

BAPTISM INSTRUCTION CLASS

Great Commission instructs us to go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

1. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF BAPTISM

a. Example of Christ

1). In practice -- Matthew 3:13-17

Jesus had lived in obscurity in Nazareth, waiting for the right time to begin his public ministry. John's baptism, calling people to repentance, was causing a great commotion. A lot of attention was focused on John. It was the ideal time for Jesus to appear on the scene.

Jews were not baptized. In their way of thinking, they didn't need it. But they baptized proselytes. Obviously, sinful, non-Jews would need to repent of their sins and take a public stand in favor of God. But John the Baptist called Jews to repentance. So during this time of national repentance and religious fervor, it was a good atmosphere for Jesus to come on the scene.

Furthermore, in being baptized, Jesus identified with us. Even though he didn't need it, he submitted to it as an example for us. I read about some recruits in military training. Right after a rainstorm, their officers ordered them to the rifle range. Lying prone in the mud, they shot round after round. The man who told this story said he reached back in anger for shells from the soldier who was flat in the mud just behind him. He rammed every shell into the chamber with resentment. He squeezed the trigger with hate. Then as he reached back for another round of ammunition, he caught the face of his companion out of the corner of his eye. It was his Commander! Flat in the mud and passing shells, the Commander was at one with his men. "From that time on," said the soldier, "I was ready to follow that man, even to death."

Jesus came and was baptized, even though he didn't need it for he had no sins for which to repent. Yet he did it to identify with us and to set an example we all should follow. Jesus said, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Righteousness has to do with one's right relationship to God. Jesus had a right relationship and emphasized the importance of obeying God in order to keep a right relationship with him.

2). In preaching

As I indicated earlier, Jesus said we must go, make disciples and baptize them. This was not a request or a plea or a suggestion; it was a command -- that all believers must be baptized.

b. Example of John the Baptist

Mt. 3:1-17. John came preaching and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." People went out to him from that whole region. "Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River" (v. 6).

c. Example of the Disciples

John 4:1-2 tells us that Jesus and his disciples were baptizing people and it was actually the disciples who were doing the baptizing.

d. Example of the Early Church

- 1) Acts 2:38, 41 - Christians baptized on the day of Pentecost
- 2) Acts 8:12, 13 - Samaritans baptized after Philip preached to them
- 3) Acts 8:36-38 - Ethiopian eunuch baptized after he accepted Christ
- 4) Acts 9:18 - Saul baptized after he was converted
- 5) Acts 10:47, 48 - Cornelius' household baptized after Peter preached to them
- 6) Acts 16:14, 15 - Lydia baptized after she received Christ
- 7) Acts 16:33 - Philippian jailer's household baptized when they accepted Christ
- 8) Acts 18:8 - Corinthian Christians baptized after Paul preached to them
- 9) Acts 19:5 - Ephesian Christians baptized after they heard the gospel and believed

2. THE MEANING OF WATER BAPTISM

a. It is not salvation

Only one way to heaven . . . through faith in Jesus Christ and his sacrifice on the cross. Thousands may be baptized, but not saved. Many others, saved, but not baptized because they had no opportunity or understanding that baptism was required.

b. It is a sacrament

Sacrament = outward sign of an inward work; physical symbol for a spiritual truth.

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament.

Idea of baptism has roots in OT. Orthodox Jew washed self, sometimes articles of furniture several times a day. Sprinkled water on self and possessions to be sure he was ceremonially clean. As Christians we are not clean by any act of our own. Not even made spiritually clean by baptism.

Baptism symbolizes that we are made clean by Jesus when he forgives us of our sins and cleanses us from our wrong doing. It is a symbol of what Christ has already done by his Spirit in our hearts.

c. It is a testimony

In OT times, when a person wanted to convert to Judaism, he was baptized. Priest would dip a bunch of hyssop in water and sprinkle it on the person. Meant this person was leaving his old ways behind and was becoming a Jew.

In NT, to become a Christian was a big step. Being baptized meant leaving old ways, old life totally in past. Complete break with pagan life.

It is our testimony that we are leaving our old life of sin behind us, and we are putting our trust in Jesus Christ. No longer depending on self, our own goodness, family relationships to get us into heaven. Taking God's way and intend to live for him all the days of our life.

Peter calls baptism the "answer of a good conscience toward God."

Baptism = not salvation, it is a sacrament and a testimony. God doesn't want SECRET SERVICE CHRISTIANS.

3. WHY DO WE BAPTIZE?

a. As an act of obedience

Jesus said, "Go, make disciples and be baptized"

What right do we have to disobey a direct command of Jesus?

b. As a testimony -- we've covered that

c. To follow the example of Christ

Jesus was a common name in those days. Nazareth was a very common town. So you have this man with a common name from a common town coming to John the Baptist and submitting to a common experience - an experience that is supposed to be common to every believer.

d. To strengthen the resolve of the person who is baptized

Puts us on record. It's a public confession of faith. We feel a greater obligation to be true to the Lord.

e. To identify with the church

Done in the church by an official of the church.