

## **Lesson 9 – Why Should You Be Baptized?**

(Read John 3:1-5) (Ask the student to state in their own words what happened in this passage.) A religious teacher from the Jews came to talk to Jesus in private. Jesus spoke to him of the need to be born again. Nicodemus did not understand anything. Jesus began to explain, talking about the need to be born anew/again.

Born again? Jesus was indicating a drastic change. It is not about just becoming a member of a church. It's about starting a new life. And Jesus added "of water and Spirit." Nicodemus did not understand. We wouldn't understand either if it weren't for other explanations later in the Scriptures. Jesus was talking about what happens at baptism.

### **Christ Commands It**

(Read Matthew 28:18-20) (Ask the student: What did Christ command in this text?) That they should go to all nations and make disciples, baptize them, and then teach them everything that Christ had commanded. This command applies "to the end of the age/world." So, Christ invites us to become disciples (students, followers) of Him. When one learns some basic things, it is time to be baptized.

(Read Mark 16:15-16) (Ask the student what Christ commanded in this text.) That they should go and preach the gospel throughout the world, and that everyone who believed and was baptized would be saved. Here he emphasizes the need to believe – believing that Jesus is the divine Son of God, believing that Jesus died for our sins, and believing that He rose from the dead and lives in heaven today. When one believes all this, the time is nearing to be baptized.

A few days after Jesus' ascension, the apostle Peter preached to a large crowd. At the end of the message, they asked him "what shall we do?" (Read Acts 2:38) (Ask the student what Peter commanded in this text.) That they repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This text emphasizes the importance of repentance. Studying is not enough. Believing is not enough. You have to decide to change your life, decide that you are going to stop living your way and start living as Christ wants. When one repents, it is time to be baptized.

Based on these three texts, we see that in order to receive forgiveness of sins, one must learn of Christ, believe in Christ, repent of sins, and be baptized.

### **For the Forgiveness of Sins**

Many churches today say, "Baptism does not save."

God's word, the Bible, says, "Baptism, which now saves us." Big difference!

(Read 1 Peter 3:21) Baptism is for salvation. It is not about bathing to cleanse the physical body. Rather, a person submits to the will of God in order to obtain a good conscience before Him.

The conversion of Paul (called Saul at the time) is found three times in the book of Acts: in chapters 9, 22, and 26. (Read Acts 9:1-18) (Ask the student: When Paul/Saul asked Jesus what he had to do, what did Jesus tell him?) That he had to go to Damascus and that there he would be told what he had to do. Notice that Jesus neither saved Paul at that moment nor told him what he had to do to be saved. Paul went to Damascus, fasted and prayed for three days, and received another vision. Ananias, when he arrived, answered the question that Paul had asked

Jesus regarding what to do. (Read Acts 22:16) (Ask the student what Ananias told Paul regarding his salvation?) That he had to be baptized for the forgiveness of his sins. Notice that Paul had already come to faith on the road to Damascus, and he must have repented deeply, asking God for forgiveness during those three days of prayer and fasting.

Now Paul was told what he had to do to be saved. He was not told to repeat a little prayer asking for Jesus to come into his heart, as they do in many churches today. The truth is that he had already been praying for three days. If prayer were the way to get saved, certainly Paul would have been saved long before Ananias arrived. We clearly see that Paul was not saved by seeing Jesus on the road, nor by seeing the vision in Damascus, nor was he saved by three days of prayer and fasting. Ananias had come to tell Paul that it was time to stop praying; it was time to be baptized to wash away his sins, calling on the name of Christ.

Years later, Paul himself wrote a letter to the church in Rome in which he described what happens at baptism. (Read Romans 6:1-6) Jesus died for our sins. He shed His blood on the cross for our sins. How do we make contact with His blood and with His death? In this text, Paul says that we are "baptized into his death." We make contact with His death in the waters of baptism. We have to die to sin, we have to make a life-changing decision before we are buried. Then, in the waters we unite with the death and burial of Christ so that His blood cleanses us from all sin.

(Ask the student, What does it tell us in Romans 6 to make it clear that baptism is by immersion?) It says that we are buried in baptism. Putting a little bit of water on a baby's head is not a baptism, even though they call it a baptism. The word baptism means immersion. A person, whether baby or adult, who has only had a little water applied to their head has not been baptized. Christ died and was buried. We have to do the same through repentance and immersion in water.

### **Questions**

1. What is necessary before you can be baptized? (have faith in Jesus as the Son of God and our Savior and repent of all sins)
2. When baptized, what does one receive? (forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit)
3. Are you ready to be baptized? (\_\_\_\_)
4. If not yet, what doubts or questions do you have? (\_\_\_\_\_)