

BAPTISM

“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 live a new life.” —ROMANS 6:4

There are two ordinances God gave to the New Testament Church. An ordinance is an outward physical act which portrays an inward spiritual experience. The first ordinance is Baptism and the second, The Lord’s Supper, commonly known as ‘Communion’. What these two events have in common is that they focus on the Cross of Jesus, on His death and resurrection. Both these ordinances are at the very heart of the Christian Gospel, and are vital to experiencing all that is to be ours in the Christian life.

Baptism involves three movements: dying with Christ, buried with Christ, and raised with Christ. The first movement, whereby a person is going down to be immersed in water, is symbolic of dying with Christ. The second movement is being submerged in water, which depicts our burial with Christ. The third movement is coming up from the water, and represents having been risen with Christ.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:5, there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism”. As there is only one baptism, then clearly baptism in water is symbolic of baptism in the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul says, “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free...” The one body into which we are baptized by the Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ. We are united with Him in such a way that our union with Him means what is true of Christ

becomes true of us. We are baptized into His history, His body, His death and into His resurrected life.

Baptism is not something additional to the Gospel. It is a portrayal of the Gospel. The outward act of baptism was designed to portray the inner spiritual truth and reality of our union with Christ. The Book of Acts relates nine separate instances of people being baptized; each one taking place immediately after the person had become a believer in the Lord. Today a period of time between conversion and baptism is encouraged so that the individual is sure of coming into a genuine living relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Once becoming a believer, to not be baptized is actually disobedience as it was Jesus' command in the commission He gave His disciples. The act of baptism, however, does not unite us with Christ. It is symbolic of being united with Him, and being united with Him is the essence of the Gospel. Baptism takes place once, because it demonstrates a once for all event in the life of a Christian. If we haven't been baptized, but are living in a committed relationship with the Lord Jesus, then we need to take that step, which openly acknowledges our union with Him.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for the incredible blessing of sharing in Your life, and for the privilege of being baptized in Your name, the name of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

TO REFLECT UPON: What significance does being baptized hold for me?