

## Sunday School notes: Why Baptism?:

### *The History and Importance of Christian Baptism*

#### **Introduction to Baptism:**

- **Definition:** Baptism is a Christian sacrament of initiation and purification, often involving the use of water.
- **Purpose:** It symbolizes a believer's faith in Christ, repentance from sin, and commitment to a new life.

#### **Historical Context:**

- **Jewish Roots:** Baptism has roots in Jewish purification rituals, such as mikvah, which involved ritual washing.

**Mikvah (Ritual Bath):** The practice of immersion in a mikvah for ritual purification is prevalent in Jewish law. This is seen in various passages that describe purification processes, particularly in Leviticus.

**Leviticus 14:8-9:** This passage describes the ritual for cleansing a leper, which includes washing their clothes and bathing in water, symbolizing purification.

**Leviticus 15:** This chapter outlines various laws regarding bodily discharges and the associated purification rituals, including washing and immersing in water.

**Numbers 19:17-19:** This passage details the use of water for purification, specifically in the context of cleansing from contamination, such as after contact with a dead body.

**Psalms 51:2:** David pleads, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin," highlighting the desire for spiritual cleansing.

- **John the Baptist:** Baptism was a central practice of John, who called people to repentance as a preparation for the coming Messiah (**Luke 3:3**).
- **Early Church:** After Jesus' resurrection, baptism became a key practice among early Christians, as seen in (**Acts 2:38**).

## Theological Significance:

- **Union with Christ:** Baptism signifies the believer's identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (**Romans 6:3-4**).
- **Covenant Sign:** It represents entry into the New Covenant, similar to circumcision in the Old Covenant (**Colossians 2:11-12**).
- **Community:** It marks the individual's entry into the community of believers (**1 Corinthians 12:13**).

## Myths About Baptism:

- **Myth 1:** Baptism is necessary for salvation.
  - **Truth:** While important, salvation is through faith in Christ (**Ephesians 2:8-9**).
- **Myth 2:** Only certain people can baptize.
  - **Truth:** Any believer can baptize (**Matthew 28:19-20**).
- **Myth 3:** Infant baptism is unbiblical.
  - **Truth:** Early church practices included the baptism of whole households (**Acts 16:15**).

## Key Greek Terms:

- **Baptizo (βαπτίζω):** The Greek word meaning "to immerse" or "to dip," emphasizing the act of immersion in water.
- **Baptisma (βάπτισμα):** Refers to the act of baptism itself.
- **Metanoia (μετάνοια):** Meaning "repentance," which is often linked to the act of baptism.

## Scriptural Support:

- **Matthew 28:19-20:** The Great Commission, instructing believers to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- **Acts 2:38:** Peter's call to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.
- **1 Peter 3:21:** Baptism as a pledge of a good conscience toward God.

## References:

- **Matthew 28:19-20** (The Great Commission):

"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..."

- **Acts 2:38:**

"And Peter said to them, '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.'"

- **Romans 6:3-4:**

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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."

- **1 Corinthians 12:13:**

"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

- **Galatians 3:27:**

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

- **1 Peter 3:21:**

"Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

- **Mark 1:4:**

"John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."