

Baptism - Necessary or Not?

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | March 4, 2011



Could you please write a blog on the topic of baptism. My understanding is that when you come to know God and trust him completely, there comes a point when you decide to surrender your life to the will of Jesus and follow him 100%.

Baptism symbolizes repentance of sinful/selfish living and rebirth in Jesus Christ. It is a public display of one's change of heart and desire/devotion to live like Christ and develop a Christ like character. Is this correct? Could you also address whether baptism is necessary for salvation and at what stage a of a person's Christian journey should they consider baptism? Your insight into the meaning and significance of baptism would be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance. God bless.

Baptism has a literal and a symbolic significance. The literal significance is when our minds, hearts, and characters are immersed into Jesus Christ and we surrender self, cease to live for self, "die" to self and begin living a new life of love for God and others. This is symbolically demonstrated by the ceremony called baptism. The ceremony called baptism has no power to cleanse, save, heal or renew the believer. It is a mere public enactment of being buried under water, symbolizing death to the old life of

selfishness, washed anew by the Spirit, and rising again to live a new life in Christ.

The literal baptism is necessary (having the mind/heart immersed in Christ by the Holy Spirit) for salvation. It is this immersion into Christ, via the presence of the Holy Spirit, which regenerates the heart, writes the law on the heart and mind (Heb 8:10), circumcises the heart, thus recreating us into Christ-likeness. To receive Christ into the heart is the only means of salvation. This immersion of the mind/heart/character into Christ requires the individual to freely choose to surrender self in trust to God.

The symbolic baptism of immersion in water is not a requirement for salvation. The thief on the cross was not baptized symbolically, but his heart was immersed into Christ and renewed by the Spirit.

The ceremony of baptism can be done for many reasons, but only one is spiritually meaningful. A person can be ceremonially baptized (in water) because their parents expect them to do it, their friends are doing it, their fiancé won't marry them unless they do etc. Such baptism is meaningless because the motives for the ceremony are all selfish, thus the public enactment of dying to self and living for God and others is a lie.

The meaningful fulfillment of the ritual of public baptism is entered into whenever a person has experienced the immersion of heart and mind into Christ, died to selfishness and now lives a new life of love for God and others, and wants to publicly testify to this new life.

Below is my paraphrase of 1Cor 1:10-17 regarding baptism:

1 CO 1:10 Brothers and sisters, as an ambassador of our Lord Jesus Christ, I call on you to come into agreement with each other on the truth about God as revealed by Jesus and be fully united in mind, heart, attitude and motive around the beautiful character and methods of God. 11 My brothers and sisters, I have heard, from some of Chloe's household, that disagreements and arguments have developed among you. 12 Evidently, some have lost the main focus of the truth about God as revealed by Jesus, for one of you says, "I am Paul's disciple"; another, "I adhere to the teachings of Apollos"; another, "I belong to the order of Peter"; and still others, "I follow Christ."

1CO 1:13 What are you thinking? Is there more than one Christ? Do you think Christ has multiple personalities or is two-faced? Were your minds immersed into the truth about Paul or into the truth about God as revealed by Christ? 14 I am thankful, that after your minds were immersed into the truth about God, as revealed by Christ, I didn't assist any of you in the symbolic water immersion, except for Crispus and Gaius, 15 so none of you would get confused and think you were immersing your hearts in loyalty to me. 16 (Oh yes, I also assisted the household of Stephanas in the symbolic water immersion; but other than that I don't remember assisting anyone else with this ritual). 17 For God did not send me to perform rituals, but to present the good news about him, his methods, principles and character as revealed by Christ - not some human theory of appeasement, lest the death of Christ be seen as some payment to an offended god and therefore lose its power to free the mind from fear and mistrust of God.