

Baptism

BEING BAPTIZED

PART 1

The what and why

READ ACTS 8:26-40

INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of questions that swirl around baptism. Theologians have argued and debated whether it is full immersion or sprinkling, before or after someone comes to faith, even what kind of water should be used: blessed or normal, running or still, natural location or in a tub. The whole subject can be intimidating when we start digging into it and yet, it is a crucial aspect of the Christian life. Baptism is something that Jesus went through (Matthew 28). There is no way to get around it, we are to be baptized when we are saved by Jesus Christ, but, why?

We see in the story of the Ethiopian in Acts, that he was studying about the prophecies concerning Jesus and immediately once he was born again, Phillip and he wanted to perform a baptism. The reasoning behind this is twofold. First, the command by Jesus would've been on Phillip's mind and he saw no reason to put off baptizing the Ethiopian. Secondly, the reason why we get baptized is for the public declaration of our faith. When we are baptized, we are declaring to the world that we are a new creation. We have been born again in Jesus Christ. (John 3)

The public declaration carries no 'washing of sins' but allows for the Church body to know who is a brother or a sister in Christ. To allow the Church to encourage, exhort and correct those within Her ranks. We are to help those who come to Jesus know Him more and live lives that glorify Him. The person being baptized is saying that they are coming under the wing of the Church and the Church is saying that they will disciple, and encourage the person. This is the base relationship with a Christina and baptism.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read John 3 when Jesus is talking to Nicodemus. What does that interaction say about our responsibility in baptism? How are we to be born again? What makes a person born again?
2. Why is the passage that the Ethiopian was reading meaningful? What does that passage say about Jesus?
3. What does it mean to be a new creation? When we declare to the world that we are going to live a life of discipline, what does that then require of us as believers? Why is it important to let the world know what our decision is regarding Jesus?
4. What is the importance of timing in baptism? Is it a good idea for someone to wait?
5. Looking at Jesus getting baptized, why would it be important for Him to go through the ceremony? Did Jesus need to get baptized?

WRAP UP

There are still many thoughts on sprinkling versus immersion and there probably always will be. The truth is that God looks at the heart of the action more than the action itself. When we believe with all of our heart and desire to follow Him, there is no reason to wait to get baptized. If there is not a desire to be born again and to live a different life, then it is better to wait until God changes our hearts.