

Baptism

God gave us the institution of Baptism to achieve a number of things.

1. It is an act of obedience to a direct command from Jesus.
2. It is the act of having one's sins remitted or forgiven.
3. It is an act of induction into Christ and the body of believers in Jesus Christ, with the hope of salvation.

So let's find out about these three things.

1. Act of obedience

Jesus requires his followers to be baptised – this is a direct command from Jesus himself.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" Matthew 28:19.

If Jesus requires this, then to be a follower of him, one must obey this command!

2. The remission of sins

The Apostle Peter made it clear when he preached in Jerusalem, a short time after Jesus gave the commandment that baptism is necessary for the remission or forgiveness of sins. It says in Acts 2:38:

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins".

These were ordinary men and women who had come to Jerusalem for a Jewish feast. But they recognised their need to have their sins forgiven. On that day, about 3,000 people were baptised.

3. The act of induction into Christ

This is as important as the other reasons, for it sets the baptised believer apart from other men and women. People who go through this act of baptism change their "status" in the eyes of God from being "in the world" to being "in Christ". As such it is the first step in a lifetime of obedience to Christ.

Paul puts it simply in Galatians 3:27:

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

In other words, the baptised person becomes part of the group of believers in Christ.

So, that is "why" we need to be baptised. But what happens when we are baptised, and, who should be baptised?

Jesus told the disciples in Mark 16:15,16: *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved".*

From this, we learn that before asking for baptism, a person must first hear the Gospel, understand what it is and then believe it. If these things are carried out, and a baptised person lives a faithful life in Christ, he or she is fulfilling God's requirements to be granted forgiveness of sins to live forever, by His grace.

It also shows how ineffective infant or child baptism is. There is no capacity in young children for understanding, or believing the Gospel message.

Baptism itself is an act of full immersion or covering in water, and there is no instance recorded in the Bible that anything less happened. John the Baptist used the River Jordan in which to baptise adult believers - Mark 1:5. Philip baptised the eunuch in an oasis - Acts 8:26-40. And the act of Baptism is said to be like a burial. Paul says in Romans 6:3-4:

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life".

Baptism is the first step which must be taken in a journey which, for faithful believers, will lead to eternal life in God's coming Kingdom on earth.

Note: all quotes are from the King James Version of the Bible