Baptism

There is a lot of confusion among people today about water baptism. Some people tell us that unless a person is baptized, he or she is not a genuine Christian, while other Christian traditions don't even practice baptism. Some churches baptize infants; others only baptize adults. Some baptize by sprinkling or pouring water, while others demand full immersion. This pamphlet is designed to help you sort through the confusion, so you can make an educated decision about water baptism.

What is the Meaning of Baptism?

The Greek word translated "baptize" in our English Bibles is bapto or, in some cases, baptizo. These words simply mean "to dip" or "to wash." Water baptism is an external symbol of the internal washing and renewal that takes place when a person trusts in Jesus Christ. For example the biblical writer Paul wrote, "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 1:3). This is an inner reality that comes through faith in Christ.

Baptism is also symbolic of a person's union with Jesus Christ. Paul also wrote, "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" (Romans 6:3-4). Baptism, then, is a public confession of our new life in Christ and an outer sign of our obedience to Him.

Who Should Be Baptized?

When the Christian Church was born almost 2000 years ago, the people who heard Peter's first sermon asked, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37), to which Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ..." (v. 38). Weeks later the same thing happened after an evangelist named Philip shared the good news with the people living in Samaria: "When they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). These verses indicate that people who were baptized had first repented of sin and believed in Jesus. One must, therefore, be a believer in Jesus Christ in order to be eligible for baptism. Nowhere in the Bible do we see infants baptized.

Why Be Baptized?

There are three important reasons for a Christian to be baptized. The first is to follow Christ's example. A Christian is a "follower of Christ," and Jesus Christ was baptized (see Mark 1:9-11). Jesus Christ also commanded us to be baptized. He told his followers, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). The last reason is because this was the practice of the early Christian Church. While Paul was a missionary in the city of Corinth, "many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). Therefore, our reason for being baptized is to express our love for Jesus and our obedience to His Word.

When Should We Be Baptized?

Perhaps the most detailed account of baptism is found in Acts chapter 8, where Philip led an Ethiopian eunuch to faith in Christ: "Then Philip... told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?'... Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him" (8:35-38). There is no reason to delay. As soon as a person puts his or her faith in Jesus Christ, that person should be baptized.

To participate in our next Baptism service, call the church office at 981-4848 or check the appropriate box on your "Keep in Touch" card during one of our weekend worship services.