

Lesson 3: Water Baptism (Colossians 2:11-12)

1. Visible words

Acts 2:38, 41

³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

People who have repented and were born again will have some changes in their lives. First of all, they have new direction of life. Before they were heading toward darkness and sin, but now they were heading toward light, truth and holiness. They want to follow God's Word. So, they want to receive water baptism. Secondly, they desire to know the Lord more, want to have deeper relationship with the Lord. They want to be filled with the Holy Spirit. They love Jesus more and more. Because of that, they will naturally think about Jesus and talk about him. They are never ashamed of being Christians, or feel guilty about their relationship with Jesus. Thirdly, they are added to a church. It is contradictory if they love Jesus but they don't take part in a church which is the body of Jesus.

In Foundations Class, from lesson 2 to lesson 5, we study about repentance, water baptism, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and being added to the church. These four foundations can be thought of as legs to a chair. If any one or more of these foundations is missing, they will not have a strong, stable life in Christ.

There are some good things for you learn from the Foundations Class. One of them is you can get some ideas about how to share or teach your faith. The last time, we studied about repentance. I used an illustration. Do you remember? You can use it when you share your faith with others.

The other good thing about taking the Foundations Class is that you can learn what New Life Fellowship is about, what we teach, and what we value. You will have better understanding of what your pastor believes. You may not agree with me in every detail. That's all right with me. I will respect what you believe.

You don't have to change your belief or doctrine. And I would like to ask you to do the same thing to me. If what I believe is acceptable for a Bible believing Christian, please respect what I believe. Is it fair?

There are two sacraments in the NT. One is communion, the other is water baptism. Communion is related to the Passover in the OT, which is the symbol of liberation and salvation. Water baptism is related to circumcision in the OT, which is the symbol of covenant.

"Sacraments are visible words, embodiments of grace, enacted testimonies to the love of God in Jesus Christ."¹ The practice of sacraments shows publicly that they have identity in Christ, and that shows they have identity as God's children and as a member of a local church.

"The sacraments are celebrated in Christ and re-present Christ. God comes to human beings personally by the power of the Holy Spirit in the concrete, worldly media of spoken word and enacted sacrament."²

You receive Water baptism by someone in your church. Usually your pastor baptizes you. No one baptizes himself. Right? You agree to be baptised by someone. This shows something about your decision. That is, from that time on, you would be received by people in your church. You would accept to be loved and served, equipped and trained by people in the church. In other words, you would become a part of the church, and you would also love and serve others.

2. Examples of water baptism in the Bible

The English word "baptize" is a transliteration (substitution of letters of one language for those of another) of the Greek word "baptizo." Baptizo means to make whelmed (i.e. fully wet) and comes from the root word "bapto", meaning to cover wholly with a fluid, as in "dip."

Let's look at some scenes of water baptism in the Bible. They give us clear picture of the word "baptizo."

John 3:23

¹ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, p121

² Ibid, p123

Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.

For giving water baptism it is necessary for John to choose the spot where there was much water.

Matt.3:16

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. ...

After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water (NASB). In other words, he was in the water when he was baptized.

Acts 8:38-39

³⁸ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

When Philip baptized an Ethiopian eunuch, they both went down into the water, rather than he went to the river to bring the water.

3. Action shows your faith

Taking water baptism is the act of obedience to the Word. It witnesses that we have been changed, or that we have changed our direction.

We were saved by the grace of God through our faith in Him. Receiving water baptism is the proclamation of what has been happening inside of us. You cannot see the changes inside of you from outside: In our physical eyes, we cannot see that we are forgiven, the blood of Jesus took away our sin, we have been reconciled with Jesus, Christ lives in us, or we're children of God, and so on. When we receive water baptism, our actions proclaim publicly "I'm following Jesus, I'm living with the Word."

Matt.28:18-20

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has

been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

After believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, the new believers are commanded by the Word of God to take water baptism in the name of the Lord. This is the first priority after a person repents of their sins and places their trust in Jesus Christ for salvation. It should not be put off and there is no reason for anyone to think "it's too early for me."

Gal.3:26-27

²⁶ You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

A pastor shared this with me. He preached about water baptism in a meeting. One lady came and said that she wanted to receive water baptism. And she said "It's like joining a sport team, isn't it? If you join the team, you will be proud of wearing the team uniform. When you put the uniform on, you have strong identity with the team. I grew up in Buddhist family. I had never thought about God, the Creator. Now, I heard about Jesus and met with him. And the Word commands me to be baptized. I want to be clothed with Jesus. I want to remain in him. And I want to show that I believe in Jesus, I love him and obey him through the action of receiving water baptism."

At the following, we will look at the some meanings of water baptism.

4. Death: Our old man (old sinful nature) is crucified

Rom.6:1

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

God is merciful and will forgive us always. Therefore, we continue to sin and continue to ask forgiveness from God. Is that Christian life? What does the Bible say?

Rom.6:2

By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

Christians are people who died to sin, rather than who live in sin.

Rom.6:3-7

³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ 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. ⁵ If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – ⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

To die with Christ and to live with him. We receive these by faith, we apply these by faith. The act of receiving water baptism shows our faith that we died with Christ and will live with him just as the Bible says.

5. Burial with Christ

What do we do to the dead body? Do we leave it somewhere? No. Never! We bury it properly. Water baptism is burial with Christ.

Gal.2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

It doesn't say that Jesus is one part of my life. Jesus is my life. Then, what shall we do to our old-self who died with Christ? It should be buried.

Rom.6:4

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.

Water baptism symbolizes Burial. Because our old-self were buried with Jesus, so now we can live new life with him.

In Exodus 14, we can see that the power which bound people sank into the water, and people were set free.

Israelites were slaves in Egypt. God led them to be set free from the control of Egypt. The Egyptian army chased them down from behind. And before them was the Red Sea. There was no way to advance nor return. They were in a real pinch.

God made miracle that he divided the waters, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground. The Egyptian army chased them down. After Israelites finished crossing the Red Sea, the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. The water covered all the Egyptians, not even one of them survived.

There is no power to bind them any longer. Now Israelites were completely set free from the control of Egypt. They became free men.

What about us? We were saved through faith in Jesus. Our sins were forgiven. However, sadly there are quite a few people who have faith in Christ but are living like Zombies. What do I mean by saying this?

By birth, all humans were sinners. All mankind deserved eternal separation from God's presence. They may be gentle and may behave well. They may have good moral standard and high education. But, sinners are still sinners.

One day, he heard about the good news of Jesus, and believed in him. For a while, he was doing well. But, later he found himself slide back into a sinner like before. And he asked for God's forgiveness. But the result was the same as before and he repeated the same pattern again and again. His old self was supposed to be dead, but was still alive and come back again. It's like a Zombie, right?

Our old-self died with Christ. And it should be buried properly.

Rom.6:4

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.

I'm not saying that if we just receive water baptism, our sinful nature will be removed and our old selves are buried. We must understand that if you don't have faith, receiving water baptism is nothing but going under water. We repent and turn back to God, and make Jesus Lord of our lives. We must have faith that on the cross our old-self died and were buried with Christ. Now we live a new life. Christ lives in me. Because we have this faith, we receive water baptism proclaiming Jesus' Lordship in our lives. Jesus, you are my life.

6. Resurrection: Living New Life

Col. 2:11-12

¹¹ and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; ¹² having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (NASB)

A circumcision is a ritual in the OT, in which they cut off a part of their body, a part of their skin, and that represented the covenant with God. It symbolizes that they are God's chosen people, they belonged to God.

In the NT, Colossians cp.2 mentions the circumcision of Christ. It shows that our old self, or the flesh polluted by sin is removed. And now I belong to God 100%. It is not by human effort, such as hard work, doing charity, religious rituals, and so on, but it is the work of God. Receiving water baptism shows that we have this faith. We have covenant relationship with God. He is my God, I'm his redeemed.

Water baptism shows not only death and burial with Christ, but also resurrection with Christ, living new life in Christ. We died to our old self in order to live new life. Amen!

Matt.7:26-27

²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down,

the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

It is easier to build a house on sand than on the rock. But, you cannot have solid foundation on sand. On sand, it is easy to lose balance and collapse. What does it mean to build a house on sand? That is, not to put the Word we heard into practice. If we are building a house on sand, no matter how much time we spend, we cannot have solid foundation. Having clear understanding of the Bible is good, actually it's very good, but it is not enough. It is only half way done. We must practice it.