



What is Baptism and what does it do?

Discuss – Why should Christians be Baptised?

What is Baptism all about, why is it important?

What happened at your own Baptism and how did you feel?

In the New Testament baptism was part of the conversion experience this act was given to us by Jesus and has been carried out in the church of Jesus Christ for 2000 years. However there has been much disagreement in how this act established by Jesus should be carried out. Two different ideas have dominated Christian thinking.

Believers Baptism:-

Believers baptism is the idea that someone has to have come to the age where they can both Repent of their sin and claim Jesus for their own, through faith. A number of different evidences are given for this type of Baptism:-

Jesus made it clear that we were to, “go into all the world and preach the gospel. **THOSE WHO BELIEVE** we were to Baptise in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit.”

As someone once said God has no grandchildren. You cannot inherit salvation through the faith of your parents. Giving your life to Jesus has to be the personal act of the individual.

The whole teaching of the New Testament is one of the individual being personally responsible to come into a relationship with God through Jesus. As a result of this the New Testament is full of examples of adults being baptised but none of babies. Infant baptism is not found in the New Testament.

These are a number of occasions where families are mentioned in regard to being baptised, but there is no evidence that there were babies or small infants involved.

Infant Baptism:-

The main focus of this agreement is that God’s universal grace and love can be manifested to an individual before they have turned to Christ. Particularly if their parents are Christians. In this idea there is a sense that God has made a new covenant with mankind and just like the Jews brought their children into the covenant people through circumcision, so we as Christians can bring children into the covenant of Jesus through baptism. There was the idea that if a baby did not get baptised and died in it’s infancy then because of original sin it would go to hell.

Discuss – what are the strengths and arguments for each idea of baptism?

Do you think we should allow this argument to divide the church as it has?

Three ways that the church has baptised:-

Sprinkling – Usually on the forehead.

Effusion – pouring water onto the head and hands

Total Immersion.

Many people argue that both in symbolism (I.e buried with Christ – raise with Christ) and the practice of the early church, that full immersion is closest to the biblical ideal. Immersion was the original practice of the church right up to the middle ages.

So why be baptised:-

- 1) Example of Christ. We read in the New Testament that Jesus was perfect in every way and therefore did not need to be baptised. However we see that he submitted Himself to baptism. There are two main reasons why people believe Jesus was baptised. A) to set His people a clear example to follow. B) to identify himself with humanity and its sin.
- 2) Jesus commanded us to be baptised (read Matthew Ch 28 v 18 – 20) Jesus made it clear that if we truly love him then we will do what he says. He has commanded us to be baptised so we should do it. If Jesus is really Lord of our lives we will be prepared to submit our independent feelings to God and do what he asks.
- 3) The evidence of the early church is clear that there was no such thing as a unbaptised Christian. The Witness of the New Testament shows us that there was no such thing as a unbaptised believer. All believers in the new testament were baptised.

Discuss – why do you think some Christians don’t get baptised or put it off?

How do you think Jesus feels about that?

What happens at baptism?

Cleansing from Sin

Encounter with God / filling of the Holy Spirit

United with Christ in his death and resurrection

Initiated into the Church.

Some Bible Passages to look up

Acts 22 v 16 – Titus Ch 3 v 5

Ephesians Ch5 v 25 – 26

Rm 14 v 17

Galations 3 v 27, Acts Ch 8 v 26 – 40

Acts Ch 9 v 1 – 19

Acts Ch 16 v 11 – 15

Romans Ch6 v 3 – 4