

## **BIBLE BAPTISM - WHY YOU SHOULD BE BAPTIZED**

We read in Ephesians 4:5 that there is "One Yahweh, one faith and one baptism." The purpose of this article is to clearly set forth the Bible teaching as to what baptism is, what it means, and how it is accomplished. From death to life, from despair to hope and from bondage to freedom. You go down into a watery grave and you are raised to walk in newness of life. In essence, that is baptism. The Word of Yahweh must be our source on such matters and NOT the opinions or traditions of any church or man.

We first invite the reader's attention to the meaning of the word "baptize," taken as it is from the Greek word "baptizo", which means to plunge, or to dip. The literal translation is to "immerse." It does not mean to "sprinkle" or "pour." The one who baptized with Bible baptism must plunge or dip the candidate under water. This, we will explain, was the practice of the early church, and the teaching of the apostles.

Belief and repentance precede baptism, as is found in Acts 2:38 and 18:8, Mark 16:16 and Acts 22:16. Yeshua (Jesus) commanded, "Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Peter exhorted, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Yeshua Messiah for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). It is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit which makes a person a Christian (Romans 8:9). Therefore, little babies receive no divine benefit from baptism, for they have never sinned (yet), and furthermore, they cannot repent or believe in Yeshua. Infant baptism has no place in the Bible. It is only a practice handed down to us from the dark ages when the Bibles were burned. It is one of the traditions of men.

Genuine repentance and conversion are not based solely on mere sentiment or stirred emotions or feelings, although they may be a part. True repentance and conversion involve coming to know that Yahweh is real, that he is the Supreme Being in the universe, working out his purposes here on planet Earth and that he is directly involved in his creation in a personal way. And that he is our Creator and our Father if we truly desire to surrender our lives to him and desire to have a relationship with him and his Son.

Repentance, therefore, becomes deep and personal, the beginning of a real relationship between our Maker and us. To repent, is to recognize and acknowledge that we have sinned against our Creator and that we are guilty of the death penalty (Rom.3:23; 6:23) and that we have made up our minds to turn from sin and live in harmony with Yah's will, since sin consists of thoughts and actions that are contrary to Yahweh's Commandments, His revealed will.

What, then, is the biblical definition of sin? "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Mankind's varied religions have all kinds of concepts of what sin is supposed to be. Some think of sin in terms of smoking, drinking, dancing and playing cards. To others, sin is a meaningless concept. Modern society is not in agreement on what is right or what is wrong. Each person decides for themselves and therefore, "situation ethics" prevails.

Yahweh's will is revealed in His commandments. Yeshua magnified the true spiritual intent of the commandments, lifting them from the physical plane to the mental or spiritual plane. He taught us that not only performing the act of murder or adultery was sin, but that sin originates in the

heart (mind). (Matt.5:21-22, 27-28). So, whether we mentally or physically break Yahweh's law, we are sinning.

Once Yahweh calls us to true understanding, we must repent of all thoughts and deeds that are in conflict with His will and purpose in our hearts that from this day forward we will stop sinning. With the gift of Yahweh's Spirit, we are changed from "commandment-breakers" to "commandment-keepers."

Baptism involves the symbolic burial of the old self in water. Yeshua first gave us the example of baptism, about which it is said, "And Yeshua, when He was baptized, went straightway out of the water." (Matthew 3:16) He was our example, whose steps we are to follow, in order to be saved and have everlasting life. John was baptizing in Aenon, because there was "much water" there. (John 3:23).

The Holy Spirit directed Philip to the desert of Gaza where he found a man sitting in a chariot, and he preached to him Messiah. As they rode along and came to a certain water, the eunuch said to Philip, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" "He commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him." (Acts 8:26 -39). This baptism was especially directed by the Holy Spirit, and it required both of them to go down into the water, just as when Yeshua was baptized.

So, in baptism we should be immersed in water, symbolically burying the old self in a watery grave. The act of baptism, then, would be meaningless unless we first come to a deep, personal realization of our sins and of our need for forgiveness by Yahweh. Upon thinking about our need for forgiveness, we should become deeply aware of what our Savior, Yeshua the Messiah, did for us. Yeshua died in our place, to pay the penalty of our sins. And so Yeshua, who was with the Father in eternity past, and who became flesh (John 1:14), humbled himself and allowed himself to be beaten, scourged, tormented and finally nailed to a tree for us (Phil.2:5-8).

Sound doctrine is usually connected with strict discipline. Where one is present usually the other is to be found. The word "Doctrine" means "Teaching." You must believe (accept, trust, rely) on Yeshua Messiah and have the sincere desire not to sin any more (repentance) and then be baptized. This gives you a new lease on life. "The like figure whereunto even Baptism doth NOW SAVE US (not putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward Yahweh,) by the resurrection of Yeshua Messiah." (1 Pet. 3:21).

You are baptized that the body of Sin that you now possess may be washed clean and be freed from sin. The Master struck down Paul on the way to Damascus. He was blinded by the light and truth from heaven. He was lead into the city of Damascus where he came to realize his awful sin. He had been working against the truth all the time. The Pastor of the church of Damascus came to see him and said; "Now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, WASH AWAY THY SINS..." (Acts 22:16).

Let Yahweh wash away your sins...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isa.1:18). We must be washed. We must acknowledge that we have sinned and will stop sinning. "Sin is the transgression of the law of Yahweh." (I John 2:3-5, 3:4). "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.... Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." (Ps.51:1-7).

In any church where the Bible teachings are not taught in a consistent, consecutive and constructive manner, that church is miserably weak and wanting. You cannot baptize just any way you wish. It must be done like the Bible states, and in the proper manner and perspective. The exercise of discipline was one of the strong points in the early Assemblies of Yahweh. It still MUST be one of the strong points today. When the Church sent Philip the Evangelist to hold a revival in Samaria, many believed and were baptized. An impostor named Simon appeared. He professed to be a believer even to the extent of being baptized (Acts 8:5-13). But Simon had never been truly converted. He used water baptism as a show to others that he was also a Child of Yahweh.

We find the condition of the whole world in Simon. He was diseased, (by sin), carnally minded and deluded. These are the conditions that all Children of God have to fight. Before each of us came to the Messiah and were baptized, each one was also diseased, carnally minded and deluded. And who can counter the effects of a delusion? None but Yahweh, and His Son, Yeshua through the workings of the Holy Spirit of Yahweh.

After we are baptized, do we continue to sin? The 6th chapter of Romans is often called the baptism chapter. In verse one Paul asks a very important question that seemingly few in Christianity today really understand. Perhaps you are one of those who would like to grow in grace and knowledge of our Master and Savior Yeshua Messiah. Paul asked... "What shall we say then? Shall we (those who have been baptized, received the Holy Spirit and are now Children of Yahweh) continue in sin, that grace may abound?" This is extremely important! Shall we, after baptism after receiving pardon through the manifold grace of Yahweh, continue to break His Law. ( I John 3:4) What was Paul's answer in verse 2? "Yahweh forbid!" Yes, this answer was inspired by the Spirit of Yahweh, but some will say..."Oh, you cannot keep God's Law, and you must not continue to break it."

Paul goes on in Rom. 6:2..."How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" In other words, how can we that have died (figuratively) through baptism as a ceremony of the act of paying of the penalty for our transgression of Yah's Law (sin), keep on transgressing His Law (sinning)? It was the transgression, which brought on the death penalty in the first place!

Most people today do not fully grasp the terrible consequences of sin. Sin destroys. Sin kills. All of the curses, heartaches, emptiness, wretchedness and suffering of our society, are caused by sin! To grasp the awfulness of sin, all that we need to do is look around us carefully and realistically at the "fruit" of this world -- a world in which men and women follow after their selfish, self-centered, corrupted human nature. What do you see?

We see families coming apart at the seams, single-parent families, divorce and separation is rampant. People need the life-changing spirit of Messiah, Who would provide them with the necessary skills (fruit of the spirit), which would enable them to make their relationships work. We see crime in epidemic proportions, juvenile delinquency, drug use, sexual promiscuity and with it the rapid spread of sexually transmitted diseases. We see human lusts, greed and selfishness leading to massive environmental problems that threaten the very existence of life. We see wretched living conditions, the world over, even in our technologically advanced age. What is the real cause of these problems?

Sin, in its various forms! And the only genuine solution to the problem of sin, is the forgiveness and change that our Creator makes possible through the indwelling of His Son, Yeshua the Messiah! (Gal.2:20). Only Yahweh can perform "spiritual" heart surgery to cure the problem of sin and only Messiah living through you on a daily basis will keep you from sinning so that you can live a victorious, abundant Christian life.

When a person considers baptism in the name of Yeshua, our Messiah, he or she must focus soberly on the awesome love and spirit of sacrifice of the One who became Yeshua the Messiah, our Savior. We must never forget the depth of love He has for us as our living High Priest (Heb.2:17; 4:14-16; Rom.8:34-37). A profound appreciation of what Yeshua did, and is now doing, is a vital part of the attitude one must have as he or she prepares for Christian baptism.

We have already seen that on the Day of Pentecost Peter proclaimed, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Yeshua Messiah for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Yeshua commanded his disciples: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name (authority) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (of Yah)" (Matt.28:19). In mark's gospel we read, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (judged)" (Mark 16:15,16).

Baptism is clearly a vital part of the process of salvation. In the book of Acts, the apostles followed the teaching of Yeshua by baptizing. "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls (people) were added to them" (Acts 2:41). "But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of Yahweh and the name of Yeshua the Messiah, both men and women were baptized" (Acts 8:12).

The example of water baptism continues with the first gentile convert, a Roman captain named Cornelius. As Yahweh began to open his mind to understanding, he became very zealous in prayer, good deeds, fasting and seeking the true Elohim.

When the time was right, Yahweh answered his prayers (Acts 10:3-4). Yahweh moved Peter to bring the gospel to him, and, as on the Day of Pentecost, poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit (even before baptism, in this case). Then Peter stated: "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Master." (vs.47-48). You see, water baptism is not just an "option" for one seeking Yahweh's forgiveness and His Holy spirit. Baptism is a command given by Yeshua to his disciples. (Matt.28:19).

When we are baptized, we must understand that we are not baptized into a church or denomination. Paul tells us plainly the significance of baptism in the following scripture: "Know ye not, that so many of us were baptized into Yeshua Messiah, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Messiah was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Romans 6:3-5).

In the watery grave, is where we meet Yeshua and the old carnal man of sin is destroyed and put off. Here we put on the new nature, having had a change of heart. If you have only been

sprinkled or something else besides "baptism" you are not in a saved condition. You have never experienced the joy that is yours to receive. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Vs.6).

"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of Elohim, who hath raised him from the dead." (Col. 2:12)

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Messiah. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many." (I Cor. 12:12-14).

Through receiving the Holy Spirit after baptism, we are put into, and become part of, the Church (Ecclesia - called ones) of Yahweh. We cannot "join" the church. We must be placed into the body of Messiah by the Holy Spirit. Newly baptized Christians are to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Master and Savior Yeshua the Messiah". (2 Peter 3:18). They are gradually transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:1-2). They begin to bear the "fruits" of the divine nature: love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (self-control)..." (Gal.5:22-23).

If anyone simply has water sprinkled on their heads, or even poured on them, they are not baptized. We prayerfully ask such ones to follow the instruction of Yeshua, and repent, be baptized, and enter into divine relationship with Yahweh; for you have never done so yet. A truly converted individual will have much to proclaim about their new love for Yeshua and His Father. A person may sound 'religious', but do they really "know" Yeshua, as their friend and constant companion? For to "know" Him is to have eternal life. This was part of the Master's prayer in the garden: "And this is life eternal, that they might "know" (Greek - ginosko - intimately) thee the only true Elohim, and the Messiah, Yeshua, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:4).

The "good news," the gospel, is that men and women can be reconciled back to our Creator, Yahweh. The good news is that we have a Redeemer who has paid the death penalty our sins have incurred. Further good news, is that we may receive the free gift of eternal life in the kingdom of Yahweh. Yeshua promised that he would return to this earth as King and divine Ruler. The gospel is his message about the soon-coming kingdom of Yahweh and the ultimate hope for all of mankind.

To summarize then, a true conversion involves a total and complete surrender to Yahweh. it means that Yahweh reveals himself and his overall purpose to an individual who then yields wholeheartedly to his calling. With the help of Yahweh's Spirit, the believer begins to live by every word of Yahweh (Matt.4:4).

Over time, the Christian's attitudes change toward everything. Now the purpose of life is to serve the Creator and develop godly character, the mind of Messiah (Phil.2:5). The apostle Paul expressed this when he wrote: "I am crucified with Messiah; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Messiah lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of Yahweh, who loved me, and gave himself for me". (Gal.2:20). Christians do not argue or rebel against the teachings of the Bible. They study diligently to "prove all things" (1 Thess.5:21) and become more like Messiah.

Do you truly believe the message of the coming kingdom of Yahweh? Will you surrender wholeheartedly to the Elohim of the Bible, accept his Son as your Savior and coming King? Will you humble yourself in baptism as a symbol of the burial of your old self? Are you prepared to live by the will of Yahweh and follow his way of Life? This is what Yahweh wants.

If, after reading this article, you know that you have proved to yourself that Yahweh is real and that his Word is true, if you are ready to unconditionally surrender to the Creator and gratefully accept the sacrifice of His Son as your Savior, then you should be baptized. Certainly, you should "count the cost" (Luke 14:25-33).

Often family and friends may forsake or even persecute the true Christian. You may lose your job, or have to change jobs in order to obey your maker and keep his Sabbath holy. But Yah has promised, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb.13:5). You do not have to wait until you are "perfect" before baptism because baptism is the beginning of the Christian life, not the end. Read Col. 3:1-5, and through daily prayer set your affections on things of Yahweh, by seeking Him for every beautiful attribute that so abounded in Yeshua, and Yahweh will give them to you.

Some people pride themselves on being "independent Christians." They feel that they don't need a church or a minister to instruct them. Apparently some also feel they don't need the fellowship, the sharing, the group worship or the sense of togetherness that people in Yah's Church enjoy. Such attitudes are not supported in the Bible, which clearly tells us: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching" (Heb.10:24-25).

We need the fellowship and encouragement of other members in the body of Messiah. We all need to learn to love and minister to our brethren. We cannot do this if we don't get to know them through fellowship. The church is the physical body of Yeshua. Together, we are the physical instruments through whom Messiah does his Work of preaching the gospel. As you approach baptism, be thankful there are thousands of other true Christians who have genuinely repented of their sins and surrendered their lives to Yahweh's will. Be thankful that He has called you and that there is a spiritual family around the world to help and encourage you, pray for you and worship with you.

If you are truly repentant and ready for baptism, you will desire the fellowship and opportunity to share the Christian life with your brethren. You will look forward to participating in Sabbath services, fellowshiping with Yahweh's people and to receiving instruction in His way of life.

Dear reader, may Yahweh grant you the humility and the spiritual courage to act according to His will.