

In Preparation for Baptism

A Study for Individuals

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Australia
February 2015; Updated April 2017
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INTRODUCTION

Background

Baptism has to do with salvation and it is performed out of obedience to God. The act of baptism does not save you, nor does it make you a better person. It is a sign that you have confessed Jesus Christ, the Son of God as your Lord and Saviour. To understand fully why you should be baptised you need to understand why you need to be saved.

The act of Baptism points to the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, and in particular, the propitiatory sacrifice he himself offered (Romans 3:25, Hebrews 2:17, 1 John 2:2, 4:10). The word 'propitiatory' is difficult to explain because it is not a word in every-day use, but it is the way God made reconciliation for our sins (Hebrews 2:17). He expiated the sins (expiation fines are issued every day for those who travel through a speed camera too fast - when we pay the fine, it is said to have been expiated). Those saved therefore have had their sins expiated, or atoned for, by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, hence we can exclaim: "blessed is the one whose sin is covered" (Psalm 32:1). This means there is no further judgement for those sins; they have been paid for in full.

Some facts about Baptism

A person needs to be qualified to be baptised. Acts 2:38 states "**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." We will explore what this means later, but note the first word - repent. Repent means 'to change your mind'. That is, before you were saved, you were going in a direction away from God (and straight to hell); on repenting you turned around and **believed** on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Baptism shows that:

1. You profess to be dead with Christ (*For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.* Colossians 3:3).
2. You believe on Jesus Christ the Son of God (*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved* Acts 16:31), and
3. You have confessed Jesus Christ, the Son of God as your Lord and Saviour (*that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.* Romans 10:9).

Baptism is done in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20).

Baptism is about dipping someone into water and drawing them out again. The word baptism comes from one of five Greek words. *Bapto* means to dip and *baptizo* means to baptise or *make fully wet*. The other words include the baptiser - *baptisteris*, baptism - *baptisma*, and the word *baptismos* which is translated baptism or washing. We conclude from this that baptism has something to do with water and getting wet - we will explore what this really means later.

Baptism is not new, nor did Jesus invent it. John the Baptist, who was about half a year older than Jesus, his cousin, went about baptising (Mark 1:4, John 3:37). Indeed John the Baptist baptised Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17, John 1:30-34) in a manner that was very familiar with the people at the time!

You may have heard of some controversies about Baptism. These we will look at briefly in one of the studies.

How to do this study

This study will consist of reading bible verses and answering questions.

Read the Bible verse from a Bible version you are familiar with, and if you do not understand the verse, try another version. The NIV is a useful alternative.

Question: Without referring to text books or other people for ideas, answer the question as best as you can.

Think about question: These are there to test your mind. This means you need to read the verses and think about the answer, perhaps for some time before putting your thoughts down on paper.

Bible Verses

This study is based on verses in the Bible taken from the New King James Version (NKJV). If you don't understand the text, read the verse from another translation such as the New International Version (NIV). The NIV often 'explains' the Hebrew or Greek rather than translating it word for word as the NKJV attempts. Other versions may also be useful such as the English Standard Version (ESV).

Be very careful with versions of the Bible that purport to be true translations but are really a paraphrases of the original language. This is when someone re-interprets the Hebrew or Greek, paraphrasing, or using their own word - which can often be misleading. The *Message Bible* is one such bible that often wrongly misinterprets the original language to suit the ideas of the author.

STUDY 1: ALL HAVE SINNED AND ALL WILL BE JUDGED

This study is about sin and the fact that we have all *missed the mark*, and therefore we need to pay the penalty.

All have sinned

Sin is an old fashioned word to some, and avoided by non-Christians, and unfortunately by many Christians too. Sin is anything that is contrary to what God wants, and from the very beginning, including Adam, everyone has sinned. It is sin that separates us from God. From the very beginning when Adam sinned, he wanted to hide himself from God - it is very difficult to face someone you have been nasty to, or wronged. In the case of God, it is much more difficult to face him, since God is your creator who knows what goes in in your heart. In both cases the wrong needs to be paid for.

In the case of sin - the penalty is death.

Read Romans 3:23, written by Paul to the Christians in Rome.

Question

1. What does it mean to be a sinner?

2. What does “fall short” mean to you?

3. Have you ever fallen short of reaching a goal, or target or your full potential? Explain why this occurred?

Read Jeremiah 17:9-10 (Old Testament).

Question

4. The author is using ‘picture language’ or metaphors. We know the heart pumps blood around the body, but it is not what Jeremiah means in these verses: what does Jeremiah mean?

5. Jeremiah 17:9 asks a question which essentially says “who can know the inner person and the secret things of a person”? The answer is given in verse 10. In your own words describe what God knows about you (in general terms).

What is God's Standard

Read Leviticus 20:7 and 1 Peter 1: 13-16

In Leviticus, Moses uses the word “consecrate” - although some Bibles translate this as “sanctify” or “hallow”. This means you; 1) need to be separate from anything that makes can lead you into sin, and 2) you need to be observing the commands of God.

Question

6. Using these verses and what you know of God write what you believe being holy means.

Note that being holy is more than being good. The Old Testament repeats the phrase “be holy” and often adds, “For I the Lord Your God am Holy”, with instructions on how to be a distinct people of God. Indeed, the purpose of the Law of Moses was to ensure the Children of Israel were distinct from all other people - they were not to associate with the evil, corrupt and idolatrous people of the world, who would corrupt their life. The apostle Paul says we are to be in this world but not of it - we are not to be conformed to this world (“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” Romans 12:2). Jesus puts it a different way - we are to store up our treasure in heaven not on this earth. In other words, being rich or famous on this earth is worthless - what we do for Jesus Christ is what counts.

The consequence of sin

Sin is a term that means that you have missed the mark. God demands perfection, and sin causes people to be imperfect - that is, they miss the mark. It is like an arrow that has flown past the target. Isaiah 59:2 states: *But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.* Here the author uses the term “iniquities” which is the same as sin or wickedness.

Read Genesis 2:16-17

Question

7. When Adam disobeyed God, what was the penalty that resulted?

Note the penalty of death is carried forth from the day that Adam sinned unto today. Only one person has ever overcome this - and this was the Lord Jesus Christ, who died but rose again, because he did not sin, although he became sin for our sake (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Question

8. Reread Isaiah 59:2 and write in your own words what sin does to the relationship between you and God. Read also Romans 8:7 to help clearly understand the consequence of sin.

Read Romans 5:12 and 6:23

Question

9. Romans 6:23 uses the word “wages” - give some examples to explain what ‘wages’ means.

10. Based on these verses what is the consequence of sin? Explain what death means in terms of your body and soul.

Question

11. Death in these verses means being separated from God forever. Think about what this means and write a sentence to describe being separated from God.

Read Romans 2:11, 16; Ecclesiastes 12:14

Paul in Romans is showing that both Jew and Gentile could only be saved by grace, through the cross of Jesus Christ. The Jew had the law, which could not make him righteous, but rather it judged him. The Gentile was alienated from the kingdom of God and along with the Jew will also be judged (verse 12). These verses importantly indicated it is not the things that are visible that God has a main interest in: it is your heart and mind.

Question

12. These verses show that both good and evil thoughts will be judged. What does this mean to you?

13. What do you need to do to please to God? In your answer consider 2 Corinthians 2:9 & 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

Think about

Think about Revelation 20:11-15

In your own words describe what these verses mean to you, explaining what you expect to happen to your soul (the part of you that makes you what you are) when you die or when the Jesus Christ comes again? Explain the reason for your answer.

STUDY 2 JESUS CAME TO SAVE ALL

This study is about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God who came to save us. Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:15 *The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.* Jesus Christ is the Son of God. In this study we will discover he took on the form of an ordinary man, was crucified, died and rose again on the third day.

Who was Jesus?

Read Mark 1: 1-22

Question

1. What is the book of Mark about?

2. After reading Romans 1:16,17 and considering the Gospel of Mark, write down what the word 'gospel' means?

3. In the following passages explain what authority Jesus had:

Mark 1:21 - 28 _____

Mark 2:1-12 _____

Mark 2:5 & 9 _____

Mark 2:16-20 _____

Jesus predicts his own death

The remarkable thing about the Bible is its prophecies. In every case, where the Bible has foretold the future, the prophecy has proven truthful. From the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:5) to his death and resurrection (e.g. Psalm 16:8-11; Psalm 22; Matthew 12:40; Luke 24:47 etc.) and many more, every prophecy has been fulfilled. Believing and understanding the truthfulness of the Bible gives us great hope and comfort that Jesus has indeed saved us and will return to take us to be with him.

Read Mark 10:32-34

Question

4. Write in your own words what these verses mean.

Jesus is falsely accused

Read Mark 14:55-60 and Mark 15:9-15

Question

5. For what reason was Jesus crucified?

6. We see in the passages you have read and in Isaiah 53:7 that Jesus did not answer the accusations against him. Why do you think he did not do this?

Read Mark 15:33-39

Question

7. What did Jesus mean when he said “*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*”

8. Why do you think the Roman soldier (centurion) in verse 39 said that Jesus was the Son of God?

Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead on the third day

If you read the accounts of the trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus you will note that Jesus himself gave up his own life, and he himself rose from the dead after three days. In John 2:22 we see that even the disciples did not understand this until after the event.

Read Mark 16:1-8 and verse 14

Question

9. In your own words, recount the episode outlined in these verses.

10. What does it mean that Jesus had risen? Where did he go to?

11. Why do you think it was so hard for some to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead?

Read Acts 1:1-11

Question

12. Where is Jesus Christ today? (You might like to read Acts 7:55, Romans 8:34, Hebrews 10:12)
What is his position?

13. What does it mean that Jesus will *come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven* (v.11 NKJV)?

Putting it all together

Sometimes it can be hard to put all the pieces together when reading the gospels. Each gospel takes a different point of view and presents the truth as the Holy Spirit directed. If you need to see an overview or summary of the gospel it is useful to read the sermons of the Apostles who summarised what happened.

Read Acts 10:34-43

This is the account of the life of Jesus, and the gospel by Peter, as he is teaching Cornelius, a Roman soldier who was a follower of Christ.

Question

14. Verse 42 indicates that all people will be raised - to be judged. This means death is not the end of our souls, although our mortal bodies will rot away and the chemicals that make it up will be returned to the environment. What will happen to everyone, in particular their soul?

15. What does verse 43 tell you about those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? (Note some versions use the word 'remission' and others 'forgiveness').

16. What will happen to those that do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

Read John 3:16 and Romans 5:8

Question

17. Why did Jesus allow himself to be falsely accused and be nailed to the cross? That is, why did Jesus take on the form of a man and live on this earth?

Note the judgement of Jesus Christ is forever. He is a righteous judge, and therefore will judge perfectly.

Think about

Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and if so, why do you believe he is the Son of God (Note the entire Gospel of John sets out to prove this very fact).

STUDY 3 SALVATION: BORN AGAIN, DEAD AND BURIED

Sin is wrong in God's estimation and all have sinned. So how do we get right with God? The issue is that we cannot make ourselves right before God, that is, righteous in the eyes of God.

We need to be born again

Read John 3: 1-18.

This is a very important chapter in the Bible, so if you have time read the entire chapter. Note verse 16, which you may be very familiar with. The Bible speaks of being 'born again'. This is not in the literal sense, which Nicodemus had to learn, but supernaturally by God; born with a heavenly stamp on him or her, and indeed, such a person becomes a child of God and a citizen of heaven.

Question

1. In your own words, describe what John 3:14 - 18 says.

2. Verse 14 is about Jesus Christ. What does it mean? (Reading Numbers 21:6 - 9, Isaiah 45:22 will help).

The language of verse 14 is 'picture language' or can be called an *idiom*, which means it is a *figure of speech* or figurative. The verse is from an actual event where Moses placed a sculpture of a snake (serpent) on a pole made of brass and held it up. Anyone bitten by a snake, if they looked up at the brass snake, would be healed. Can you see this is a 'picture' of what the cross of Jesus is about - sin is caused by the serpent's bite, who is Satan (Genesis 3 - the serpent deceived Eve), and anyone who looks upon the crucified Jesus will be healed if they believe.

Read Romans 3:23 and 24

Question

3. Rewrite what Paul is saying in your own words.

Turning around

Read Mark 1:14 & 15, Luke 13:5 and Acts 3:19

4. What is the repeating word (it's a verb or action word) in these verses and what does it mean?

5. The verses from the Book of Acts includes two actions - what does the second action mean and how does it relate to the first?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 2:20

Question

6. In light of what Jesus taught in John 3, what does Paul mean in this verse 2 Corinthians 5:17?

7. What does Paul say about his own experience of salvation in Galatians 2?

8. How can you apply what Paul has learnt in Galatians 2:20 to your life? What will you change?

Read Matthew 16:24

Jesus in essence is explaining what would happen to himself, but also for anyone who wants to be saved. The language is again 'picture language'. To be a follower of Jesus you have to put aside the things of this world - deny the sinful self, the proud self, the boastful self; deny the pleasures and profits of this world. A person 'taking up his cross' was a sign of failure to those who lived under Roman law. A person carrying his cross was on his way to his death - it showed a person totally under the power of the Roman court till death. This has two meanings today - under Christ the world will hate us and we must carry this burden as commanded by Jesus. But also, we are to submit to the will of God - our mind, body and soul.

Dying to Sin and a New Life

Read Romans 6:1-4

Question

9. What does it mean to "die to sin" (verse 2)?

Question

10. Read the following verses and write down how a person behaves who is "dead to sin".

Romans 12:2 _____

Ephesians 4:22-24 _____

1 Peter 1:14 _____

1 Peter 2:2 & 3 _____

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17

Question

11. How does Paul describe a true believer in the 2 Corinthians passage?

Life is still a struggle

Being born again still leaves us with 'self' that wants to interfere with our relationship with God. Paul had this struggle - he says in Romans 7 that the things he wants to do to please God he doesn't do and the things he does not want to do, because these displease God, he does! So although Christians are from a new place and are children of God (indeed we have new citizenship, that of heaven - Philippians 3:20) and are confident that Christ will take us to be with him on the day of Rapture or when we die, our life in this world is full of old temptations and old ways of thinking. So how do we cope?

Read Galatians 5:16-17

Question

12. Since becoming a Christian, what desires of the flesh do you need to struggle with?

Note the Holy Spirit provides a means to deal with these desires (see Philippians 4:6-7), but it also takes will power: *put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.* Ephesians 4:22-24

13. Paul sets a good example of how we are to deal with 'self'. Read 1 Corinthians 15:31 and explain:

a. What does Paul mean by the words "I die daily"?

b. How you put this into practice to deal with your "desires of the flesh"?

The Holy Spirit lives within us

We are not alone in our struggles with self. When Jesus was with his disciples he said God the Father would send the Holy Spirit to *convict the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgement* (John 16:7,8). It is the Holy Spirit that taught the Apostle Paul what to write (2 Corinthians 2:13). When we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour, the Holy Spirit 'indwells us' (an example is given in Acts 2 - note verses 38, Romans 8:9, Galatians 4:6). That is, our new bodies become the temple (or place to live) of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). This is one of the reasons why we need to be very mindful what we do with our bodies - it is now the temple of the Holy Spirit.

John writes in his first letter (1 John 5:6,7) that it is the Holy Spirit along with the Father and Word (i.e. Bible) that tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ come and died to save people from their sins, if they, in faith, believe on Him. The Holy Spirit is also the guarantee of our salvation. The reason we know we have been saved is because the Holy Spirit is in us, and He is a rock solid guarantee (Ephesians 1:14,15).

Read Romans 8:5-10

Question

14. What does the word 'flesh' symbolise here and in other parts of the Bible (Jesus gave a sermon on the subject - John 6:48-58)?

15. How do you live according to the Spirit of God?

Read Romans 6:11 - 14

Question

16. What does a Christian need to do to allow the new life to live?

17. When we fail what should we do (Read 1 John 1:9 as a reminder?)

Think about

Read Romans 6:9 - 12. How do you go about “considering yourself dead in sin”? What do you do every day, perhaps every hour to ensure that you don’t let “sin reign in your body” (verse 12)? How will you demonstrate to those around you that you consider the ways of the world to be contrary to God?

STUDY 4 WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE

Christ Died for Us

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. Romans 5:8-9

Justified means that you have been declared right by the judge and found not guilty. God is the judge of all.

Saved means that you have been rescued from death or danger - in this case from being sent to hell.

Wrath is the action God takes against those who hate him. It is a righteous wrath of a judge, who has given all people an opportunity to repent. But this has been rejected by most people and these will have God's wrath poured out upon them.

The Old Testament teaches us that humans under law cannot be made right before God. The children of Israel were given the Law of Moses to show all people they we are incapable of keeping the law. And therefore, the keeping the law is not a pathway to God. Those in the Old Testament who believed in God, had their faith imputed to them as righteousness (This is what chapter 4 of Romans is about).

All the Law of Moses did was to show what behaviours were sinful, and how sinful they were. Paul in Romans 3:30 states it was by the Law of Moses we have knowledge of sin. The law also shows that due to sin we cannot make ourselves right before God. It does not matter how many sacrifices a person offers, or how good he or she is, or how many good deeds a person does, that person will still suffer the **guilt** of sin. If Aaron, the High Priest, could **not** 'cleanse your conscience' of sin with sacrifices to God, how can we (Hebrews 9:14)?

We have learned that all have sinned and every sin incurs a debt that needs to be paid. Only God himself, by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, can pay for the debt of sin. This removes all **guilt** of sin

Read Romans 5:6-11

Question

1. Rewrite the Romans 5:8-9 in your words

1. What did God show (demonstrate) us?

2. What did Christ do for us?

3. When did Christ die for us?

4. What does “justified by His blood” mean?

5. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 and write down what we are saved from, along with the final consequence of this.

Read Ephesians 2:8-10.

Question

6. What does grace mean and where does it come from?

7. What would the opposite to grace mean? (You might need to read Romans 4:4,5; Romans 11:6)

8. These also verses speak of faith. What is faith (You might need to read Hebrews chapter 11 to understand this)?

9. Why aren't we saved by doing things (works) or doing 'good' for God, according to the Ephesians verse?

Read 1 John 1:5 - 10

Question

10. Why can we trust God for forgiveness?

11. How much of our unrighteousness does he clean from us?

12. Verse 7 has a promise - in your own words, describe what the promise is.

John uses contrasts to show the difference between sin and purity, righteousness and unrighteousness. In both his gospel (John) and his letters (especially 1 John) he uses light and dark, truth and lies, clean and unclean. In particular he highlights the difference between those who have faith and those who do not. Those without faith in Jesus Christ cannot be imputed righteous, and those not righteous, cannot enter heaven.

Faith is Required

Faith in Jesus is the key to forgiveness.

Read John 3:16, Acts 10:43 and Hebrews 11:1

Question

13. What does a Christian have faith in, and what does this mean?

14. Reflect on your own position before God. Describe your faith, and write about what does this means to your current life and future life?

Use another piece of paper if you have more to add.

A true Believer

There is nothing we have done, or can do to save ourselves or anyone else. Confessing our sins to a priest will not save us, nor will being a 'good' person (noting that Jesus said no one is good but God Mark 10:18). We are saved only by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

How does this work? A wise man wrote: *God operates in man by the conscience. True intelligence[understanding] of spiritual things is only acquired by the conscience being awakened and exercised in the presence of God. Consequently where God acts, the truth presented to the heart by His Holy Spirit and by His word (the Bible) leads to confession of sins.*¹

Read 1 Corinthians 15:14-20.

Question

15. In these verses Paul has put forward a proposition, which he then declares incorrect. What is the proposition (i.e. question) Paul puts forward?

¹ The Christian's Friend 1884 *The Baptism of Repentance*

16. The questions in these verses are rhetorical; they are meant to be taken in the opposite way. So in your own words write the counter argument.

If the dead do rise then Christ is _____

Read Philippians 3:7-11

Question

17. What does Paul mean that “whatever gain I had, I count as loss”?

18. Is there anything you your life that appears to be a gain but in fact separates you from God?

19. If so, what are you going to do about it?

Think about

Are you right with God? Yes or No or Don't Know

If you answered yes to the question above, describe why you think you are right with God?

If you answered no - why do you think you are not right with God? Read 1 John 1:9 then meditate on the verse and pray to God to help you truly confess (which requires repenting or turning from sin).

On what basis can anyone be right with God?

How can you be sure you will be saved?

STUDY 5 WHAT IS BAPTISM

Baptism is symbolic. One of the lies of Satan, perpetrated by other religions, and various Christian denominations such as the Catholics (whether orthodox or not) is that a baptised person is saved.

But, a baptised people can be unsaved, and will be judged by God and cast into hell, because baptism alone cannot save.

God enjoys role-plays, and has set out many role playing activities for his people to follow over the years. Every year the Children of Israel had seven feasts to attend, and each was role play that set out the blessings of God. The most important was Passover, which emphasised that God had saved Israel out of Egypt and had given them the Land of Canaan. Indeed Jewish families the world over play out the Passover, removing all yeast from their homes and eating unleavened bread and lamb, just as happened in Egypt when the children of Israel left (Exodus 12). Another is the Feast of Booths - also called Sukkot (Leviticus 23:39 - 43) where Jewish families live in a hut made of leafy tree branches to symbolise the time they spent in the wilderness on their journey to Canaan. God also uses symbolism; indeed the ceremonial Law of Moses was all symbolic, as the Bible states in Hebrews 9:9.

Baptism is no different and indeed is linked to Passover. It is both symbolic and a role- play and has been commanded by God to be undertaken by all who believe on the name of Jesus.

Commanded by God

Read Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 24:46,47 and Acts 2:38-41

Question

1. Why is baptism important?

2. Did you note Matthew 28:19. In whose name is a person baptised and who are these three?

3. The Matthew 28:19 verse comes with three commands and a blessing; what are these

Command 1 _____

Command 2 _____

Command 3 _____

Blessing _____

4. Both the Luke and Acts verses emphasises an important act that needs to take place before baptism - what is this?

Baptism as a symbol

Jesus said to Nicodemus that only by being born again can one enter the kingdom of heaven. Baptism symbolises that the old self is buried; and we are to walk from that day forth in the "newness of life". Romans 6:4 states *Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Read Romans 6:3-5

Question

5. Who are we baptised into?

6. Why are we baptised into or in the name of Christ Jesus?

7. Think about how Baptism is conducted. A person is lowered into water, so they are completely immersed, and then raised again out of the water.

Consider the words: *therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death.* What does this mean in terms of Baptism?

8. Baptism highlights two deaths; what are these?

1. _____

2. _____

9. Consider verse 5 and write what you believe the symbol of being raised out of the water means.

10. Consider verse 4b. What does the following mean: *Even as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life?*

11. Thinking about the fact we have been saved by grace - it was all done by God, is there anything a person needs to do in the actual baptism?

We therefore note there is no effort on the part of the one being baptised - it is the effort of the baptiser that creates the symbol. This fits with the grace of God - there is nothing a person can do except believe on the Lord Jesus Christ because it was Christ who died and rose from the dead. Likewise, a person being baptised has faith the baptiser will raise him back out of the water! This underscores that being saved is an act of faith upon God, and is not a result of one's own goodness, for we have none (see Ephesians 2).

Baptism also has a symbol of washing and cleansing. The Law of Moses had many commands about washing. At one time Jesus's disciples were told off by the Pharisees (religious leaders) for not washing their hands before eating (Mark 7:1-4).

Read Psalm 51: 2 & 7

Question

12. What is David (the author of this psalm) asking God to do? Why do you think he is doing this?

To help answer this question note that David had sinned three times: he had committed adultery with Bathsheba (had sexual intercourse with her, when she was the wife of Uriah), had organised for Uriah to be killed (essentially murdered him) by placing him in a position in a battle where he would be unlikely to survive, and finally David lied about the affair and murder. (2 Samuel 11)

13. David wanted more than to be washed. What did he want in verse 10a?

14. Of great importance was that David realised that by going to the tabernacle and offering offerings he was not going to please God, nor undo the wrong he had done. Read verses 16 & 17 and write down what God actually wants. (These verses are repeated in Hebrew 10:5-9).

15. In light of these verses what should your attitude be towards the commands of God?

Thus we are baptised into Christ and therefore baptised into his death (Romans 6:3), and we were buried with Him through baptism unto death (see Romans 6:3) therefore we walk in newness of life according to the purpose of God (Romans 6:4).

Qualifications for Baptism

Read Luke 24:46-47

Question

16. In your own words, write out what these verses are saying.

Read Acts 16:30-33

Question

17. In this passage there are two responses from a man who realises the consequence of his actions towards God: the second is in response to the first - what are these?

1. _____

2. _____

18. Have you carried out these actions?

Read Romans 10:9 and Acts 2:38

Question

19. What are the actions that a person needs to take to be saved, and what does this mean?

20. Have you carried out these actions?

Think about

Baptism is a public act - it was once performed in the river Jordan (and still is) or where there was water to be found (see Acts 8:36 for an example). The purpose is, in obedience to God, to declare to the world that your old nature has been buried, and you have been re-born. It also declares Christ as the saviour of the world. It is a role-play that says: **“I have become a disciple of Jesus Christ. He is my Lord and Saviour”**

You will be asked two questions, publically, before being baptised; think about these and how you will answer them.

Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he died for your sins according to Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose from the dead, according to Scriptures, and that he ascended to heaven to sit on the right side of God the Father?

Do you undertake this baptism in response to the wonderful truth that Jesus Christ has saved you, and you, with the help of the Holy Spirit you have turned your self-centred life, to one that trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ and Saviour?

Upon the affirmation of the two statements, the baptiser will say:

I now baptise you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Are you qualified to be baptised?

What are the qualifications of being baptised?

Are you qualified to be baptised (can you truthfully declare the two statements above), if so, why?

STUDY 6 SOME CONTROVERSIES ABOUT BAPTISM

This is an optional study, but it looks at some of the controversies and issues surrounding baptism.

Is baptism necessary?

The issue is whether one needs to be baptised, and if so, whether it is for salvation or for obedience.

Question

1. Was baptism commanded by Jesus Christ?

2. Was baptism carried out by the apostles (those who know and were taught by Jesus)?

3. What does the writing of Paul say about baptism? (It is mentioned in 56 verses in the New Testament, 13 times by Paul.)

4. What do you conclude about the need for baptism?

5. After answering these question: do you think the following is a good definition of baptism: *baptism is an identification or association with a person or message or group?* (Reading what John the Baptist says did may help).

If you don't think this is a good definition, write your own:

Baptism and salvation

Read Ephesians 2

Question

6. Since baptism requires a person to actually believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, why would some believe baptism actually saves?

7. Thinking about how a person is saved and what the gospel is about, why doesn't baptism contribute to our salvation? Include the following words in your answer GRACE, RIGHTEOUSNESS, FAITH.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:14-17.

Question

8. Here Paul is saying that he is was pleased he did not baptise many. What does this say about the importance of Baptism in the process of salvation?

9. If baptism was important for salvation, what would Paul have said in verse 17?

There are over 200 Bible passages that mention salvation, and EVERY ONE indicates that faith is the only requirement for salvation; indeed the only attribute that can lead to salvation. If Baptism was needed for salvation, then the Bible would have said so, as would have Jesus Christ - God does not leave things to chance.

Should baptism involve dipping a person into water?

Question

10. From this study and what you have read from the Bible should baptism involve dipping or immersing a person into water or just sprinkling them with water?

The argument of immersion or not is around whether 'immersion' is the key to baptism. Some hold that in some places there was not enough water to be immersed into, for example in Acts 2:41. But the Bible passage gives no indication that people were not immersed, and further, there were clearly public baths that were found by archaeological teams to be large enough to baptise by full immersion.

11. Reading Romans 4:24 and Romans 6:4 why would merely dripping water on a person not symbolise the entire process of Christ saving us? In answering this, recall the two aspects of salvation that Baptism symbolises (Also John 3 & Colossians 2:12).

Read Matthew 3:11,16; Mark 1:5,8,9-10 and Acts 8:38-39

Question

12. What is the example that the Bible gives in terms of how baptism was carried out? Did it involve immersion or dripping water on a person?

Who should be baptised?

Read Acts 16:15, 33 18:8 and 1 Corinthians 1:16

Question

13. In each case the entire household was baptised - these probably involved children, therefore, should children be baptised?

It is based on these verses and some other thoughts that infant baptism has become a part of some denominations. There is no indication that infants were baptised in the cases cited about. Furthermore, in many cases if the entire household was baptised, the children would have been old enough to have become believers based on their own confession of faith - not all families have infants!

14. One of the qualifications of baptism is repentance: Luke 24:37, Acts 2:38 etc. If one needs to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and have repented from sin, can an infant be qualified for baptism?

Search the Bible and you will find no command to baptise infants. Baptism will not make a baby trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the essence of anyone who wants to be saved.

Some will argue circumcision, which was practiced on the 8th day of life, is equivalent to baptism. But this is not the case - circumcision is the cutting off, and highlights the distancing from the world required by all believers. In essence circumcision was to make the Children of Israel distinct and reminded them daily of their need to be pure - not mixed up in the world. Circumcision is not needed (Galatians 5:6) for we have been born again, but we do need to die daily to self, and keep ourselves pure (1 Timothy 5:22; James 1:27 etc.).

How often should a person be baptised

Read Romans 6:3-5

Question

15. Thinking about these verses should a person be baptised more than once? If you think so, what would this mean Jesus would need to do?

Does baptism make you a member of a church?

The world has corrupted the word church. Originally 'church' meant a gathering of people, not a building. When a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ - he is saved (Acts 16:31) and becomes part of the Church - the one where Christ is the head or leader. In every case the church is spoken of as a body, with Christ as its head (Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 1:18 etc.). That is, a Christian is 'church'. The church is made up of believers, and is called the Body. She is also referred to as the Bride of Christ, where Christ is the Bridegroom (seen in all His splendour in Revelation 21), or the House (or household) of God (Ephesians 2:19, 1 Timothy 3:15). Note the church is never a building, but rather a group of believers united together with Christ as her head, and chief corner stone (holding it together). Those who are saved are called *living stones* that make up a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5).

The confusion arises from the fact we are baptised by the Spirit into *one body* - this is not baptism with water, but by the Holy Spirit, which we first saw at Pentecost (Acts 2). Jesus foresaw this saying; *John truly baptised with water, but you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now* (Acts 1:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13). The minute we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour we are baptised by the Spirit into the body of Christ - the Church (1 Corinthians 12:13). Baptism with water shows our death and new life in Christ. The Church is made up of many members (1 Corinthians 12:14) each with a specific role (1 Corinthians 12:14-19).

Problem Verses

Mark 16:16

He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

Some hold these verses are not in the original Canon. Notwithstanding, in the days of the Apostles a person accepting Jesus as his saviour was baptised immediately, as the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27) in Acts did. The understanding in those days was much clearer, as shown by the attitude of the people to John the Baptist. Baptism identified a person with an idea, message, person or group. The act of baptism does not and *cannot* save.

John 3:5

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

This has nothing to do with baptism, but being born again. Water represents action of the Holy Spirit here and in other parts of Scripture. Paul writes; *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit* (Titus 3:5). Being born of water is a Jewish expression of physical birth.

Acts 2:38

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

The word of issue is 'for' which has been used to connect baptise with remission of sins - this is not true. Baptism cannot remove your sin. The same word occurs in Matthew 12:41, and means "on account of". Darby's New Translation puts it: *Repent, and be baptised, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*; note the commas.

Acts 22:16

And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptised, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

Does this mean baptism washes away sins? In the Greek there is no "and" between "baptised" and "wash". This verse has multiple parts.

1. Arise - is not an imperative, but rather a participle, that is, a word that modifies the verb, and means 'arising'.
2. Be baptised - is an imperative, that is, a command.
3. Wash away your sins - is an imperative, that is, a command
4. Calling on the name of the Lord - is a participle and means: "having called" - that is, the action has already occurred, before the "arise and be baptised" is pronounced. It could be translated "having called on his name", being an *aorist participle* (The action takes place before the action of the main verb - be baptised).

So this means, a person being saved by calling upon His name, should arise and be baptised, which is an act of obedience.

Note that if baptism was done by sprinkling of water on the person there would have been no need to arise!

Some have used this verse to mean one can baptise one's self. The Greek does not allow this interpretation; however, it is hard to translate into English the exact meaning.

1 Peter 3:20,21

Who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

These verses do not speak salvation but the deals with the conscience. When one believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit baptises him or her - removing the guilt of sin. Water baptism is carried out in obedience to God - to demonstrate the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The one who is not baptised is disobeying God, and therefore will have the guilt of disobedience.

Baptism is certainly a sign of cleansing, but in and of itself it cannot cleanse.