

DISCOVER PROPHECY



The Water and the Blood

15

Jesus Final Words

Often the final words given by someone are considered to be very valuable and important. Jesus, just before leaving the disciples and others and ascending into heaven, gave some final words to them. Note these words and the importance placed upon them! “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” Matthew 28:19,20. The final words given by Jesus, just before He ascended into heaven was that we should go and baptize people for Him.

Baptism, mentioned some 80 times in the New Testament, was a vital part of the Christian church. Since it is mentioned so many times, and because it was the topic of Jesus’ last words, we will take a little time to look into this subject!

Not only is baptism mentioned so many times and Jesus included it in His final words, but it is something we as Christians are seriously asked by Christ to do. “Truly, truly, I say to you,” Jesus said, “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” John 3:5. Jesus says that it is a must for salvation. “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved” Mark 16:16. Is baptism important? It certainly is something we should do.

What Is Baptism?

There are so many different opinions available today advocating the different methods of baptism. Some are sprinkled, some are immersed under the water, some have had flower petals thrown onto them and some doused in alcohol. But the Bible is clear that there is only one true method of baptism. The Bible says that there is only, “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” Ephesians 4:5. The question is, “What is that biblical method of baptism? What is Bible baptism like?

To begin with, baptism is a Greek word. When the translators were translating from Greek to English, they didn’t translate this word, but placed it into the English text in its Greek form. The Greek word, “Baptizo” (βαπτίζω) means to dip, immerse or plunge under the water. So if we were to translate the text, Jesus would

have said, “He who has believed and has been immersed or plunged under shall be saved.”

When John the Baptist was at the Jordan River, he was baptizing people there. Note the method of baptism he used. “Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins” Matthew 3:5,6. John was baptizing the people at the River Jordan. If baptism was anything else other than immersion, he could have been elsewhere, but true biblical baptism requires a great deal of water. Why then did he go to the River Jordan? “John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there” John 3:23. The reason was the supply of water for immersion.

Jesus’ Baptism

Since Jesus is our example, how was it that He was baptized? All the people were gathered around the Jordan river, listening to John the Baptist and becoming baptized. Then, Jesus walks from among the crowd and comes to John to be baptized. Jesus, being perfect, was baptized. How much more should we? “Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” Matthew 3:15. Jesus says that baptism is a part of fulfilling righteousness and important for us to do!

“And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, and behold a voice out of the heavens, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’” Matthew 3:16,17. Jesus came up from out of the water. He was immersed in it. Then afterwards, God spoke saying that He was well pleased with Jesus for being baptized. God is still well pleased when we choose to be baptized for Him.

In the book of Acts, we see the deacon Philip put to practice what Jesus had commanded them to do in His final words. Note the experience. One day Philip was impressed by the Lord to go to the road side because there he would meet someone who would need to learn some things from Philip. So he went.

Along the road came this Ethiopian eunuch. This

man, in a chariot, was going down the road and reading from the book of Isaiah. He wasn't quite sure what it all meant. Philip saw the man and began running along side the chariot asking if he might be able to help. The Ethiopian said he didn't understand the passage and was wishing that someone might help. Philip jumps into the chariot and gives that man a Bible study on the ministry, life and death of Christ. The Ethiopian was amazed and wanted to make his hearts response come out in a public expression.

"And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the Eunuch said, 'Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?' And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him" Acts 8:36-38.

When it was time to be baptized, after he had studied the Bible, they both went down into the water to be baptized, rather than using what drinking water they had on the chariot. Baptism required enough water to immerse under.

What Does Baptism Represent?

Baptism, much like a marriage ceremony, represents something very special and significant. As a marriage ceremony, it represents my commitment to Jesus Christ. I love Him enough that I want to publicly make that profession for all to see and hear. Beyond the marriage ceremony, the Bible gives some very special meaning to the act of baptism.

"...having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" Colossians 2:12. Baptism represents my new life in Jesus Christ. As Jesus died on the cross, was buried in the grave and was resurrected again on Sunday morning, I go through the same process- spiritually. It is my death, burial and resurrection.

"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" Romans 6:3,4.

Baptism is our dying to the old life and experiencing the resurrection in the new life in Christ. Jesus died on the cross for us. But we too must die to our lives. We choose to give ourselves completely over to Him, letting

His will control us. And as He was resurrected from the grave, so we too will have a new, happier life.

What about children and their baptism? Some churches baptize children. Does the Bible teach that children should be baptized? Remember that baptism is a choice an individual makes to follow Jesus; to die to the old life and live a new life in Jesus Christ. Since a child can't make that choice independently on their own, baptism would have no meaning. Therefore, we wait for children to reach an age of maturity where they understand their commitment. Much like Jesus and His turning twelve and going to worship at the sanctuary for the first time.

The Bible does talk extensively about the subject of dedicating a child to the Lord. When a child is born he or she should be dedicated to the Lord through a special service. There were many children in the Bible that were brought to Jesus or God and presented in dedication. The prophet Samuel, Isaac and even Jesus was dedicated shortly after birth. If you would like that, we do have a special service for the children as we dedicate them to the Lord, giving them over to His care until they are baptized.

Historical Baptism

What was baptism like historically? Why then do some sprinkle if the Bible says it should be by immersion? Ancient churches use to baptize by immersion. A first century church building located in the region of Philippi has been found by archeologists. This church building shows us that in the church people were baptized by immersion. Inside the building was a large baptismal font or pool. In Rome there are many older cathedral's that also have baptisteries in them. The Leaning Tower of Pisa itself has within it a baptismal font for the immersion baptism.

Located in Capodicea, Turkey, there is an old city. This city was once occupied by Christians during the dark ages who did not want to follow along with the Catholic church's teachings. In a church there was a baptismal font large enough to immerse new Christians in.

The Russian king, Vladimir the Great was baptized by immersion. In a painting of his baptism we see him in a baptistery large enough to immerse in.

In a fourth century African Fresco of Jesus' baptism, we see the depiction is of Jesus being baptized by immersion. With himself almost completely covered in water.

It was not until the council of Ravenna in 1311 AD

that sprinkling and pouring were officially accepted as equally valid as immersion in the rite of baptism. It was accepted because over the years, they found it to be easier. But remember, you take and change the form, you change the meaning of baptism! No immersion, no death! No immersion no burial of sin! No coming up, no new life in Christ!

Steps To Baptism

What are the various steps to baptism? How do I know when I am ready to make the decision to follow Christ? What must I do?

1. *Repentance*. “Brethren, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins’” Acts 2:37,38. The first step in preparation for baptism is that of repentance. Repentance is experiencing a genuine sorrow for sin. This occurs when we understand that Jesus died for MY sins. His death was a reality and my transgression of the law caused His dying upon the cross. His hands were pierced through for me. He wore the crown of thorns for me. His feet were nailed to the old rugged cross for me. He suffered for me. He died.... FOR ME!
2. *Believe*. “If you believe with all your heart, you may” Acts 8:37. The second step is to believe and accept Jesus Christ as both your Savior and Lord. This means that you experience salvation through Him and as you die to the old life, His will now controls the decisions you make. Do you believe that Jesus died for you? Do you wish to make Him Lord of your life?
3. *Learn & Receive*. “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls” Acts 2:41. Once the people had learned and received the word of God, they were ready for baptism. A necessary step is to come to a basic understanding of the scriptures and the Lord’s will for your life. Once you’ve learned the basics of the Bible and have received it, you are ready for baptism.

Join A Church?

Does being baptized mean that I would have to join a church? I am often asked this question by people who come to me wanting to be baptized. Let’s look at just a few verses to answer this question.

“The Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved” Acts 2:47. Here in the

book of Acts, shortly after Jesus left, the people who were coming to Christ and being baptized were added to the church. The Lord was adding people to their numbers. To the group of people.

“For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body” 1 Corinthians 12:13. When people are baptized, the Bible is saying, they are joining together with a body of believers, the church. Baptism is the entry into the body of Christ. When you become baptized, you are officially joining the church of the Bible, the followers of Christ, His church!

“For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” Romans 12:4-5. “And He is the head of the body, the church” Colossians 1:18. Speaking of Christ, when we join the church, we are joining a group of people that are not following a religious leader, but following Jesus Christ. He is the head of His church.

“You are God’s household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone...in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit” Ephesians 2:19-22. Here the Bible describes those who are Christ’s as part of a family. “In Christ’s body we’re all connected to each other” Ephesians 4:25. To not be part of the church is like being an estranged family member.

“Know that the LORD Himself is God. It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture” Psalm 100:3. Once you give yourself to Christ, you become a sheep in a flock.

So when you make the decision to be baptized, according to the Bible, you become part of the body, a member of the family, a sheep in a flock and you are joining the church. You are joining the body of Christ with Him at the head!

Will You Be Baptized?

Jesus’ final words to the world; Jesus final words to His disciples; Jesus final words to you were, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” Matthew 28:19,20. If you have not been baptized, wouldn’t you like to be? Wouldn’t you like to publicly proclaim your desire to let Jesus lead in your

life? Wouldn't you like to experience Bible baptism?

Jesus is in the process of adding more and more people to His church every day. He desires you to be added too. Won't you follow along? Won't you follow Him?

"And now why do you delay? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name" Acts 22:16.

