STARTING OUT AS A CHRISTIAN · STUDY NOTES

Study 4: Christian baptism

For personal study or groups

Your name

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How to use these notes. Watch each part's video on biblehelp.net, or read the text below. Look up each passage in your own Bible and write the answer on the lines. The verses are printed at the back if you need them. At the end there are questions to think about on your own or to discuss in a group.

PART 1

Why, who and how

A public step

Becoming a Christian is the most important step of your life. Your sins have been forgiven. You have peace with God. And the Holy Spirit lives in you to help you live a new life.

Being a Christian means belonging to God's family, so you should also join a Christian church (we look at this in detail in the next study). Many societies have a special ceremony for receiving new members. When you join a church, you will normally go through a ceremony called **believer's baptism**. You may be invited to make a public statement of your faith in Jesus Christ, after which you will be immersed in water (and brought back up again!). Let's explore what this is all about by asking four questions.

1. Why be baptised?

Christians are baptised because Jesus commanded it, as the mark that identifies them as His followers!

1 **Look up Matthew 28:19**

Whom did Jesus say should be baptised?

As Christians, we should be baptised to obey Jesus' instruction.

2. Who can be baptised?

Baptism is only for true disciples, that is, followers of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19). No one should be baptised who has not first repented of their sin...

2 **Look up Acts 2:38**

What did Peter tell the people to do before being baptised?

...and then believed in Christ.

3 **Look up Acts 8:12**

What had these men and women done before they were baptised?

It is important to note that only believers should be baptised. This is why we do not baptise babies, who are too young to believe. Instead, for children, we do as Jesus did: we bless them.

3. Why immersion?

Because we believe that when the first Christians baptised people, they immersed the whole body in water, not just part of it. In Greek, the language the New Testament was written in, the word translated "baptise" means "to dip" or "to immerse". Believers were not sprinkled with water. It is clear from the baptism of the Ethiopian official (Acts 8:36–39) that plenty of water was involved. Like all travellers he carried drinking water, and could easily have spared a few drops to be sprinkled with. Instead, he waited until they came to water where he could be baptised.

4 **Look up Acts 8:36**

What did they come to on the road, and what did the Ethiopian ask?

See also: Acts 8:38–39: "both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water... When they came up out of the water..."

Immersion is also a vivid picture of what it means to become a Christian. It shows our death to sin and our resurrection to new life in Christ. This will become clearer as we look at the next question.

PART 2

What baptism means

4. What does baptism signify?

Baptism is like a bath. When we take a bath, we wash the dirt from our bodies. Baptism reminds us that, in becoming Christians, our sins are washed away. God will never count them against us.

5 **Look up Acts 22:16**

What did Ananias tell Paul to wash away?

Baptism is a helpful picture of cleansing from sin, but be careful! We must not think that the water of baptism cleanses us. Only the blood of Christ can remove our sins, and this happens when we turn to Christ and walk with Him.

6 **Look up 1 John 1:7**

What cleanses us from all sin?

Baptism is like a burial. That may not sound very cheerful, but in fact it is good news! In becoming a Christian, we have turned away from wrongdoing; we want to die to it. As we go into the water of baptism, we show that we are burying our old life.

7 **Look up Colossians 2:12**

With whom have believers been buried and raised?

Christians are no longer the old people they once were.

8 **Read Colossians 3:9–10**

What have Christians taken off, and what have they put on?

Baptism is like a birth. When God raised Jesus from the dead, He opened the way to a new life. As we come up from the water, we show that we are beginning a new life with Christ. The old life has been buried; the new life has begun!

9 **Look up Romans 6:4**

Having been buried with Christ, how are we now to walk?

Baptism is like a badge. People wear badges to make a statement to the world. Baptism is our way of telling everyone that we are now followers of Jesus Christ. It is the visible declaration of our loyalty to Him, since we are baptised in His name (Matthew 28:19). Jesus does not want secret disciples. He requires us to own Him before others. If we are ashamed of Him, He will be ashamed of us.

10 **Look up Mark 8:38**

What does Jesus say about anyone who is ashamed of Him and His words?

Baptism is like a bond. We cannot have Christ without His church. If we want to be joined to Christ, we must be joined to His people too. Baptism shows that we are linked to other Christians who wear the same "badge".

11 **Look up Ephesians 4:5–6**

How many Lords, faiths and baptisms are there?

Water does not wash away sin

Baptism is a picture. Only the blood of Christ removes our sins, when we turn to Him and trust Him.

5. Summary

So baptism is a rich picture of what Christ has done for us, and of what commitment to Him involves. Are you a true Christian, following Christ? Then you should be baptised!

THINK IT THROUGH

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Why does the Bible say baptism is for believers only?

2. Which of the five pictures (bath, burial, birth, badge, bond) helps you most, and why?

3. If you are a Christian and have not been baptised, what is holding you back?

HIDE IT IN YOUR HEART

Memory verse for study 4

Learn this verse by heart this week. Cut out the card and keep it where you will see it.

STARTING OUT AS A CHRISTIAN · STUDY 4 · MEMORY VERSE

“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 walk in newness of life.”

Romans 6:4

Berean Standard Bible · biblehelp.net

“I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11, BSB)

AT THE BACK

The Bible passages (BSB)

1 **Matthew 28:19** *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,*

2 **Acts 2:38** *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

3 **Acts 8:12** *But when they believed Philip as he preached the gospel of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*

4 **Acts 8:36** *As they traveled along the road and came to some water, the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is there to prevent me from being baptized?"*

5 **Acts 22:16** *And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized, and wash your sins away, calling on His name.'*

6 **1 John 1:7** *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

7 **Colossians 2:12** *And having been buried with Him in baptism, you were raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead.*

8 **Colossians 3:9–10** *9 Do not lie to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices, 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

9 **Romans 6:4** *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 walk in newness of life.*

10 **Mark 8:38** *If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels."*

11 **Ephesians 4:5–6** *5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

Scripture: Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain. Quotations keep its American spelling. Like many English Bibles, it often says 'man', 'he' or 'brothers' where it means people in general, men and women alike.

FOR GROUP LEADERS

Study 4: Christian baptism

> **Memory verse:** “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 walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4). Say it together at the end, and ask who can say it without looking.

Aims

- Explain why Christians are baptised (Jesus' command), who should be baptised (believers) and how (immersion).
- Unfold the five pictures: bath, burial, birth, badge and bond.
- Encourage believers who have not been baptised to take this step.

Suggested timing (about 60 minutes)

- **5 min** Welcome and short prayer.
- **20 min** Part 1 video (4 min); Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:38, Acts 8:12 and Acts 8:36.
- **30 min** Part 2 video (4 min); Acts 22:16, 1 John 1:7, Colossians 2:12, 3:9–10, Romans 6:4, Mark 8:38, Ephesians 4:5–6 and the discussion questions.
- **5 min** Summary and closing prayer.

Tips

- Some may have been "christened" as babies. Be gentle and clear: the Bible links baptism with repentance and faith, so it is for believers.
- Stress that baptism does not save: only Christ's blood removes sin. Baptism is the picture and the public step of obedience.
- Have information ready about baptism in your church for anyone who wants to be baptised.

Answers to watch for

- **Matthew 28:19:** make disciples of all nations, baptising them.
- **Acts 2:38:** repent and be baptised.
- **Acts 8:12:** when they believed, they were baptised, both men and women.
- **Acts 8:36:** "Look, here is water! What is there to prevent me from being baptized?"
- **Acts 22:16:** "Get up, be baptized, and wash your sins away, calling on His name."
- **1 John 1:7:** the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.
- **Colossians 2:12:** buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through faith.
- **Colossians 3:9–10:** taken off the old self, put on the new self.
- **Romans 6:4:** buried with Him through baptism so that we too may walk in newness of life.
- **Mark 8:38:** if anyone is ashamed of Christ, He will be ashamed of them.
- **Ephesians 4:5–6:** one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all.