

2. Baptism in Water and the Holy Spirit

Training objective:

To ensure that we understand the importance and the significance of baptism in water and the Holy Spirit and come into a genuine experience of both.

Study:

Baptism defined

- Baptism in water is part of becoming a Christian. It is where we voluntarily choose to be submerged in water as an outward sign that we are choosing to trust and to follow Jesus.
- The Jewish context of baptism meant to identify or associate with a person, message, or group. It was observed by Gentiles converting to the Jewish faith. John the Baptist baptised those who identified with his message of repentance. Christian baptism means identifying with Christ's death, burial and resurrection- Rom 6:3-5. It is a public declaration of our faith in Jesus. Martyrdom is also described by Jesus as a baptism- Mk 10:38-39. It is where we physically identify with the suffering of Christ.
- It is a picture of what has happened to us when we come to Christ- we are now 'in' Christ, united with His body. The Holy Spirit baptised us into Christ's body when we believed (1Cor 12:13). The picture is also the washing of our sins (Tit 3:5; Acts 22:16).

Why should we be baptised?

- It is commanded by Jesus- Matt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16

Who should be baptised?

- Those who are choosing to become disciples, that is followers, of Jesus- Mt 28:18-20
- Those who are believers in Jesus-Mk 16:15-16
- Those who are truly sorry for their sins before God, choosing to actively turn to pursue God's ways instead- Acts 2:37-38

Is it right to practise infant baptism, or christening?

3 common arguments people would give for infant baptism are:

1. Parallels to Old Testament circumcision done by parents for their children-Col 2:11

Problems:

- Context of passage is that circumcision of the heart is the equivalent of circumcision of the flesh.
- Also parallels between baptism and the flood-1Pet 3:20-21, and crossing the Red Sea- 1Cor 10:1-2
- Only boys were to be circumcised, but baptism is for all
- In Acts 15 the controversy over circumcision for Gentiles is not solved by baptism but by the fact that we are released from the law of Moses.
- Baptism and circumcision both continue side by side in ministry of Jesus. Also Paul circumcised Timothy. Some Jewish believers today still circumcise, not in obedience to the Mosaic covenant (which has now been fulfilled in Christ) but in accordance the Abrahamic covenant as a sign of their Jewishness.

- John the Baptist made it clear that even people who had been circumcised needed to make a choice rather than rely on their heritage (Matt 3:9)

2. Households that were baptised in the Bible- Acts 16:15, 31-33, 18:8; 1Cor 1:16

Problems:

- We are not told the ages
- Children can also understand and respond by faith without parents doing it for them
- There are many instances of individuals in the New Testament *believing* and being baptised, but there are no recorded situations where people baptise newborn babies.

3. Paul speaking of children as made holy by their parent's faith-1Cor 7:14.

Problems:

- Baptism isn't mentioned here.
- Unbelieving spouses are said to be sanctified also, but they are not baptised by adherents of infant baptism.
- Paul is simply saying that when someone becomes a Christian in a family, their godly influence has a positive godly effect not only on children yet to make a decision for God, but also on other relations yet to make a decision for God. He uses this as an argument for people not to get divorced just because their husbands or wives are unbelievers. The argument is that just as a parent does not give up on their children as they wait for them to come to faith, so also Christians should not give up on their unbelieving husbands or wives.

Other problems with christening:

- It comes from an idea of baptismal regeneration- that the process magically saves someone rather than faith and repentance. It can also forestall a true commitment to Jesus.
- There are no New Testament commands to baptise infants, or examples of them being baptised.
- It was not practised in the early Church. The first clear case was in the 3rd century.

The Bible gives faith and repentance as the conditions of baptism

- Repentance-Acts 2:38
- Faith-- Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:12,10:43-48,16:31,33, 18:8.
- Later manuscripts of Acts 8:37 read "Then 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."*" (Acts 8:37, NKJV). Even though this passage is not contained in the earlier more reliable manuscripts, its presence in later manuscripts reflects at the very least an early church stance that you must first believe before being baptised.

To conclude, then, children can be baptised as soon as they understand the gospel and the implications of what they are doing. They must be able to make a decision for themselves to follow Jesus, before they are baptised.

When should baptism occur?

- Peter instructs people to be baptised as soon as they believe. Note that on each occasion quoted, it is people hearing the good news of Jesus for the first time and responding- Acts 2:37-38, 2:41, 10:44-48
- The Ethiopian eunuch, told the good news by Philip, is still in the throws of being witnessed to when he sees water and arranges his own baptism- Acts 8:35-38
- Saul (Paul) baptised as soon as he believed the gospel- Acts 9:17-18

- Paul, in the period of several days both preaches the gospel at Philippi, and baptises a whole household-Acts 16:12-15
- Also whilst in Philippi, Paul shares the gospel with the local prison jailer and his family. As soon as they believe he baptises them- Acts 16:29-34

Should baptism be 'full immersion' or can it be done another way such as pouring or sprinkling?

- The Greek word for baptism is 'bapto' or 'baptizo'. The normal, primary meaning of this is to immerse (it is used outside of the New testament to speak of sunken ships) . It can, however, have a secondary meaning 'to bring under the influence of', but this would depend on the context. The greek language has words for 'pouring' (epicheo, katecheo) and 'sprinkling' (rantizo) but they are never used in connection with baptism. When early translations of the Bible into English happened, sprinkling was so widespread that rather than translated 'baptizo' into the English 'immerse' it was instead transliterated. The Greek Orthodox Church, although similar to the Catholic Church, practises full immersion because they understand what the word 'baptizo' really means.
- It would appear from the following passages that people were normally baptised full immersion- John 3:23; Acts 8:38-39; Mt 3:11,16; Mk 1:5,8-10
- Full immersion seems to be the way Jesus was baptised- Mt 3:16; Mk 1:9-10
- Full immersion seems to better convey the picture of us being buried with Christ- Rom 6:3-5; Col 2:12
- The evidence is that the early church practised full-immersion. Pouring began in the 2nd century AD as an exception to the rule in extreme circumstances (like on a death-bed). Sprinkling didn't come in until the 12th century AD.

Should people ever be re-baptised?

- In Acts 19:1-7 people were re-baptised who had not been through a proper believer's baptism
- If we have not been baptised by full immersion as a believer it would be logical to re-baptise in obedience to biblical guidelines
- If we have already been baptised by full immersion as a believer we should never repeat it as there is 'one baptism'-Eph 4:5

Who should perform the baptism?

- You do not have to be an ordained minister to baptise someone. The Bible teaches the 'priesthood of all believers' and this would suggest that there should be no such restrictions on who carries out the baptism- 1Pet 2:4-10. As baptism is a picture of being united with Christ's body, the Church, it makes sense to be baptised by the Church that will be your home.

If a person has not been filled with God's Holy Spirit can they be baptised?

- At times when clear teaching has not been given, people do become Christians and are baptised before they come into an experience of God filling them with His Holy Spirit. If a person has not been filled with the Holy Spirit it does not mean that they are not saved or cannot be baptised. Also, if they have been baptised it does not make their baptism invalid, but it is important that they are taught and prayed for so that they too will be filled with God's Spirit as soon as possible- Acts 8:14-17
- However, it makes more sense for people to be filled with God's Holy Spirit as soon as they respond to the good news of Jesus, rather than to have to wait until some point after they are baptised- Acts 10:44-48. Not only does God want us to know that our sins are washed away, which is one of the pictures of baptism, but He also

wants us to be immersed in His Holy Spirit, which is something else that baptism illustrates. Therefore, those being baptised should be encouraged to believe for this both when they are baptised and each day of their lives, from conversion onwards.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

What do you understand by the term, 'Holy Spirit'?

- He is a person, not a 'force' In Greek nouns are either masculine, feminine, or neuter. The Greek word for Spirit is "Pneuma," which according to Greek grammar has to be neuter, - an "it." However, there are a number of places where this general rule is broken, and the personal pronoun, "He" is used instead- Eph 4:30. This passage says that we are to be careful not to make the Holy Spirit sad. It is not possible to grieve an impersonal force, as the Jehovah Witnesses, perceive Him to be.
- He is God : Many people are frightened of the Spirit. They feel comfortable with the Father, and with Jesus, but not with the Spirit. John 14:16 tells us that the Spirit is of essence the same as Jesus, He is God! If He is God then He is also good! Lk 11:11-12 assures us that the gift of the Spirit is a good gift.
- He is not a spook. The King James translation of the Bible translated the words Holy 'Spirit' as the Holy 'Ghost', but the word simply means spirit rather than flesh and blood. It is the Spirit who takes over the work of Jesus on the earth after His ascension; a very personal work- John 14:16; John 15:26
- He manifests and is described in different ways in the Bible :Fire-Acts 2:3; Mat 3:11. Wind/breath Ezek 37:5, 14; Acts 2:2 . Rain/water/river- John 7:38-39. Oil of anointing-Luk 4:18

What does the Holy Spirit do in the lives of Christians?

- He gives us birth into the family of God. He plants a seed of the life of God within our hearts (this process we call 'regeneration')- John 3:5-7
- He assures us that we are God's children- Romans 8:15-16
- The Holy Spirit acts as a deposit, or a seal of guarantee that God will also give us eternal life- 2 Corinthians 5:5; Eph 1:13-14
- He helps to develop our relationship with the Lord - He gives us revelation- Eph 1:17
- He helps us to pray- Rom 8:26
- He helps to produce the likeness of God in us - the fruit of the Spirit- Gal 5:22-23
- He produces a bonding within the family- Eph 4:3-6
- He gives us spiritual gifts to equip us for ministry- 1Cor 12:1-11
- He empowers us to be witnesses- Acts 1:8. Luke 24:49

Are all Christians filled with the Holy Spirit?

- In Rom 8:9, Paul tells us that all Christians have the Holy Spirit. Also in 1Cor 12:13 it says the Holy Spirit baptised us into one body. However, that does not mean that all Christians are full of the Holy Spirit automatically. In Acts 19:1-7 there were believers who needed teaching and ministry on this before they were filled. Also Eph 5:18 says 'be filled with the Holy Spirit'- the Greek tense here means 'go on being filled'.

What happens when we are filled with the Holy Spirit?

- We are given a gift/gifts- 1Cor 12:7-11; Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4:7-13. Often the first gift received is the gift of tongues- Acts 2:6; Acts 10:46,19:6, but not always-1Cor 12:11,30

- People often are released in praise and worship, or in prophecy- Acts 2:11; Acts 10:46, 19:6
- There is a difference in the life of the person-boldness to witness and speak God's word-Acts 4:31, Acts 6:10, fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5).
- Eph 5:18 says to be filled with the Holy Spirit instead of getting drunk on wine. Sometimes people feel intoxicated and joyful when they are full of the Holy Spirit
- We are not always told the way in which the Holy Spirit came upon people in the Bible, but there was always a noticeable response- Acts 8:17-18
- Sometimes there are physical manifestations- feeling electricity running through your body, shaking, falling over, laughter, crying, peace. These manifestations are normal and have been noted throughout Church history especially at times of revival. We should neither avoid them, nor seek them specifically, but allow God to come in the way He chooses.

Read Lk 11:9-13. Sometimes doubt, fear or inadequacies hinder our being filled with the Holy Spirit. How does this passage address these issues?

- Doubt : The promises in v.9-10, are sure and steadfast. They contain no "ifs and buts," they are Yes and Amen.
- Fear : Some people fear that if they open themselves up to receive the Spirit, then how can they be sure that what they receive is from God, and is not "of the Devil." The answer to this fear is to point people to the nature of God. He is all powerful. He is good. He is your Father. Is this all powerful, Father, when you are asking Him for that which He delights to give, to bless you, going to allow the devil to muscle in to give you something harmful?
- Inadequacy: Some people will say, "but I do not deserve it." A true statement whoever you are. No one does. Did you deserve salvation? The Spirit is a GIFT just as salvation is. All you have to do is receive Him - (v.13).

Read John 7:37. From this passage, what factors are important in receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

- A real desire - 'Thirst'.
- Ask - 'Come to me'.
- Receive - 'Drink' (act in faith, believing that God will provide).

What is the 'laying on of hands', and is this necessary to receive the Holy Spirit?

The term 'laying on of hands' means literally to put a hand(s) on someone for a specific purpose:

- Offerings- Exodus 29:10
- Ordination for service- 2Tim 1:6
- Elders laid hands on newly appointed elders when appointing them for ministry. Leaders also did the same in the Old Testament- Numbers 27:18-21. This is seen as an impartation of the individual ministry, or of a 'setting aside' of the individual for a set purpose as shown in this passage- Acts 13:2-3
- Healing- Luke 4:40; Acts 28:8-9; Acts 9:17-18; Mk 16:17-18
- To receive gifts. Paul prayed for Timothy to have gifts - (look back at 2 Tim. 1:6).
- To receive the Holy Spirit. The apostles laid hands on individuals when praying for people to receive the Holy Spirit- Acts 8:14-19
- The laying on of hands usually accompanies the receiving of the Holy Spirit, but this is not always the case- Acts 10:44-47. This is also true with healing- Mt 8:5-13

Implications:

Baptism is a fundamental part of our initiation into the Christian faith, and should be performed at the onset of our conversion to the faith. It is only meant for believers, and all believers should be baptised. Although all Christians have the Holy Spirit, God wants His children to have the regular ongoing experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit, in order to effectively glorify God.

Practical Application:

Have you been baptised since you became a Christian?

If your baptism was not valid make a decision to set a date for a real initiation into Christ.

Are you living in the newness of life, appropriate to one who has been baptised into Christ?

Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to live your life in the resurrection power of Jesus as symbolised in your rising out of the waters of baptism.

Are you, having made a public declaration, as a Christian, still declaring Him openly as your Saviour and Lord?

- As the Spirit is a person, we should respond to Him as such.
- As He is God, we should submit to Him, and allow Him to affect changes in our lives.
- As He is good, we should put away fear.
- As we are dependant on His equipping, we should use all that He wants to give us.

Have you been baptised in the Holy Spirit?

If the answer is 'no', you can be filled right now:

- Desire to be filled
- Confess any known sin to God
- Ask God to fill you
- Believe that He will fill you
- Receive by faith

Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to work in your life?

- Examine how you feel about the Spirit.
- Deal with any negative responses, or difficulties from past experiences you may have had.

Are you continuing to be filled?