

Why Were You Baptized? (Reason #1)

I was about six years old when I first asked my dad, a preacher, to baptize me. We were 'down at the creek' with several other family members and I had found a deep pool suitable for dunking. When I asked, Dad said something like, "You know, this doesn't count."

"I just want to see what it's like," I quipped.

With that, dad 'baptized' me. And he was right; it meant nothing and I went off splashing and playing like any other six-year-old.

Did you know that the reason a person is baptized is important?

Baptism is clearly taught in the New Testament, but baptismal practices differ among various denominations; so also the reasons for baptism.

My creek 'baptism' at age six had no purpose, at least no purpose related to Christianity. For that reason, it had no value other than to satisfy my personal curiosity, and that is all it did.

So, let me ask: "Why were you baptized?"

Over the years I have heard different reasons for baptism. I do not wish to offend anyone, but I do want to see how those different reasons hold up to biblical teaching and examples.

Reason #1: Jesus was baptized, and he is our example.

It is true. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River just before he began preaching. But do you know why?

John had been baptizing, telling people to repent because the kingdom of God was coming. He protested when Jesus requested baptism. So, Jesus told him the purpose of His baptism:

Permit *it* at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.

—Matthew 3:15

John the Baptist agreed to baptize Jesus and later said something more about his purpose:

"I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God." —John 1:33–34

God had told John the Baptist that he would recognize the Messiah when the Holy Spirit visibly descended on Him. After John had baptized Jesus, he was then able to introduce Him to the world as the Messiah (Christ) and Son of God.

So, the Scriptures reveal two reasons for the baptism of Jesus:

1. So that Jesus and John could together fulfill all righteousness.
2. So that John would be able to identify the Messiah and introduce Him to the world.

There is no instruction in the New Testament for anyone to be baptized in order to 'fulfill all righteous' or to be identified as the Son of God. Clearly, the baptism of Jesus was unique!

If you were baptized to merely follow the example of Jesus, that was noble, but what was the expected result or benefit? (Why not also fast for forty days, like Jesus?) If you were baptized for a reason other than what Jesus and the apostles taught, it may have had no more benefit to you than a six-year-old's playful creek baptism.

Go back to the Bible to find out *why* the early believers in Jesus were baptized. Your intent in being baptized makes all the difference...

(Reason #2, next week)