

Small Groups – Baptism – myfishbites.com

BIBLE - Matthew 3.13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?'

Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness.' Then John consented.

As soon as Jesus was baptised, 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 alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'

Jesus began his ministry by getting baptised.

What is baptism?

The word itself comes from the Greek word 'bapto' which means 'to dip something into a fluid and then take it out again'. In English, baptise means 'to cause something to be dipped'. That's why Baptists for example believe the person should be fully 'immersed' (covered) by water. Other denominations have different ways or a range of ways of baptising.

What are the stages of baptism?

Look at Acts 2.37-38 and Mark 16.15-16.

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 baptised, 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. (Acts 2.37-38, NIV)

(Jesus) said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16.15-16, NIV)

From this we learn that we need to repent then believe and then be baptised. We need to have a good conscience before God (1 Pet 3.21) and we need to commit to a life of being a disciple (Matt 28.19-20). Baptism can and should lead to a new level of commitment from us to God and his Kingdom.

In our body we have a bath or a shower or wash to clean us from dirt and to help our skin. In the spiritual life, baptism is a symbol of the removal of the dirt of sin and is a statement that we want to follow God.

... and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3.21, NIV)

In Matthew 3 (the first Bible reading), we see that Jesus was baptised by John even though John didn't think he was up to the task! He wasn't but when Jesus calls us to do something he also appoints us and gives us his authority to do it. Being with Jesus has that effect on us - we realise that compared to him we aren't much!

But at the same time, we can do all things that Jesus calls us to do through his power of the Holy Spirit in us. We aren't anything by ourselves, but we're not just by ourselves - we have Jesus in us! So when good things happen we know it's not us but God. We just need to say yes.

Question - what does true humility look like?

Question - When we watch a movie with a superhero, we see how they change from human to super-being. If this is true in a movie, how much more is it true for us with the power of God living on the inside of us! What would it look like to live a life knowing and showing God's power in us?

We also see John's obedience. Once Jesus told him that it was God's will to be baptised by John, John agreed. Is this a lesson you need to learn?

What happened when Jesus came up out of the water (?) - the miraculous. It often does when God is at work! Heaven opened and God's Spirit came down on Jesus like a dove. (This is why a dove often represents the Holy Spirit). Then God's voice came from heaven saying that Jesus was his son who he loved and who he was well pleased with.

From this we learn to approach baptism with a sense of expectation about what God will do for us. We can also be 'baptised in the Spirit' and see God really bless us once we have been baptised. Is this something you need to do?

Some churches teach that we need to learn more about baptism before we get baptised. Sometimes we read a book, sometimes we may do a short course. Do you think we should wait before we get baptised? Have a look at Acts 8.35-39 and Acts 16.25-34.

- MORE QUESTIONS -

- What have you learned from this bit of the Bible?
- How can you apply it to your life?
- Can children be baptised? (Acts 10 and Acts 16) Can young children make the kinds of decisions that baptism requires?
- What do you think it means to be 'baptised in the Spirit'? Do you agree with this?

- WORK OUT -

- Have you been baptised? What happened next?
- Do you think you should be baptised? Do you fulfill the conditions?

Did you know?

Did you know that Jewish baptism (from ancient times up to today) involves someone baptising themselves by immersing themselves in water? Messianic Jews usually follow this kind of baptism today. This has led to speculation that this is most likely the way that John 'baptised' Jesus and the other people he baptised. Traditional Judaism requires converts into Judaism to immerse themselves fully in water in a Mikvah or body of "living water." (See Wikipedia for more on this). Therefore, we could view John the baptist's role as an enabler of others baptising themselves, rather than the baptiser of others.