

TIM CHESTER

Preparing for
BAPTISM

3
sessions

Exploring what the Bible says
about baptism

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Preparing for Baptism
Exploring what the Bible says about baptism

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Contents

Introduction 5

Session 1: Baptism is a sign that
we have a new hope..... 7

Session 2: Baptism is a sign that
we have a new family.....13

Session 3: Baptism is a sign that
we have a new life.....21

Introduction

“What shall we do?” This is what people asked the apostle Peter when he had finished preaching about Jesus on the day of Pentecost.

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.”³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

(Acts 2 v 38-39)

Perhaps you feel God calling you to be a Christian. Perhaps someone has told you about Jesus and you want to know what to do next. Perhaps you grew up in a Christian home, but now you want to express your own personal faith. Peter says, “Repent and be baptised”.

Peter also says, “The promise is for you and your children”. Maybe your parents had you baptised when you were a child because they wanted to express God’s promise of salvation to you. And now perhaps you’re wondering what that means.

We’re going to look at how baptism shows us what it means to be a Christian.

Note for Leaders

A free downloadable leader’s guide is available to use with this study guide.

You can find it at:

www.thegoodbook.co.uk/preparing-for-baptism-leaders-guide (UK & Europe)

www.thegoodbook.com/preparing-for-baptism-leaders-guide (N. America)

www.thegoodbook.com.au/preparing-for-baptism-leaders-guide (Australia)

www.thegoodbook.co.nz/preparing-for-baptism-leaders-guide (New Zealand).

session
1

Baptism is a sign that we have a new hope

About this passage

This extract is from one of the four accounts in the Bible of the life of Jesus. John the Baptist was a prophet appointed by God to prepare for the coming of Jesus.

Mark 1 v 4-11

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the River Jordan. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt round his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

1. Look at verses 4-5. What was the significance of the baptism John was offering?

Jesus lived a perfect life, so he didn't need to confess any sins or have any sins forgiven. So, when he was baptised, he wasn't identifying himself *as* a sinner. Instead he was identifying himself *with* sinners.

2. Look at verse 11. What was God the Father's verdict on Jesus?

About this passage

James and John were two of Jesus' disciples. Just before this conversation Jesus had predicted that he would soon be arrested and executed, and then rise from the dead.

Mark 10 v 35-38

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to [Jesus]. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

³⁶ "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

³⁷ They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

³⁸ "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with?"

Jesus is talking about his death, using two pictures: "baptism" and "the cup".

- **Baptism:** In the Old Testament, water was sometimes a sign of God's judgment. God judged the world at the time of Noah with a flood (Genesis 6 v 9 - 8 v 22). He destroyed the Egyptian army in the waters of the Red Sea (Exodus 14).
- **The cup:** Drinking the cup of God's wrath is another picture of judgment in the Old Testament (for example, Jeremiah 25 v 15-16).

3. What is Jesus saying about the meaning of his baptism by John?

4. What is Jesus saying about the meaning of his death?

Baptism is like a wedding

In his baptism Jesus identified with us (he was willing to be treated like a sinner, despite being sinless). And when we put our faith in Jesus, God identifies us with Jesus. We're united to Jesus and this is what is displayed and sealed in baptism. So baptism is like a wedding. Imagine a poor slave girl marrying a prince: he takes her debts and covers them; she receives his status. Jesus lived the life we should have lived and died the death that we deserve to die.

About this passage

One of the main leaders among the first Christians was the apostle Paul. This extract is from a letter he wrote to a church in Ephesus (in modern-day Turkey).

Ephesians 2 v 8-10

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.¹⁰ For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

5. What do you need to do to be saved from God’s judgment?

6. How would you put these verses in your own words?

7. Look again at Mark 1 v 11 (p7). What is God’s verdict on you if you are united to Jesus, do you think?

1 Peter 3 v 21 says baptism is “the pledge of a clear conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Baptism itself doesn’t save us. It’s not a magical act. We’re saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism is this promise to us expressed in physical form. It’s like a wedding ring. A husband gives a wedding ring as a sign of his love and commitment. Baptism is a sign of Christ’s love and commitment to us.

8. Are you confident that God will give you eternal life? What gives you this confidence? Or what stops you having this confidence?

9. Do you have any questions about Jesus and the hope that he offers?
