

Baptism and the Believer's Salvation Walk

A Comprehensive Bible Study Lesson

Theme: Baptism as God's ordained response of faith, obedience, identification, and discipleship.

Primary Texts: Matthew 3:13-17, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:38-41, Romans 6:1-11

Lesson Goal: To understand what the Bible teaches about baptism, why Jesus commanded it, how the apostles practiced it, and how it relates to the believer's salvation walk.

Opening Question

Ask the class:

"If baptism was not important, why was Jesus baptized, why did He command it, and why did every apostle practice it?"

Many believers have questions:

- Is baptism necessary?
- Does baptism save?
- Why should believers be baptized?
- What is the purpose of baptism?

The Scriptures provide clear answers.

Part 1: Jesus Set the Example

Reading: Matthew 3:13-17

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him."

Observation

Jesus was sinless.

Hebrews 4:15

"...yet without sin."

Since baptism was associated with repentance, John was confused as to why Jesus wanted baptism.

Matthew 3:14

"I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?"

Jesus answered:

Matthew 3:15

"For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

Discussion

Jesus did not need cleansing.

Jesus submitted to baptism because:

- He fulfilled righteousness.
- He identified with mankind.
- He inaugurated His ministry.
- He modeled obedience.

Teaching Point

Before Jesus preached, healed, or worked miracles publicly, He submitted Himself to baptism.

Obedience comes before ministry.

Part 2: Baptism Was Commanded by Christ

Reading: Matthew 28:18-20

This is the Great Commission.

Notice the Process

Jesus did not merely say:

"Go make converts."

He said:

1. Make disciples.
2. Baptize them.
3. Teach them.

Important Truth

A disciple was expected to be baptized.

The command was not directed only to the apostles but to all future disciples.

Discussion Question

Why would Jesus include baptism in His final instructions if it were optional?

Teaching Point

Baptism is not a denominational tradition.

Baptism is a command of Christ.

Part 3: The New Testament Pattern

Reading: Acts 2:37-41

After hearing Peter preach:

"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Peter responded:

Acts 2:38

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ..."

What Happened Next?

Acts 2:41

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized."

Notice the sequence:

- They heard.
- They believed.
- They repented.
- They were baptized.

New Testament Examples

The Samaritans

Acts 8:12

They believed and were baptized.

The Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:36-38

He believed and immediately requested baptism.

Saul (Paul)

Acts 9:18

He rose and was baptized.

Cornelius

Acts 10:47-48

Peter commanded them to be baptized.

Lydia

Acts 16:14-15

She believed and was baptized.

Philippian Jailer

Acts 16:30-33

He believed and was baptized the same night.

Teaching Point

Everywhere the Gospel was preached, baptism followed faith.

The apostles never treated baptism as a minor issue.

Part 4: What Baptism Represents

Reading: Romans 6:3-5

Paul reveals the spiritual picture behind baptism.

The Symbolism***Going Under the Water***

Represents:

- Christ's death
- Christ's burial
- Death of the old man

Coming Out of the Water

Represents:

- Christ's resurrection
- New life in Christ
- Victory over sin

Romans 6:4

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death..."

Illustration

A wedding ring does not create a marriage.

It publicly demonstrates a covenant already made.

Likewise:

Baptism does not create faith.

Baptism publicly declares faith.

Teaching Point

Baptism is the believer's public identification with Jesus Christ.

Part 5: Paul's Teaching on Baptism

Reading: Colossians 2:12

"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God."

Notice:

Paul joins baptism and faith together.

Not baptism alone.

Not faith without obedience.

Faith expressing itself through obedience.

Reading: Galatians 3:27

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

What Does "Put On Christ" Mean?

It speaks of identification.

When someone is baptized, they are declaring:

- I belong to Christ.
- I have left my old life.
- I am now His disciple.

Teaching Point

Baptism is a declaration of allegiance to King Jesus.

Part 6: Does Baptism Save?

This is one of the most debated questions in Christianity.

We must examine all Scripture.

Scriptures Showing Salvation by Faith

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For by grace are ye saved through faith..."

Romans 10:9

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus..."

John 3:16

"Whosoever believeth in him should not perish..."

Truth

We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

No human work can earn salvation.

Part 7: Why Does Peter Say Baptism Saves?

Reading: 1 Peter 3:21

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us..."

At first glance this appears confusing.

But Peter immediately explains.

Continue Reading

"Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God..."

Peter specifically says:

The water itself is not washing away dirt or sin.

Rather, baptism is:

- An appeal to God
- A response of faith
- A good conscience toward God

Teaching Point

The power is not in the water.

The power is in Christ's resurrection.

Part 8: The Thief on the Cross

Reading: Luke 23:39-43

The thief was never baptized.

Yet Jesus said:

"Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

What Does This Teach?

It teaches:

- Salvation is by grace.
- Jesus can save apart from rituals.
- God is not limited.

What Does It Not Teach?

It does not remove Christ's command to be baptized.

The thief provides an exception.

The Great Commission provides the rule.

Teaching Point

The thief lacked opportunity, not willingness.

Part 9: Why Every Believer Should Be Baptized

Because Jesus Was Baptized

Matthew 3:13-17

Because Jesus Commanded It

Matthew 28:19

Because the Apostles Practiced It

Acts 2:38

Because It Declares Our Faith

Romans 6:4

Because It Publicly Identifies Us with Christ

Galatians 3:27

Because It Demonstrates Obedience

John 14:15

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Common Misunderstandings About Baptism

Error #1

"Baptism saves regardless of faith."

Biblical Response:

Faith is always central.

Error #2

"Baptism is unnecessary."

Biblical Response:

Jesus commanded it.

Error #3

"Baptism is merely symbolic."

Biblical Response:

It is symbolic, but it is also a sacred act of obedience, covenant identification, and public confession.

Group Discussion Questions

1. Why did Jesus choose to be baptized?
2. What does baptism symbolize according to Romans 6?
3. Why do you think new believers in Acts were baptized immediately?
4. How does baptism demonstrate obedience?
5. What would you say to someone who believes baptism is unnecessary?
6. How would you explain the relationship between faith and baptism?

Personal Reflection

Ask participants:

- Have I been baptized since believing?
- Do I fully understand why I was baptized?
- Am I walking in the new life baptism represents?
- Is there an area of obedience I have been resisting?

Key Takeaways

Remember These Four Truths

1. **Baptism was modeled by Jesus.**
2. **Baptism was commanded by Jesus.**
3. **Baptism was practiced by the apostles.**
4. **Baptism is the believer's public identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.**

Closing Statement

Baptism is not an empty religious ritual. It is a God-ordained act of obedience that marks the believer's identification with Jesus Christ. We are saved by grace through faith, but genuine faith responds to Christ with obedience. Throughout the New Testament, those who believed the Gospel were baptized, publicly declaring that the old life had died and a new life in Christ had begun.

Main Lesson Truth: *"Baptism does not replace faith, but biblical faith will desire to obey Christ in baptism."*