

## Baptism Part One

Jesus Christ gave these instructions before his ascension into heaven:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."<sup>1</sup>

Christ commands his followers to make disciples of all nations, baptize them and pass on his teachings. The gospel of Mark gives us additional information:

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus Christ made promises and gave instructions. The book of Acts has many examples of his instructions being carried out. The first example is from the day of Pentecost following Christ's ascension. The apostle Peter is speaking:

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

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.

The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off-- for all whom the Lord our God will call."

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

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

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."<sup>3</sup>

The apostle Peter mentions receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit in connection with baptism, also notice that this instruction and promise applies to "all whom the Lord our God will call". In other words this applies to us. Notice also Peter gives this instruction in response to the people that were cut to the heart concerning what God had done through Jesus Christ. Peter instructs them to "repent" (turn away from sin and turn back to God) and to be baptized. The following example is of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. The eunuch was reading from the prophet Isaiah:

The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?"

Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"

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<sup>1</sup> Matt 28:18-20

<sup>2</sup> Mark 16:15-16

<sup>3</sup> Acts 2:36-42, 46-47

And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

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.<sup>4</sup>

Notice they understood that they needed a body of water for baptism also notice "they came up out of the water" implies a sufficient body of water for them to be immersed in. Notice also this comment about John the Baptist's choice of location to work:

Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.<sup>5</sup>

So far we see that baptism is a necessary step to be a follower of Jesus Christ. We also see baptism is an immersion in water. Let's back track a little to see if we can more clearly understand baptism. Jesus Christ at the age of thirty years old, at the beginning of his public ministry presents himself to John the Baptist to be baptized (not for repentance because he was without sin). He did this to demonstrate his obedience to the father and to illustrate for us the importance of baptism:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."

Then John consented.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.

And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."<sup>6</sup>

The immersion of baptism signifies a death to sin, so that the believer can be born again to live a new life. Jesus Christ talking to Nicodemus said this:

"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."<sup>7</sup>

The apostle Paul adds further clarification to this concept:

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,

so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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

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

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

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.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

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<sup>4</sup> Acts 8:34-39

<sup>5</sup> John 3:23

<sup>6</sup> Matt 3:13-17

<sup>7</sup> John 3:3-8

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-- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.

The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.<sup>8</sup>

These passages of scripture can provide a good jumping off point for our discussion of baptism. Look at the essay "Baptism Part Two" for further discussion of this important issue.

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<sup>8</sup> Rom 5:20-6:11