

Should I be baptised? * Q's from the pews
September 20, 2020 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

This morning we are going to look at our final Q from the Pew and just like I've said every other week the last two months, this is a great question.

Should I be baptised?

That's it. Just, should I be baptised? No context, no background, no nothing. Just 'should I be baptized?' That's a great question and I want to see what I can do to answer it.

Now, I realize that this is a sensitive subject for a church like ours. Some of us were baptized as children and the last thing we want to do is dishonour what our parents were doing. Some of us are fully committed to a covenant theology where child baptism makes sense as a way to welcome them into the covenant community. Some of us have been baptized as adults. And some of us have done all three.

So I want to try and honour everyone's circumstances but I also want to try to give you what I think is a reasonable biblical answer to the question – should I be baptised? (And right off the top, I assume by this that this person means 'baptised as a believer,' as an adult, and not infant baptism. I'm pretty sure Weston didn't submit this question). So whatever you think about infant baptism, let's look at the Bible to answer the question 'Should I be baptised as a believer?'

The first place in the Bible where it talks about baptism is John the Baptist's ministry in the Gospels. Mark 1, verses 4-5 says – 4 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and 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 baptized by him in the Jordan River (Mar 1:4-5 NIV).

Baptism here means two things – repentance and forgiveness. They confessed their sins and received forgiveness and then got baptized to show that it had happened. Pretty straightforward. Their baptism showed that they had chosen to reorient their heart towards God. That's pretty consistent in the Gospels and it works that way in the book of Acts too.

Acts 2, leading up to verse 38, Peter presents the Gospel to a crowd in Jerusalem and then says verse 38 - 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, 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." (Act 2:38 NIV).

Again, baptism here is the sign of repentance and forgiveness. They confess their sin – they turn their hearts AWAY from sin and TOWARDS God, trusting in Jesus and then He forgives them and gives them the Holy Spirit. They are spiritually renewed. That all happens the moment they chose to believe and then they get baptised to show that that repentance and forgiveness and faith have all actually happened.

That's true here in Acts 2 and it happens again and again throughout the book. Acts 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19 and 22 – baptisms happen in all of those chapters – let's look at just a couple.

In Acts 8, Philip goes up to Samaria to tell people about Jesus and they respond in faith, turning from sin and turning to Jesus. Acts 8:12 it says "12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Simon himself believed and was baptized" (Act 8:12-13 NIV).

They believe; they get baptized. Baptism and belief go hand in hand.

Same thing in Acts 18:8. Paul and the gang are in Corinth preaching the gospel and it says: 8 Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized. (Act 18:8 NIV).

You believe, you get baptised.

Acts 16, famous story – Paul and Silas are in jail and an earthquake rips the doors off the place. The jailer's about to kill himself out of fear and shame and then Paul intervenes. He says 'slow your roll, we're all here!' and the jailer says –

(30 He then brought them out and asked,) "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household."

32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.

Verse 34 tells us that he and his family came to believe – and so guess what they did – verse 33 – he and his family were baptized.

33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he and his whole family (Act 16:30-34 NIV).

The jailer and his family trust themselves to Jesus, but it doesn't end there. Right away, the apostles baptize them too to show that repentance and forgiveness and belief and spiritual renewal have all happened. They go down under the water and come back up (they symbolically die and rise with Christ – Romans 6:4) to show that they believe.

4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life (Rom 6:4-5 NIV).

So what do you think? Should you be baptised as a believer?

I think so. I think that baptism is the normal, foundational, God-given way of saying once and for all 'I believe.' Time and again, the Bible puts belief and baptism side by side, so that baptism is simply the way we say once and for all 'I believe.'

We're not saved by baptism; we're not forgiven through baptism; we don't receive the Holy Spirit at baptism – that all happens the hour we first believe – but baptism looks back and says 'that's happened and I believe' and it looks forward and says 'I'm going to live in light of in from now on.'

Should I be baptised as a believer? I would say yes, because baptism is the normal, foundational, God-given way of saying once and for all 'I believe.' Normal because it happens almost everywhere belief happens in the NT, foundational because it's THE way of marking belief, God-given because the Great Commission calls us to baptize disciples and so be baptized as disciples.

Is it possible that some people who don't really believe are baptized? Sure.

Isn't it possible that you can tell the world that you believe through the way you live? Absolutely.

Should that stop you from being baptized? No. It's the normal, foundational, God-given marker that says 'I believe.'

Ok, what if I was baptized as a child? *I* was baptized as a child and for a long time I resisted believer's baptism because of it. I didn't want to go back on what my parents did by baptizing me. And I think that covenant theology makes a good argument for infant baptism is the way to welcome children into the covenant community.

But it's also very clear from the passages that we've looked at this morning, and others, that baptism and belief go hand in hand. That baptism is the normal, foundational, God-given way of saying 'I believe.' And I'll tell you, when I was baptised as a child, I did not believe. I didn't even know what belief was. I don't even think that I truly believed when I was confirmed. But many years later, I really did – I turned from sin and fundamentally reoriented my heart to God and I was forgiven and made new – but even then, it was years later before I was baptized as a believer. Looking back, I realized that my infant baptism was my parents' way of saying 'we hope he believes;' adult baptism was my way of saying 'I DO believe.'

Can I trust in Jesus without being baptized? Well, sure, it's possible. It's not your baptism that saves you, but your faith that baptism symbolizes. But really, it's a little bit like saying 'do I have to have a marriage ceremony? Do I have to get married in front of people?' I mean, no, I guess not. You could just go to the justice of the peace and get married, but, why would you do that? You want people to know. You want to be able to look back and say 'I've made this commitment to this person.'

Baptism is kind of the same. It's a public statement that you look back on that says without a doubt – 'I've made a commitment to Jesus and I want to live it out.'

If you've never been baptised as a believer, talk to me about it. I don't want you to feel pressured into it, but I do think that it's an important step in our discipleship. If you've believed – that is, if you've turn from sin to Jesus, trusting Him for forgiveness of sin and a brand new life – then let's celebrate that, let's mark it, by going down with Jesus in baptism so that we will rise again with Him.

BENEDICTION

(May) Christ dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:17-19).