

Believer's Baptism: Six Important Questions

Believer's Baptism is one of the most well known practices of the Christian faith. The discussion that follows presents the essence of our view of believer's baptism at Providence Bible Church.

1. What is the meaning of believer's baptism? Believer's baptism is a symbolic act that pictures an inward spiritual reality. Romans 6:3-3 *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.* Baptism pictures the identification of a believer with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection to a new life. Believer's baptism also pictures the washing away of sins, (Acts 22:16). By being baptized, the believer also testifies of his or her being placed into the body of Christ, (I Cor. 12:13); and that he or she has been clothed with Christ. (Gal. 3:27)

2. Are believer's baptism and belief in Jesus Christ both necessary in order to be saved? No. The New Testament clearly teaches that salvation is based solely on personal faith in Jesus Christ apart from any other actions. Two Scripture passages which present this truth are John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. , and Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

However, certain New Testament passages closely link baptism with salvation. But, this is because baptism is a symbolic ritual which pictures what salvation is all about. And so, just as a person can point to a photograph and say, this is my brother, the New Testament writers sometimes use the word, baptism, as a reference for the whole of salvation which is only through Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38, 22:16; Galatians 3:27; I Peter 3:21). Believer's baptism is not to be seen as a means to salvation, but rather the outward, visible, tangible testimony of what has taken place already in the heart. It is the believer who is baptized, which means salvation takes place before the act of baptism.

3. Why should a person receive believer's baptism? Primarily because Jesus, in one of His last appearances to the eleven apostles after His resurrection, said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). The apostles understood what Jesus was saying and believer's baptism immediately became the public sign of every believer's entry into the Christian community (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12)

4. Should infants receive believer's baptism? No. Since believer's baptism pictures a spiritual relationship which begins at salvation, and since salvation occurs through personal faith in Jesus Christ, no person should receive believer's baptism until they have made that conscious, personal commitment. This would include babies. However, Christian parents are encouraged to publicly dedicate their children to Christ. And usually, those who have practiced infant baptism did so with loving intentions to dedicate the child to God.

5. What is the proper method of believer's baptism? In the New Testament, immersion appears to have been the universal practice. The Greek word translated baptize is (baptidzo) and it literally means to dip or immerse. At Providence we follow the early church's practice of total immersion and believe this method most clearly shows the meaning of spiritual baptism as the identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

6. Who should be baptized? Everyone who has personally trusted Christ for salvation should receive believer's baptism. If you are a believer and have never done this, we encourage you to make arrangements to be baptized by contacting the pastor. Your public expression of faith will be a great encouragement to the body and may even be an encouragement to help someone else find salvation in Jesus Christ.