12:13).

A Proper Perspective of Baptism

- Baptism is a symbolic picture of the believer dying to their old self and becoming a new creature in Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). This is something that has already taken place internally in the believer, and water immersion beautifully symbolizes this change in the believer’s life (cf. Mk. 1:9-10; Acts 8:38-39). It is a visible demonstration of an invisible inward reality.

Who Should be Baptized?

- Only those who repent (turn from) and believe (faith in, allegiance to) are to be baptized (cf. Acts 2:41; 8:35-38; 18:8; 19:4-5). There is no such thing as an unbaptized Christian in the New Testament.
- Babies and Unsaved Children are not to be Baptized: The offer to children to be disciples of Jesus and be baptized has the same condition as it does for adults: repent and believe. To do otherwise is to go contrary to the Bible’s teaching and to possibly give a false sense of security to those baptized as infants.

Why Should One be Baptized?

- Baptism is commanded by Jesus Christ Himself (cf. Matt. 28:19).

What Does Baptism Represent?

- Baptism is a public identification with Jesus Christ:
  - It is a public act of declaration that this baptized individual has come by faith to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Baptism makes an invisible reality (ones immersion into Christ) visible through immersion in water (baptism) (Rom. 6:3-4).
- Baptism is a public identification with the people of God:
  - When an individual identifies himself with Jesus Christ, he is also identifying himself with Christ’s people. The inclusion of God’s people into Christ is essential to our understanding of baptism (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4-12).

Is Water Baptism a Requirement for Salvation?

- Baptism is not a condition for salvation; it is the initial act of obedience for those saved.
- Faith is Christ alone for salvation is what saves a person (Eph. 2:8-9; 1 Jn. 5:13). A good example of this is the thief on the cross (cf. Lk. 23:42-43). The thief simply believed in Christ. There wasn’t time or opportunity for him to be baptized to publicly declare his faith.