

## Water Baptism – The First Step in Discipleship

- *On the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit filled the believers in the upper room and the Church was birthed, Peter preached the first evangelical sermon in history and he concluded with these words:*

Acts 2:36–41 (NKJV)

<sup>36</sup>“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

<sup>37</sup>Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

- *When the Holy Spirit touches someone, faith rises up in their hearts and they realize they are sinners in need of a Saviour. Then the question arises, “What shall we do?”*

<sup>38</sup>Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- *Peter’s response was immediate and precise: Repent and put your faith in Christ; receive water baptism; receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (the baptism in the Holy Spirit).*

<sup>39</sup>For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

<sup>40</sup>And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.”

<sup>41</sup>Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

- *The promise of salvation is “to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”*
- *The word of exhortation that Peter had for them which applies to everyone is, “be saved from this perverse generation.”*
- *The response of the people was both wonderful and wholehearted. They received his words with gladness, obeyed, and were baptized in water and the Holy Spirit.*
- *There are a number of things we can learn from this first evangelical message, but the point we can learn in regards to water baptism is that faith comes first, followed by water baptism.*

- *We see this pattern throughout the New Testament; faith in Christ and then water baptism.*
- *The Bible teaches believers to be baptized, because water baptism is not a ritual, but a personal response to an encounter with God and an expression of faith through an act of obedience.*
- *If a person is water baptized without a personal faith in Jesus Christ, their baptism is powerless and nothing more than a meaningless ritual.*
- *The power of water baptism is that it is both an expression of faith in Christ and a desire to surrender totally to the will of God.*

**Matthew 28:18–20 (NKJV)**

<sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

<sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

<sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

- *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” - The Great Commission as outlined in Matthew 28 is not evangelism, but discipleship.*
- *Evangelism is the first step in the Great Commission, but discipleship completes the picture and is the ultimate goal.*
- *Jesus Christ didn't just die for our sins to save us from the penalty of sin, which is eternal damnation in Hell. He died so we could be freed from the power of sin and all the destructive habits and behaviours that have controlled our lives.*
- *Discipleship is learning to live a life submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, a life where we joyfully obey Him.*
- *People sometimes misunderstand God's commandments and see them in a negative light.*
- *God's commandments are protective, not restrictive.*
- *God's Word is liberating, not limiting.*
- *To become a disciple is a process and a journey where we learn to be followers of Jesus. Instead of living a life filled with selfishness and self-will, we can submit to the will of God the Father, the Lordship of Christ, and the leading of the Holy Spirit.*

- *To be a disciple means obeying God's Word and following God's ways.*
- *Therefore the first action Jesus instructed His disciples to take was, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*
- *Becoming a disciple is a process, lived out one step at a time.*
- *Jesus didn't say that those who receive Christ have to do some great feat of faith their very first day as a Christian, but simply fulfill one simple commandment, "be baptized."*
- *Water baptism is the first step in learning to obey the Word of God.*
- *The next step of discipleship spoken by Jesus was, "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you."*
- *The step following water baptism is simply learning all that Jesus has taught us in His Word one principle at a time, and to grow in our faith by obeying His Word.*
- *Jesus concluded the Great Commission with these wonderful words of encouragement and comfort, "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*
- *Our great comfort and joy is that He will never leave us nor forsake us. We can enjoy unbroken fellowship as we abide in His presence.*
- *The key for us to experience His presence continually is to learn to abide in Christ and to have His words abide in us. (John 15:7). The way we abide in Christ and have His words abide in us is through faith and obedience—discipleship.*
- *Water baptism is not simply a symbolic act. Because water baptism is the result of faith and obedience there is a release of grace in our lives.*
- *Every time we step out in faith and obedience we will find there is a release of grace in our lives to overcome sin and live a victorious life filled with joy and peace.*
- *When one takes water baptism it does not mean life will be easier or that we will have fewer trials. However, it does mean we have made a decision to walk in God's ways and God honours our decision to be obedient.*
- *Even though water baptism is not a ritual, it does have strong symbolism.*
- *Water baptism is symbolic of death, burial, and resurrection.*

- *Water baptism is symbolic of surrender as we allow another person to lower us into the water and raise us up. Our submission signifies our admission that we are powerless, and it is Christ who is raising us up by His grace and strength.*

#### **Romans 6:8 (NKJV)**

**Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.**

- *As the water covers us, our old life has died with Christ and our new life and identity in Christ rises from the water.*
- *Salvation isn't a renovation, it's a transformation—new from the inside out.*
- *Although water baptism is one single action, it is a confession of three separate events which correspond to our triune nature of spirit, soul, and body and the triune aspects of salvation.*
- *The first aspect of water baptism is the confession that we have already received salvation. We have placed our faith in Christ and all He did for us at Calvary through His death, burial, and resurrection. The result is that we are regenerated and born again.*
- *Water baptism is a confession of what has already taken place. It is also a confession of our complete assurance in the salvation that we have received through our faith in Jesus Christ.*

#### **1 Corinthians 12:13 (NKJV)**

**<sup>13</sup>For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.**

- *The Holy Spirit baptized our spirit into Christ's spirit at the moment we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ—we were born again.*
- *The second aspect of water baptism is our confession that daily we choose to die to ourselves and live for Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:31).*
- *As believers, our desire now is to live consecrated lives and to grow in sanctification and freedom from the power of sin and sinful habits.*
- *Water baptism a confession of what we desire to do daily. It is a commitment to be Jesus' disciple.*

#### **Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)**

**<sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.**

- *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” - This is a life of faith and surrender and one motivated by God’s love. This is a life of discipleship.*

**Philippians 1:21 (NKJV)**

**<sup>21</sup>For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**

- *This is a life that is lived to bring glory to Christ and a life that is filled with expectation of the resurrection that we will soon experience.*

**Acts 1:5 (NKJV)**

**<sup>5</sup>for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”**

- *A sanctified and surrendered life is empowered by the Holy Spirit.*
- *The third aspect of water baptism is the confession of our future hope. One day these mortal bodies will die and we will be resurrected with immortal incorruptible physical bodies.*
- *Heaven is a physical reality—a real place.*

**1 Corinthians 15:42 (NKJV)**

**<sup>42</sup>So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.**

- *Water baptism is a confession of what will happen—our bodily resurrection in our new incorruptible bodies.*
- *Water baptism is a confession of three things: our past, present, and future state.*
- *It is a confession of the assurance of our salvation that we have already received—freedom from the penalty of sin.*
- *It is a confession of our daily commitment to live a surrendered life for the glory of God—freedom from the power and control of sin.*
- *It is a confession of our future hope in the resurrection to come—freedom from the presence of sin when we will be with the Lord in Heaven for all eternity.*

**Mark 16:16 (NKJV)**

**<sup>16</sup>He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.**

- *Salvation, our justification occurred at the moment we received Christ and is independent of taking water baptism.*
- *However, it would be incorrect to say that water baptism has nothing to do with salvation, but it is not referring to justification, it is referring to sanctification.*
- *Water baptism represents stepping out in faith and saying, “I want to obey Christ and live the life He has for me, a life that is victorious and filled with His glory.”*

**John 10:10 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup>The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

- *When we repent and put our faith in Christ we have eternal life.*
- *However, when we begin to obey Him and become His disciples we experience abundant life.*

**Romans 6:3–5 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup>Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

- *When we received Jesus Christ we were born again and we were baptized into Jesus Christ and died to our old nature. — Justification.*

<sup>4</sup>Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

- *Since our old man has been crucified and buried with Christ we choose to daily die to our old sinful and selfish ways so that “we should walk in the newness of life.” — Sanctification.*

<sup>5</sup>For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

- *One day we will leave these mortal bodies and be resurrected in the likeness of His resurrection with immortal and incorruptible bodies. — Glorification.*

**2 Corinthians 4:16–18 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup>Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

<sup>17</sup>For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

**<sup>18</sup>while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.**

- *As they grow older, those without Christ are winding down, but as we grow older, followers of Christ are winding up for eternity.*