

Should You Be Baptized Again?

Water baptism is one of the most powerful first steps we are to take in our Christian walk. Once we have committed our lives to Jesus by confessing He is Lord, believing in our heart that God raised Him from the dead, we have entered into the most exciting relationship ever (Rom. 10:9). We are saved by our confession and are to obey Him by our public profession of faith displayed through water baptism. Jesus commanded Christians to be water baptized in Matthew 28:18-20 while giving the Great Commission.

Water baptism is considered an ordinance of the church. Some Christian faith traditions call it a sacrament. It is apparent in Scripture that it takes place soon after we give our lives to Jesus. The Book of Acts shares several true stories of people being water baptized almost immediately after they committed their lives to Jesus, such as the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:34-40. In fact, on the day the church was born, 3000 people who witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost turned from their sins, confessing Jesus as Lord, and received water baptism (Acts 2:41).

The apostle Paul discusses water baptism on several occasions. In Ephesians 4:4-5 he said, "There is one body and one Spirit, even as you were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Many commentaries agree that this verse mentions water baptism. There is a holiness and reverence for baptism, and it correlates with the one Lord, one body, one faith and one God.

But when I meditate on this, I ask the question, "If there is one water baptism, then why do many people I know go through with it multiple times?" Perhaps you see this in your church, where people who have been baptized before, commit to doing it again and again.

I understand that humans can get caught up in the moment, especially as water baptism has become a specialized and professional event with a branded T-shirts, hosted at churches once or twice a year (although it was quite often a spontaneous and clear next step soon after conversion in the New Testament).

I have seen people go through water baptism several times, such as when they may have had a pastoral change, or they were a kid or teenager and later backslid. But I have also heard some pastors erroneously tell their members that even though they were baptized in a previous church, they should be baptized in their present church, "just in case." Just in case what? The first baptism they personally committed to should have been enough. Even in the case of "backsliding," their genuine step of obedience to baptism the first time does not need a second or third water baptism.

Rebaptism is something pastors should be addressing from time to time, especially if they have scheduled a baptism service. Scripturally, the only time people were rebaptized was when they didn't have Christian baptism the first time. People who gave their lives to Jesus were rebaptized if they received the baptism of John the Baptist, a baptism of repentance in preparation for the coming Messiah (Acts 19:1-6). But once they received Christian baptism, there is no biblical record of them going through with it again and again as the case may be today.

However, Christians should receive rebaptism if they were water baptized into a cult or false religion. This is the case for those who were water baptized into Mormonism but who are now Christians. Their baptism or ritual was clearly not Christian baptism. And the only other reason why Christians should be baptized a second time is if they know they were not really a believer in Jesus the first time around.

I think that the people who feel compelled to be water

baptized more than once perhaps need stronger leaders who know the Scripture. And who can counsel and disciple them instead, reassuring them of their commitment the first time they obeyed following through with water baptism.

If you or someone you know is considering being re-baptized, I think what is needed more is good counsel from a pastor or leader with a prayer of confession (1 John 1:8-9). A definite encounter with the Holy Spirit, with the reassurance of salvation is also greatly needed (John 5:24, 1 John 5:12-13). The public profession of faith through water baptism is needed only once, but I won't get in your way if you want to get immersed again. Ultimately, it's between you and Jesus. {eoa}

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