

Series: Baptism - What Does the Bible Really Teach?
Tonight's Lesson: "Common Misconceptions About the Baptism of Jesus"

Introduction:

1. There is probably not a more debated issue in Christendom today than the subject of water baptism.
 - Some believe that baptism is essential to salvation.
 - Some believe that baptism is unnecessary to salvation, but is necessary after salvation.
 - Some believe infants should be baptized, some believe it is wrong.
 - Some believe in baptizing by sprinkling, others by immersion.
 - Some believe you have to be baptized by their denomination or it's no good.
 - Some believe that baptism is totally unnecessary at all. It is not needed in any form.
2. One thing every denomination or church has in common is that they all quote Scripture to support their views.
3. Of course the answer to the confusion is **2 Timothy 2:15** where we are told to rightly divide the word of truth.
 - If you do not have a grasp of the big picture of Scripture, the various programs of God, and where you fit, you will never understand issues like baptism.
 - A failure to rightly divide God's Word in the area of baptism is literally damning millions upon millions of people. People all over this world are trusting in a water ceremony that was performed on them, rather than trusting in Christ.
4. One of the most misunderstood subjects concerning baptism is the baptism of Jesus. Let's read about this. **Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-23; John 1:29-34**
5. There are a couple of very common misconceptions that we need desperately to understand because many religions will use this event from the life of Christ to derive their teachings regarding water baptism.

First misconception: Christ was baptized according to a New Testament ordinance.

1. Preachers and churches may think this and teach this, but it is **not** found in the Scriptures.
2. Nowhere is baptism referred to as a New Testament ordinance. I had always been told that there are two New Testament ordinances - water baptism and the Lord's Supper.
 - There is no chapter and verse to prove this, yet people believe this and teach it as if it were an absolute Biblical fact that permeates the Bible.
3. In **1 Corinthians 11:1**, Paul praised the Corinthians for keeping the ordinances that he delivered to them. The word "ordinances" simply means "precepts, traditions."
 - Paul never says that there were only **two** traditions he gave them and he never lists them as baptism and the Lord's Supper.
 - "Ordinances" refers to the commandments and precepts he had taught them.
2 Thessalonians 2:15, 3:6 ("traditions" is same word as "ordinances")
4. Did you know it is utterly impossible for Christ to have been baptized according to a New Testament ordinance?

5. According to **Hebrews 9:14-17**, when does a testament go into force? **After** men are dead!
 - The New Testament could **not** go into effect until after Christ's death. Jesus' water baptism was three and a half years **before** His death.
 - The New Testament could not be made possible until after Christ's death at the end of Matthew through John.
6. Christ was actually baptized under the Old Testament economy and according to the Old Testament system of ordinances imposed under Moses' law. **Hebrews 9:9-10**
 - "*Divers washings*" is the exact same word translated "baptisms" in **Hebrews 6:2**.
 - There were various water baptisms (or washings) that were in order under the Old Covenant of Moses. We will see those later as we study in this series.
7. Someone may say, "But what about **John 1:17**? Didn't Christ do away with Moses' law and usher in a New Testament?"
 - Did the verse say that Jesus did away with the Law of Moses while on earth?
 - Did the verse say anything about Jesus replacing the Old Testament of Moses with a New Testament during His earthly ministry?
 - Jesus' earthly ministry was done in complete submission to the Law of Moses. **Matthew 5:17-18, 8:4**
8. If a person believes the Bible, there is no way he can say that Jesus was baptized according to a New Testament ordinance.

Second misconception: Jesus was baptized as an example for people to follow.

1. Again, the Bible never says this, yet it is proclaimed constantly (especially by Baptists).
2. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. What did John's baptism consist of? **Mark 1:4-5** explains clearly.
 - Notice, John didn't preach baptism as a first step of obedience after salvation. He preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. John said he was sent to baptize. **John 1:33; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:17** (two different programs, commissions, and ministries)
 - John's baptism of repentance summarized the gospel of the kingdom to Israel.
 - Peter preached the same thing to Israel in **Acts 2:38**.
3. If people were following Christ's example in baptism, that would mean that Christ was also baptized for the remission of sins. This, of course, is heresy. It would make Him a sinner like everybody else.
4. To say that we should be baptized to follow Christ's example is bad doctrine. People use this argument to justify their positions regarding water baptism, but as you can see, it casts a terrible reflection on our Savior.

In Conclusion:

1. If Jesus wasn't baptized to fulfill a New Testament ordinance, nor was He baptized as an example for people to follow, then why was He baptized?
2. This is a crucial and important question.
3. Next week we will examine from God's Word four reasons why Jesus was baptized.

Series: Baptism - What Does the Bible Really Teach?
"Why was Jesus Baptized?"

Introduction:

1. Last week we examined two common misconceptions concerning the baptism of Jesus Christ. We learned that Christ was not baptized according to a New Testament ordinance, nor was He baptized as an example for people to follow.
2. So here is the obvious question: Why was Christ baptized by John in the River Jordan?
 - What was the real purpose and meaning behind it?
 - What was the significance of Christ's baptism in water?
3. As we study God's Word, we will learn that there were four positive, significant reasons for His water baptism.

Christ's baptism was a submission.

1. John objected to the idea of baptizing Jesus. **Matthew 3:13-14**
 - John knew that Christ wasn't a sinner. He knew that Jesus was worthy and he was unworthy.
2. Jesus responded by saying, "*Suffer (allow) it to be so now.*"
 - Jesus doesn't come repenting and confessing sins like the rest of Israel. Jesus said the purpose was to fulfill all righteousness.
 - Where was the righteousness of God revealed at this time? It was revealed in the law of Moses.
3. Christ is beginning His public ministry to Israel which would end with His sacrifice for sin on the cross. Christ would be the complete fulfillment of all the Old Testament sacrifices. **Hebrews 9:11-12, 25-26, 10:11-12**
4. What did the law require that Israel do to the sacrifices before they offered them? They had to wash them in water. **Leviticus 1:1-3, 9; cf. Ephesians 5:2; 2 Chronicles 4:6**
 - One of the preparatory ceremonies before a sacrifice could be offered was that it had to be washed in water.
5. This is why Christ told John to allow it. Jesus is saying, "I have come to be washed." Jesus was the Lamb of God who would die for sin. **John 1:29**
6. When Jesus submitted to the washing of baptism, He was submitting to the righteousness of the law.
 - When Jesus refers to "all righteousness," He can only be referring to the law (**Romans 2:26, 8:4, 10:5; Philippians 3:6**). The law is what Christ came to fulfill. **Matthew 5:17-18**
 - Christ was perfectly fulfilling the requirements of the law when He submitted to baptism.
 - John was washing the offering before it was taken and the blood shed.

Christ's baptism was an identification.

1. When Jesus was baptized, He was identifying Himself with believing Israel, those who responded in faith to John's call to prepare for the kingdom.

2. Who was John baptizing? According to **Mark 1:4-5**, he was baptizing the people of Judea and Jerusalem.
3. Jesus did not come to John privately and get baptized. Jesus was right among the common, ordinary people of Judea. Christ numbered Himself publicly with the believing remnant of the nation of Israel. **Luke 3:21**
4. He was demonstrating to Israel that He was, in fact, a part of Israel Himself. What was demanded of Israel, Christ as part of Israel performed. He was one of them and He did what they did. **Hebrews 2:16-17**
5. Water baptism was an essential part of Israel's program at this time. **Luke 7:29-30**
 - If you were a Jew living during this time, how did you justify God? How did you declare that John's message was right and was from God? You were baptized.
 - By being baptized you were admitting that you and your nation were in an apostate, backslidden condition and in need of repentance.
 - How did you reject the counsel of God? By refusing to submit to John's baptism. **Luke 7:30**
6. Christ came and submitted Himself to baptism to identify with that believing remnant of Israel and to separate Himself from apostate and unbelieving Israel.
7. This issue of identification by water baptism is also seen in **Acts 2:36-40**.

Christ's baptism was a manifestation.

1. **John 1:29-31** clearly reveals that John was baptizing in order that Jesus should be made manifest to Israel.
2. When Christ was baptized, it would be evident that He was Israel's Messiah. John's own testimony confirms this. **John 1:32-33**
3. Christ's baptism is one of three major events used to manifest Jesus as the Christ.
 - His birth - **Luke 2:8-20**
 - His baptism - **John 1:31-33**
 - His entrance into Jerusalem - **Luke 19:28-40**
4. There was no reason for the nation of Israel to miss the fact that He was the long promised Messiah, the servant of God. **Isaiah 42:1**

Christ's baptism was an ordination.

1. Christ's baptism was His public entrance into ministry. Christ was the nation of Israel's prophet, priest, and king.
 - Prophet - **Luke 7:15-16; John 4:19**
 - Priest - **Hebrews 5:6, 10**
 - King - **Revelation 11:15, 19:16**
2. Each of these offices required an anointing before assuming office. In **Exodus 40:12-13**, the priests had to be washed in water and then anointed.
3. Jesus was washed and anointed at His baptism. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit. **John 1:32-34**
 - Oil in the Bible is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. **Hebrews 1:9; cf. Acts 10:38**
4. Jesus is 30 years old and His baptism was His public inauguration into ministry. He was washed in water and anointed with the oil of the Holy Spirit.

In Conclusion:

1. We see now why Christ was baptized.
 - It was a submission to the righteousness of the law.
 - It was an identification with the believing remnant of Israel.
 - It was a manifestation to Israel that He was the Christ, their Messiah.
 - It was an ordination of Christ into public ministry.
2. What does Christ's baptism in the Jordan River have to do with a Gentile believer today who has been placed in the body of Christ by God's Holy Spirit? Absolutely nothing.
3. Yet we can see, recognize, and appreciate what it **did** mean for the nation of Israel, just as we can appreciate many facets of Christ's life that are not incumbent on us to imitate. **Luke 2:21; cf. Galatians 5:6**
4. But there is **another** baptism of Christ that we do participate in, and that affects us greatly. Next week we will examine this!

Series: Baptism - What Does the Bible Really Teach?
“United in the Second Baptism of Jesus”

Introduction:

1. As we have been studying the subject of baptism, we noted two common misconceptions concerning Christ's water baptism.
 - Christ was not baptized according to a New Testament ordinance.
 - Christ was not baptized as an example for us to follow.
2. There were definite reasons why Christ was baptized by John and they all had to do with Christ's earthly ministry and relationship to Israel.
3. So what about us today? What about Gentiles living in this dispensation of grace? Does Christ's baptism have any effect or impact on us?
4. Did you know Christ experienced a second baptism that does impact us greatly?
 - **Luke 12:50** - Christ had already been baptized in water. This was a future baptism.
 - **Mark 10:38-39** - Clearly this is a reference to His death on the cross.
 - Christ was baptized in **water** at the beginning of His earthly ministry, but was baptized into **death** at the end of His earthly ministry.
5. Every believer in the body of Christ is identified in Christ's second baptism into death. We, too, are baptized into death, Christ's death! **Romans 6:3**
6. Let's examine this baptism into death in the Scriptures.

This baptism places you into spiritual union with Christ.

1. **Romans 6:3-5** is very clear. The baptism Paul is speaking about results in a spiritual union and oneness with Jesus Christ.
2. There is a complete change of identification here. No longer does God see me in my sins, but rather in His Son.
 - Christ died unto sin on the cross (**Romans 6:10**) and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (**Hebrews 9:26**).
 - This baptism causes God to see me dead **with Christ** on the cross (**Romans 6:3, 6, 8, 11**).
3. God views everything in light of the cross.
 - He sees you baptized into the death of Christ, and therefore free from sin (**Romans 6:7**) or
 - He views you in your sins and out of Christ.
4. Paul said in **Galatians 2:20**, "*I am crucified with Christ...*" This is God's view of the Christian. How do we get into this position? **Romans 6:4** says "*by baptism.*"
5. If this is speaking of water baptism, we have a serious problem.
 - This would mean that believers who were never water baptized would **not** be united with Christ's death and therefore still be in their sins.
 - This would mean that unbelievers who had submitted to water baptism **were** united with Christ.
 - Bottom line - if Romans 6 is water baptism, it would teach baptismal regeneration (salvation by baptism).
6. Do you see the mess that is created when you fail to rightly divide God's Word? The answer to this dilemma is found in our next point.

This baptism is performed by God the Holy Spirit.

1. There are a host of different kinds of baptisms in the Bible. We already saw two in the life of Christ. There are many others - some completely dry baptisms.
1 Corinthians 10:1; cf. Hebrews 11:29; Psalm 66:6; Exodus 14:22, 15:19
2. One of those baptisms is explained in **1 Corinthians 12:12-14**. This will shed great light on which baptism places us into union with Jesus Christ as **Romans 6:3** teaches.
 - There is one body of Christ. vs. 12
 - You get into this body by Holy Spirit baptism. vs. 13
 - This baptism by the Holy Spirit makes us members of Christ's body. vs. 14, 27
3. Do you see any water in this text? No. In fact, if there **were** water, it would contradict what Paul said in this same letter when he did discuss water baptism. 1:14, 17
4. The baptism in **1 Corinthians 12:13** isn't a baptism performed by Paul or any other man. This is a spiritual baptism by God the Holy Spirit which places a person into spiritual union with Jesus Christ.
5. We know it is a non-physical, spiritual baptism because **Galatians 3:27-28** teaches that this baptism does away with physical, racial, and sexual distinctions. Water baptism obviously doesn't do this.

This baptism guarantees your resurrection with Christ.

1. The clear teaching of Romans 6 is this: If you have not been baptized into Christ's death, you cannot possibly possess His resurrection life. Notice the order in verses 3 & 4.
 - We are united in Christ's death and burial, therefore we now possess newness of life.
 - Notice verse 5 - no death, no resurrection life. cf. **Colossians 2:12**
 - Notice verse 8 and the conditional word "if" - if we are united with Christ in His death, we shall live with Him. cf. **Colossians 3:3-4**
2. God's Word is clear. If a person has **not** been united with Christ in His death, that person **cannot** possess the resurrection life of Christ. If a person does **not** possess the life of Christ, that person is **lost** in his sins. **Romans 8:9-11**
3. Again, if Romans 6 is speaking of water baptism, then it would be teaching that a person must be water baptized before he can receive Christ's life. This would contradict Paul's clear teaching that salvation is solely by God's grace, without works. **Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 2:16; Titus 3:5; Romans 4:5, 24**

This baptism is done in response to your faith in Christ.

1. We've learned that God the Holy Spirit is the baptizer. He baptizes us into a spiritual union with Jesus Christ. This baptism unites us with Christ in His death, and then imparts unto us resurrection life.
2. What sets this glorious baptism by God's Holy Spirit in motion? Does it occur when we join the church? When we perform a religious ritual or ceremony? When we do enough good works to earn it? When the preacher prays for us?
3. What does Paul teach the church, the body of Christ?

- God's Holy Spirit enters into our hearts and brings God's life in response to one thing, our faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ.
Ephesians 1:12-13, 2:5, 8-9; Galatians 3:26-27; Titus 3:5-7; Romans 5:1, 5; 2 Corinthians 1:21-24; Philippians 3:9; Colossians 2:12-13; 2 Timothy 1:9-10

In Conclusion:

1. There is one baptism that places you into the one body - the body of Christ.
Ephesians 4:4-5
2. We have seen clearly that Paul taught the church that this baptism is the baptism by God's Holy Spirit.
3. Many people have been baptized with water many different times in many different churches, yet they are still lost in their sins.
4. A water ceremony cannot place you into Christ and unite you in His death, burial, and resurrection. Only God's Holy Spirit can do this in response to your faith in the complete and finished work of Jesus Christ for sin.

Series: Baptism - What Does the Bible Really Teach?
“Water Baptism Before Paul” - Part 1

Introduction:

1. One of the great debates today is the issue of water baptism. It is hotly contested among all religions of the world. Most religions quote Scripture to validate their views.
 - Some believe that water baptism is absolutely essential to salvation; others believe it is not essential at all.
 - How could there be such diametrically opposed views on this subject? It is simply because there are verses in the Bible to support **both** views.
2. So what is the answer to this dilemma? The answer is to do what **2 Timothy 2:15** commands us to do. To rightly divide the Word of truth.
3. We see a division in the book of Acts that is unmistakable.
 - From Acts 1-8, the key figure is the apostle Peter.
 - From Acts 13 to 28, Peter disappears from off the historical record and Paul is the key figure, and the next book is Romans and begins with the word "Paul."
 - From Acts 9-12, we see the transition from Peter to Paul.
4. Did you know that Peter and Paul had two completely different ministries (**Galatians 2:7-9**)? You will never understand issues like water baptism until you understand this basic Bible principle.
5. Paul didn't get his message from Peter, but directly from Jesus Christ (**Galatians 1:11-12, Ephesians 3:1-3**), so we would expect them to be different, would we not?
 - They, in fact, **were** different. **Galatians 2:1-2, 6-7; 2 Peter 3:15-16**
 - Peter eventually did come to an understanding of Paul's gospel. **Acts 15:7-11** (the only time Peter is mentioned in Acts 13-28)
6. Let's examine the issue of water baptism before Paul and his gospel show up in the book of Acts.

Baptism under the Old Testament Law

1. Someone may immediately question this and say, "Baptism wasn't part of the Old Testament law."
2. **Hebrews 9:8-10** is discussing the Old Testament tabernacle and sacrifices and says that "*divers washings*" were a part of this Old Testament system.
 - The phrase "*divers washings*" is the word translated "*baptisms*" in **Hebrews 6:2**.
3. According to the Bible, the washings of the priests and the sacrifices were baptisms. They spoke of ceremonial cleansing. **Exodus 29:1-4; Leviticus 1:9**

Baptism under John the Baptist

1. As the book of Matthew opens, we see John the Baptist proclaiming to Israel, "*Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" **Matthew 3:2**
2. John is announcing that the Messiah is coming and you'd better get ready! Israel was in a state of utter apostasy from God. John was calling them to repent and turn to God.

- God's imminent wrath and judgment were part of John's message.
Matthew 3:7-12
3. God had long promised Israel a Messiah who would deliver them from their oppressors and reestablish Israel's glorious kingdom over the entire earth. God said that they would be a kingdom of priests unto Him on the earth. **Exodus 19:6**
 - Remember, what must a priest do before he could function in that priestly position? He was washed with water.
 - As John comes proclaiming that it is time to gather the nation together and prepare themselves to function in that kingdom, what does John require?
Matthew 3:5-6
 - One side note: It is interesting that John baptized believing Jews in the Jordan River. This is the place Israel crossed when they first went into Canaan to possess the land under Joshua and where Christ will enter at His Second Coming. This is a significant spot in regards to Israel's kingdom.
 4. John preached "...*the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*" **Mark 1:4-5**
 - If the Jews heard John's message and believed it, what would their faith cause them to do? Confess their sins and allow John to baptize them in water.
 - They would submit to this outward ceremonial cleansing which expressed their faith in John's message.
 5. But was water baptism really necessary at this time? Couldn't a person just believe John's message in his heart and **not** be baptized, and still be acceptable to enter the kingdom? Not according to **Luke 7:29-30**. What does this passage clearly teach?
 - How did the people justify God? In other words, how did they declare that "God is right and we are wrong?" By being baptized with the baptism of John.
 - How did a person reject the counsel of God at this time? By **not** being baptized of him.
 6. It was such an important issue for Israel that even Jesus submitted to this water ceremony. Jesus identified Himself with the believing remnant of Israel.
Luke 3:21; John 1:31
 - The King-Priest (Christ) and all that wanted to be a part of His kingdom were baptized in water to prepare for this kingdom.
 - The people were baptized as a ceremonial cleansing to prepare for the coming kingdom, when at that time their sins would be remitted. (This will be discussed later.)
 7. The twelve disciples and Jesus preached the same basic message as John and operated under this same commission during Christ's earthly ministry.
 - They preached "...*the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" and they preached this message exclusively to Israel. **Matthew 4:17, 10:5-7**
 - They also baptized in water as John did. **John 4:1-2**
 - They did **not** baptize people to picture their faith in the future death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The twelve disciples themselves did not understand this future work of Christ. **Luke 18:31-34**

Concluding Thoughts:

1. Do you see now why it is so important to rightly divide the Scriptures? If not, a person could read all of this and get very confused.

2. Many Bible teachers try so hard to make John the Baptist's message to Israel and Paul's message to the body of Christ one and the same. It simply won't work. Compare **John 1:33** with **1 Corinthians 1:17**.
3. They are **not** the same and never will be. It's simply two different time periods, two different messages, two different purposes, two different commissions to two different people groups. An honest student of Scripture can clearly see and recognize this.

Series: Baptism - What Does the Bible Really Teach?
“Water Baptism before Paul” - Part 2

Introduction:

1. We see a division in the book of Acts that is unmistakable.
 - From Acts 1-8 the key figure is the apostle Peter.
 - From Acts 13 to 28 Peter disappears from off the historical record and Paul is the key figure, and the next book is Romans and begins with the word "Paul."
 - From Acts 9-12 we see the transition from Peter to Paul.
2. Did you know that Peter and Paul had two completely different ministries (**Galatians 2:7-9**)? You will never understand issues like water baptism until you understand this basic Bible principle.
3. Paul didn't get his message from Peter, but directly from Jesus Christ (**Galatians 1:11-12; Ephesians 3:1-3**), so we would expect them to be different, would we not?
 - They, in fact, **were** different. **Galatians 2:1-2, 6-7; 2 Peter 3:15-16**
 - Peter eventually did come to an understanding of Paul's gospel. **Acts 15:7-11** (the only time Peter is mentioned in Acts 13-28)
4. Last week we began to examine water baptism before Paul's commission in the book of Acts. We examined water baptism under the Old Testament law and John the Baptist.
5. Let's continue to examine the issue of water baptism before Paul.

Baptism under Christ's commissions to the eleven

1. Christ had died, Judas had hung himself, and the eleven were cowering behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. **John 20:19**
2. Things could not have looked worse, but then Christ appeared to these men and demonstrated to them His bodily resurrection. After this, Christ spent 40 days with the apostles, instructing and teaching them of things pertaining to His coming kingdom. **Acts 1:3**
 - They were to tarry at Jerusalem until Christ baptized them with the Holy Spirit, which would mean supernatural power. **Acts 1:4-5; Luke 24:49**
 - They were then to witness of the risen Christ, beginning at Jerusalem. **Acts 1:8**
3. Would water baptism be a vital part of their message as it was under John and under their three-year earthly ministry with Christ? Let's examine Christ's commissions. **Matthew 28:16-20**
 - What were they to teach the nations? Were they to teach that Christ had died for all their sins, and through faith in Christ they could have peace with God apart, from any works of the law? There is no record of them preaching this gospel of grace that we preach today. It simply wasn't revealed yet.
 - They were to preach the things Christ had taught them concerning His earthly kingdom, and baptism was once again an integral part of their message.**Mark 16:15-20**
 - This passage is clear. Water baptism was to continue to be an integral part of the gospel message they preached. It was part of the obedience of faith.

- If people believed the apostles' message concerning the risen Christ, they would be water baptized to prepare for the return of this Messiah and the establishment of His kingdom.
4. God would also baptize the apostles with His Holy Spirit, as evidenced by miraculous sign gifts (**Mark 16:17-18**). This was to confirm the message to Israel that Christ (the One you crucified) **was** the Messiah, and His wrath and kingdom are coming.
- Throughout their history, the Jews always required a sign. **1 Corinthians 1:22**
 - The Holy Spirit would be given and these signs would be evidenced in those who believed the apostles' message and were baptized in water. **Mark 16:17-18**

Baptism under Peter

1. After Christ's post-resurrection commissions to the eleven, Christ is taken up into heaven. The eleven are reminded that Christ will return to the earth in like manner. This is a confirmation of Christ's coming earthly kingdom. **Acts 1:10-11**
2. On the day of Pentecost (a Jewish feast day), the apostles receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit as promised by Christ. **Acts 2:1-5**
3. As instructed, they witness (Peter is the chief spokesman) of the resurrected Christ and warn of coming wrath. **Acts 2:32-36**
4. When Israel wanted to know what to do, how did Peter answer them? **Acts 2:37-40**
 - Peter told them exactly what Christ had taught him to say. He told them to repent and demonstrate their faith in the apostles' message by uniting with the apostles in water baptism.
5. This would result in three wonderful blessings:
 - Remission of sins - vs. 38
 - The gift of the Holy Spirit - vs. 38-39
 - Deliverance from the wrath to come on the unbelieving nation of Israel - vs. 40
6. Those that believed Peter's message were united with the little flock (the 120 - **Acts 1:15**) through water baptism.
7. After they were united, what happened next? They did signs and wonders, sold all their possessions, and met in the temple **every** day (**Acts 2:42-47, 4:34**). All of this was in line with Christ's prior instructions.
8. Some say that Peter's promise of remission of sins had nothing to do with their baptism. They say the word "for" in **Acts 2:38** means "because of." In other words, because this group already **had** remission of sins, they were to be baptized.
9. This cannot be true because **Acts 3:19** makes it clear that this was a **future** remitting of sins that they were looking to, when Christ would return to earth and establish the kingdom. **Acts 3:20-21**
10. In Acts 10, God gave to Peter a commission that seemed quite odd. Christ wanted Peter to go to a Gentile's house and tell him of the resurrected Christ.
 - The prophetic program had called for the conversion of Israel **first**, and then Israel would, in turn, bless the nations. Peter knew this plan, had been instructed in it by Christ, and was true to it.
 - This was clearly a diversion from the prophetic plan that Peter had been taught.

- To Peter's amazement, these believing Gentiles received the Holy Spirit **before** ever being baptized. Peter commanded them to be baptized **after** they had already received the Holy Spirit.
 - This was different than the kingdom program that Peter had been instructed in by Christ. The Gentiles received the Holy Spirit without water baptism and apart from the conversion of Israel.
11. An important event happened in chapter 9 that would bring about a radical change in the program of God. That event was the salvation of Saul of Tarsus, later known as the apostle Paul.
 12. Why would God allow Peter to divert from the kingdom program? Why would God give the Holy Spirit to uncircumcised, unbaptized Gentiles?
 13. Because God was preparing the Jewish church to receive the man who would take the gospel of God's grace to the Gentiles, apart from Israel. This man, the apostle Paul, would become known as the "*apostle of the Gentiles.*" **Romans 11:13**
 14. Would water baptism hold the same prominence under Paul's commission and ministry as it did Peter and the twelve? Next week we will examine God's Word and find out.

Series: Baptism - What Does the Bible Really Teach?
“Water Baptism After Paul” – Part 1

Introduction:

1. In last week's lesson, we learned from the Scriptures that water baptism held a very prominent role in Christ's commission to His eleven apostles following His resurrection. **Mark 16:16; Matthew 28:18-19**
 - They were fully anticipating the reestablishment of Israel's earthly kingdom. **Acts 1:6, 11**
 - They were to be witnesses to Christ's resurrection and that He was in fact, Israel's Messiah. They were to work **first** for the conversion of Jerusalem. **Acts 1:8**
 - They were to baptize in water those that believed their message, which would result in the Holy Spirit being given to them, and insure that their sins would be remitted at Christ's Second Coming to earth. **Acts 2:38, 3:19-20**
 - All of this was a continuation of John the Baptist and Christ's earthly ministry to Israel and the gospel of the kingdom that they proclaimed.
2. A significant event happened in Acts 9 which would truly change the course of history. God reached down and saved His chief enemy, Saul of Tarsus. We know him as the apostle Paul.
 - Paul was a Jew and would be baptized in water according to Israel's kingdom program that had been revealed up to that time. **Acts 9:18, 22:12-16**
 - Paul logically began his ministry by working towards the conversion of Jerusalem, just as the kingdom program had clearly stated. But to Paul's surprise, God had other plans. **Acts 22:17-21**
3. Paul had a commission that would bypass Jerusalem and go straight to the Gentiles with the message of Jesus Christ.
4. Would water baptism play the same prominent role in Paul's ministry to the Gentiles as it did in Peter's ministry to Israel? Let's compare two passages.
 - Peter's words - **1 Peter 3:20-21**
 - Paul's words - **1 Corinthians 1:14-17**
5. Why is there such a clear difference in Paul and Peter's attitude toward water baptism?

Paul's position was different than the twelve apostles.

1. There are twelve apostles because there are twelve tribes of Israel. They will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel in Christ's kingdom. **Matthew 19:27-28**
2. This is why Peter knew he had to replace Judas and he did so with Matthias in Acts 1. God ratified this decision by filling all of them with the Holy Spirit in **Acts 2:4**.
3. Paul knew he wasn't one of the twelve. He distinguished himself apart from the twelve in **1 Corinthians 15:5, 8**. Paul's office was the apostle of the Gentiles. **Romans 11:13**

Paul's commission was different than the twelve apostles.

1. The twelve were to testify to Israel of Christ's resurrection and seek to convince them that Christ was Israel's Messiah. Acts 2-7
 - They were to evangelize Jerusalem and the cities of Israel first before going to any other nations. **Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; Matthew 10:23**
2. Paul's commission was to get **out of** Jerusalem (**Acts 22:18**). Paul's commission was to go straight to the Gentiles. **Acts 22:21, 26:16-18**
3. This difference in commissions is clearly seen in **Galatians 2:8-9**.

Paul's gospel was different than the twelve apostles.

1. The word "gospel" simply means "good news."
2. How did Paul receive the gospel he preached among the Gentiles? He did not receive it from any of the twelve, but by direct revelation of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:11-12

- If Paul's commission would be to teach what Christ taught the twelve during His earthly ministry to Israel (**Matthew 28:19-20**), then why would Paul need a series of special revelations from Jesus Christ?
 - Obviously Christ was revealing something new. Paul called it a mystery hid in God from the foundation of the world. **Colossians 1:25-27; Ephesians 3:9**
 - A mystery is something that has been kept secret, but is now revealed.
3. Seventeen years after Paul's conversion, he traveled to Jerusalem and communicated to the twelve the gospel he preached. **Galatians 2:2, 7**
 - Why would Paul need to communicate to them privately his gospel if it was identical to what Peter had been preaching since the day of Pentecost? It clearly was different.
 4. Paul's gospel was that through faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, they (Jew or Gentile) could be totally forgiven of their sins and have Christ's righteousness imputed unto them. **Romans 10:1-13**
 - This divine righteousness would be imparted without the law of Moses (**Romans 3:21-22**), without any works (**Romans 4:5**), without circumcision (**Romans 4:11**), and without water baptism (**Romans 6:3-4; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13**).
 - This is why Paul said that he could preach his gospel without water baptism. **1 Corinthians 1:17**
 5. Paul's gospel centered around the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. **1 Corinthians 1:17, 18, 23, 2:1-2, 15:3**
 6. You do not find this in Peter's gospel message in the early part of Acts. His good news was that Israel's Messiah is risen.
 - "You crucified Him, but He is risen. If you will repent of your sin of crucifying your Messiah, He will return, remit your sins, and usher in your long-awaited kingdom. Prepare yourselves by repenting and being baptized."
 7. This is why you see Peter disappearing from the scene in the book of Acts. Israel's prophetic program was to be interrupted by something new - the dispensation of grace to all people.

8. Israel's program would be set aside temporarily and Paul's gospel of grace would go to the world. Israel's rejection of **Peter's** gospel would mean the riches of the Gentiles through **Paul's** gospel. **Romans 11:11-13**
9. Peter is the prominent spokesman in the early part of Acts, but after Acts 9 (Paul's conversion) he disappears except for a few significant events.
 - God commissions Peter to go to a Gentile household and tell them of Jesus Christ and His resurrection. God interrupts Peter's message, and these Gentile believers receive the Holy Spirit by faith alone in Jesus Christ (apart from circumcision, water baptism, the law of Moses, etc.) This is startling to Peter. Acts 10
 - Peter stands up at the Jerusalem Council and reminds them of this event and affirms the Gentile ministry of Paul. **Acts 15:7-11**
10. God used Peter to transition things to Paul's ministry and gospel, and Peter's ministry and gospel to Israel disappears from the Biblical record (Acts 9-28).
11. As we study Paul's ministry, we see water baptism still being practiced at times (**Acts 18:8**), yet it would not have the significance that it did under Israel's program.
 - When asked by the Philippian jailor, "*What must I do to be saved?*" Paul simply answers, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*"
Acts 16:30-31
 - Water baptism is only mentioned once in all of Paul's 13 epistles, and in that passage Paul said that Christ sent him **not** to baptize. **1 Corinthians 1:17**
12. Paul's focus would now be a non-physical baptism that would unite the believer to Jesus Christ for all eternity (Colossians 2:12-13). We will talk more about this next week.

Series: Baptism - What Does the Bible Really Teach?
“Water Baptism After Paul” - Part 2

Introduction:

1. Peter was asked by a group of Jews, "What shall we do?"
 - Peter responded that they should repent, and be baptized in water in order to receive remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost. **Acts 2:37-38**
2. Paul was asked by a man, "...what must I do to be saved?"
 - Paul responded, "...believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."
Acts 16:31
3. Obviously these are two different answers. Water baptism was an essential part of Peter's message, yet Paul said he could preach his gospel without it.
1 Corinthians 1:17
4. The same Christ that gave to Peter the gospel of the circumcision while on earth, appeared to Paul from heaven and gave to him the gospel of the uncircumcision.
Galatians 2:7-8
5. We learned last week that Paul was not one of the twelve apostles, but received a special commission by direct revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven.
 - To Paul was revealed the mystery of the body of Christ and the dispensation of grace that we live in today.
6. Do we see water baptism associated at all with Paul's distinct message and ministry? What role did it play in Paul's ministry? Let's do a Biblical overview of Paul's ministry and get answers to these questions.

Paul's baptism at salvation

1. After Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and Paul believed, Christ instructed Paul to go into Damascus and wait for instruction. **Acts 9:6**
2. In Damascus, Paul is ministered to by a man named Ananias. He lays hands on Paul, resulting in Paul having his eyesight restored, and Paul also receives the Holy Spirit. The Bible informs us that Paul arose and was baptized. **Acts 9:17-18**
3. In **Acts 22:16**, Paul reveals to us the words that Ananias told him that day. Up to this point, only the kingdom program that Peter preached had been revealed. Baptism was an essential part of this program and Ananias knew it.
4. As a Jewish believer, Paul was baptized as any other Jewish believer would have been at that time. Belief on Christ as the risen Messiah, repentance of sins, and water baptism all were a simultaneous event under the kingdom program.
5. This was all done to prepare themselves for their coming King and the kingdom He would bring with Him.

Paul's first missionary journey

1. Acts 13 and 14 record Paul's first missionary journey. Several years had lapsed since Paul's conversion. During those years Christ had appeared to Paul from heaven and revealed to him the gospel of grace that he was to preach to the heathen (Gentiles). **Galatians 1:11-12, 16-17**
2. During Paul's first missionary journey throughout the regions of Galatia, water baptism is never mentioned one time.

3. Paul's first sermon is recorded in **Acts 13:14-39**. Notice how he concludes it in verses 38-39. Paul preached justification by faith alone and there is no mention of baptism.
4. Many people trusted Christ during this first missionary journey, but there is no record of any baptisms at all. It says they preached the gospel, taught many, confirmed the souls of the disciples and ordained elders, but no mention of baptism. **Acts 14:21-23**
5. When Paul returns to his home church in Antioch, he told them how God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. **Acts 14:27**

Paul's defense at the Jerusalem Council

1. In Acts 15, some of the Jewish believers were causing a stir among the Gentile converts, insisting that they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved.
2. It ends up turning into a showdown at Jerusalem. The conclusion was that the Gentiles did not have to do these things.
3. But one command did come out of this meeting: the Gentile believers needed to be sensitive to the Jewish believers and not knowingly offend them. **Acts 15:19-21**
4. This meeting apparently had a great impact on Paul because we see Paul doing things on his second missionary journey that he did not do on his first journey.

Paul's second missionary journey

1. Immediately we see Paul exercising a greater sensitivity to the Jews. He takes Timothy and has him circumcised. Paul knew that circumcision availed nothing (**Galatians 5:6**). Why did he do this? Because of sensitivity to the Jews. **Acts 16:3**
2. We also see Paul shaving his head due to a Jewish vow he had taken. Why would Paul do such a thing? He knew he wasn't under the Old Testament law. He did it because of his sensitivity to the Jews. **Acts 18:18-21**
3. We also see Paul baptizing converts for the first time on this journey.
 - During the book of Acts, Paul's ministry involved taking the gospel of grace to the Jews first. There was obviously no synagogue in Philippi, so Paul goes to the riverside on the Sabbath day where Jews and Jewish proselytes had gathered.
 - He preached the gospel, and a lady named Lydia believed and was then baptized. **Acts 16:14-15**
 - When the Philippian jailor asked Paul how to be saved, Paul made it clear that it was by faith alone in Jesus Christ. But after the man was saved, he was baptized. **Acts 16:30-33**
 - The church at Corinth was birthed right next to the Jewish synagogue. It was a mixture of Jew and Gentile believers. Again, we see baptism following their faith in Christ. **Acts 18:8**
4. Paul is never seen **preaching** baptism. We do not see it mentioned in any of his messages. It clearly is not seen as part of his gospel, nor do we ever see him requiring it, but we do see it practiced and mentioned three times.
5. Paul also did not preach circumcision or Nazarite vows, but we see him doing these things. Why are none of these things mentioned on Paul's first journey, but they **are** mentioned on his second journey?

6. The Jerusalem Council made an impact on Paul, and he was passionate about wanting to reach his own Jewish people with the gospel. **Romans 10:1**

Water Baptism After Paul - Part 3

Introduction:

1. Peter was asked by a group of Jews, "What shall we do?"
 - Peter responded that they should repent and be baptized in water in order to receive remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost. **Acts 2:37-38**
2. Paul was asked by a man, "What must I do to be saved?"
 - Paul responded, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*" **Acts 16:31**
3. Obviously, these are two different answers. We learned that water baptism was an essential part of Peter's message, yet Paul said he could preach his gospel without it. **1 Corinthians 1:17**
4. The same Christ that gave to Peter the gospel of the circumcision while on earth appeared to Paul from heaven and gave to him the gospel of the uncircumcision. **Galatians 2:7-8**
5. We learned that Paul was not one of the twelve apostles, but received a special commission by direct revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven.
 - To Paul was revealed the mystery of the body of Christ and the dispensation of grace that we live in today.
6. Do we see water baptism associated at all with Paul's distinct message and ministry? What role did it play in Paul's ministry? Last week we began to do a Biblical overview of Paul's ministry in order to get answers to these questions. We examined his salvation, first and second missionary journeys, as well as the Jerusalem Council in between.

Paul's third missionary journey

1. After Paul's second journey he returned to his home church in Antioch and spent some time there. **Acts 18:22**
2. Paul then launched out on his third missionary journey. **Acts 18:23**
 - This journey ended with Paul being arrested in Jerusalem.
3. Just like Paul's first missionary journey, Paul is not seen practicing water baptism on this missionary journey, with but one exception.
4. In **Acts 19:1-7**, Paul enters Ephesus. A few things to note about this text:
 - This involves twelve Jewish men that had already believed John the Baptist's message that Messiah was coming. (vs. 2) They were believers.
 - These men had been water baptized under John's baptism and message. vs. 3
 - Paul gives these men further revelation by explaining to them that Christ Jesus was the fulfillment of John's message. vs. 4
 - These Jewish men are then baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. These men obviously desired to be baptized to demonstrate their faith in this new revelation they had received concerning the good news of Jesus Christ. This is why they are baptized in Jesus' name. (vs. 5) Remember, baptism was an essential element in Israel's program.
 - There is no evidence that Paul performed this baptism or required it, but he allowed it.

- Paul then lays hands on them; they receive the Holy Spirit and begin to manifest miraculous signs which are to be a testimony to the nation of Israel.
1 Corinthians 1:22 cf. 14:22
 - Paul immediately takes these Jewish converts with him into the Jewish synagogue. As these Jewish believers manifested Israel's signs, it would hopefully cause Israel to listen to Paul's gospel of Jesus Christ.
5. One sidenote about **Acts 19:1-7**: many religions teach the necessity for re-baptism by their church or denomination based on this passage. This is ludicrous for several reasons.
 - These were Jewish men who had never heard the gospel of Christ.
 - Their re-baptism was not commanded by Paul. It was obviously their choice. Baptism was an essential element in Israel's program.
 - This is the only time something like this is ever seen in the Bible. There is no evidence that any of the 120 in the upper room in Acts 1 were re-baptized in Acts 2 (who had all been baptized under John's baptism).
 6. There is no more mention of water baptism after this on Paul's journey. When reviewing his Ephesian ministry to the elders of that church, water baptism is never mentioned. **Acts 20:20-21**

Paul's arrest and trip to Rome

1. Paul is arrested in Jerusalem in Acts 21 and sent to Rome in Acts 27 and 28.
2. Water baptism is referred to once in these chapters when Paul is giving his testimony before the Jewish multitude in Acts 22. Paul simply recounts his own baptism by Ananias. This subject was covered earlier in Part 2 of this lesson.

Paul's Acts epistles

1. Paul wrote several of his letters to the churches during the Acts time period. These books would include Galatians, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians.
2. Water baptism is mentioned once in these epistles. It is found in **1 Corinthians 1:13-17**.
 - This epistle was written from Ephesus during the Acts 19 time period.
3. There was some serious contention in this church and much of it was centered on this issue of water baptism.
 - Paul thanked God that he himself had only baptized a few of these people. vs. 14
 - Paul then stated that Christ's commission for him was not to baptize, but to preach the gospel. vs. 17
4. Some say that Paul said this because he was an itinerate evangelist, and as an evangelist he wouldn't have been the one baptizing.
 - First of all, the Scripture never designates Paul as an itinerate evangelist. It always identifies him as an apostle. As an apostle, he would have full rights to baptize people. In fact, the twelve apostles were commanded to baptize as part of their commission.
 - Second, Paul many times spent extended periods of time in one place, in which he basically functioned as the leading pastor/teacher (year and a half at Corinth, three years at Ephesus).

5. In order to be true to the text, we can only conclude one thing. Water baptism was not an integral part of Paul's ministry or message. The preaching of Christ's finished work was the focus of Paul's message. **1 Corinthians 1:18, 2:1-2**
 - Paul realized this and wrote this to a church that had been very focused on the issue of water baptism.
6. Paul wrote this in Acts 19 (after his encounter with the twelve Jewish men) and is never seen baptizing anybody after this in the book of Acts, nor does he teach on or mention this issue in any of his other Acts epistles.
7. His focus becomes Holy Spirit baptism which places the believer in the body of Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-28**

Paul's post-Acts epistles

1. Many of Paul's letters he wrote after the book of Acts was complete. This would include Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.
2. Again, water baptism is never mentioned in any of these letters. Paul's focus is the "one baptism" of **Ephesians 4:5**. This is a spiritual, invisible baptism that is done by God the moment a person trusts Christ. **Colossians 2:11-13**
3. This divine baptism places a believer into spiritual union with Jesus Christ, brings spiritual life, and results in complete forgiveness of sins.
4. When a person trusts Christ, the Holy Spirit baptizes, regenerates, and indwells the believer immediately. **Ephesians 1:13**
5. So does a believer need water baptism? Does the Bible require this of believers? Does Paul teach the church that baptism is a prerequisite before someone can become a part of a local assembly? Is baptism necessary to be "right with God?"

Series: Baptism - What Does the Bible Really Teach?
“Answering the Tough Questions”

Note: This lesson is built upon the foundation of the previous eight lessons. Without knowledge of our prior studies, it may be difficult to fully understand.

Introduction:

1. As we have reiterated throughout this series, the issue of baptism is one of the most hotly debated issues of our day.
2. Thousands of different denominations and churches hold to different beliefs on this subject. They can't all be right.
3. The answer to this dilemma is *"...rightly dividing the word of truth."*
2 Timothy 2:15
 - Baptism was an essential part of Christ's commission to the twelve.
Mark 16:15-16
 - Baptism was **not** an essential part of Christ's commission to Paul.
1 Corinthians 1:17
4. There are distinctions in the Bible that must be recognized by the believer or confusion will reign. Why would Christ's commissions differ in their emphasis?
 - Peter and the twelve's focus was on Israel and preparing them for their coming kingdom by proclaiming a risen Messiah.
 - Paul's focus was primarily to the Gentiles and proclaiming the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead.
5. Paul is our apostle. He is the apostle of the Gentiles (**Romans 11:13**) and to him was revealed the great mystery of the body of Christ (**Ephesians 3:1-9**) and the wonderful blessings that accompany this position in Christ.
6. We know from our previous studies the special significance that water baptism held under Israel's program, but what role does water baptism have in the body of Christ?
7. In this lesson we will answer some tough questions regarding water baptism. We will answer them in light of Paul's teaching to the church, the body of Christ.

Is water baptism commanded?

1. One will search in vain to find Paul ever **commanding** Gentile believers to be baptized.
2. We saw that there are a few **examples** of Gentiles being baptized in the book of Acts, but there are also scores of Gentiles that were saved under Paul's ministry where baptism is never mentioned. His entire first missionary journey is an example.
3. Was baptism required of Israel by Peter in the early chapters of Acts? Absolutely, but in our studies we learned **why** this is true and why we don't see this same adamancy with Paul.
4. We see no instructions at all in any of Paul's 13 letters to churches and pastors concerning the issue of water baptism. There is a substantial amount of teaching regarding Spirit baptism, but not water baptism.

5. Peter ministered to Israel, but Paul is our apostle (**Galatians 2:7-9**). You will not find Paul making water baptism an essential doctrine and practice in his Gentile ministry.
6. In many churches, their doctrine regarding water baptism would make you think that Paul's missionary journeys and letters were **filled** with admonitions and commands regarding this issue, but it simply isn't the case.

Is water baptism the first step of obedience after a person is saved?

1. This is a commonly held view among many. It is based primarily on Christ's commissions to the twelve and examples of these commissions being followed in the early part of Acts.
2. Faith, baptism, remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit were inseparably linked under Israel's program. **Mark 1:4, 16:16; Acts 2:38**
3. Christ revealed to Paul the dispensation of grace and the gospel of grace that he proclaimed. Oftentimes Paul would refer to it as "my gospel." Galatians 1
4. Here is an obvious question: If Paul's commission and gospel were identical to the twelve's, how could Paul have said that Christ sent him not to baptize in **1 Corinthians 1:17**?
 - The twelve were definitely sent to baptize. Baptism was an essential part of their message and ministry. Paul said that he could preach his gospel without it.
5. If water baptism was the crucial, first step of obedience for Gentile believers, would not Paul have devoted at least one verse to it in all of his 13 letters to churches and pastors?
6. If baptism was an absolutely essential issue, would not Paul have mentioned it to the Ephesians elders in **Acts 20:17-38** when he reviewed **his** ministry and admonished them to be faithful in **their** ministry?
 - If it were the first step of obedience, would not he have encouraged them to be "getting people saved and baptized" as we hear so often today?
7. Paul never taught that water baptism is the first step of obedience after salvation.

Is water baptism required for acceptance in a local church?

1. Nowhere is this taught in any of Paul's 13 letters to churches and pastors, nor do we see Paul model this belief on any of his missionary journeys in Acts.
2. There is basically only one passage that people use to justify this - **Acts 2:38-41**.
 - Three thousand Jews were baptized and added to the 120 disciples.
 - We have studied this passage previously and we have seen that baptism was an essential part of Israel's program because they couldn't even receive the Holy Spirit until they were baptized in water.
 - Therefore, a person couldn't be added to the church until they were baptized because they didn't have God's Spirit.
3. Believers today have the Holy Spirit the moment they believe on Christ. They are forgiven of their sins and identified fully in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
 - On what basis could a local church exclude a person like this from their fellowship?

4. There is only one requirement for acceptance in a local assembly - a testimony of faith in Jesus Christ. Paul would write to the churches and address them as "*saints in Christ Jesus.*" You become a saint in Christ by faith alone in Jesus Christ.
1 Corinthians 1:2
5. Isn't it a contradiction to preach Paul's gospel of faith alone for salvation, but then require religious externals to become a member of a church? We've set the bar higher for church membership than for salvation.
6. Here is the message this sends: "To become saved and a member of **God's** family all you need is faith in Christ alone, but if you want to become a member of **our** church family you have to have faith plus baptism (and do it our way in our church), plus tithing, plus Christian service, or whatever the case may be."
7. Paul said that the Colossian believers were complete in Christ (2:10). How did they gain this marvelous position?
 - Through the invisible circumcision of Christ - 2:11
 - Through the invisible baptism of God - 2:12-13
8. These are said to take place through the faith of the operation of God and result in spiritual life, complete forgiveness of sins, and a new identity in Christ.
9. No outward religious ceremony that man can do to you can add one thing to your accepted, complete position in Christ.
10. The local church should be an assembly of believers who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ - it is faith in Christ that unites the body as one.
Colossians 2:3-7

In Conclusion:

1. We have seen in this lesson that water baptism is:
 - Not a legalistic command for today.
 - Not the first step of obedience after salvation.
 - Not a requirement for acceptance in a local church.
2. Next week we will examine what place water baptism can have in the life of a believer. We will examine its meaning and purpose for today.

Series: Baptism - What Does the Bible Really Teach?
“What is the Meaning and Purpose of Baptism for Today?”

Introduction:

1. Water baptism is not a simple, "cut and dried" subject as many would have you to believe. If it were, there would not be multitudes of different convictions and beliefs about it.
2. It is, in fact, a complex subject that must be rightly divided if it is to be properly understood. Scriptures must be taken in context and **all** Scriptures must be examined, not just a select few that prove whatever point we are trying to make.
3. This is what we have endeavored to do in this series of lessons. This is our tenth study on this subject because we have sought to examine the whole counsel of God's Word.
4. In this final lesson, we will seek to take what we have learned and answer the question, "What is the meaning and purpose of baptism for today?"

Water baptism is an external identification.

1. As we study the Scriptures, we see the issue of **identification** constantly associated with baptism. Here are a few examples:
 - **1 Corinthians 10:2** - When Israel was baptized unto Moses, they were identifying themselves with Moses and his message of deliverance.
 - **Mark 1:4-5** - When Israel was baptized by John, they were identifying themselves with John and his message of repentance.
 - **Luke 3:21** - When Christ was baptized, He was identifying Himself with the believing remnant of Israel and separating Himself from unbelieving and apostate Israel.
 - **Acts 2:38-41** - When Israel was baptized, they were identifying themselves with Peter's message that Christ was the risen Messiah and they needed to repent. They were identifying themselves with the *“little flock.”*
 - **Acts 18:8** - When Jewish and Gentile Corinthians were baptized, they were identifying themselves with Paul's gospel of grace and separating from their previous belief system (whether it was Judaism or paganism).
2. The believer must understand that today it is **Spirit** baptism that identifies the believer eternally with Christ and His body. **Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 4:4-5**
 - This is the baptism that is absolutely necessary and it only comes through faith in Jesus Christ. It is a spiritual baptism that takes place in the inner man.

Water baptism is an external testimony to others.

1. We never see any person baptizing himself in the Bible. When a person is baptized in the Bible, there is always at least one other person present. Typically, there was a group of people present to witness the baptism.
 - **Matthew 3:6-7** - When these Jews were baptized by John, it was a testimony that they no longer aligned themselves with the religious leadership of Israel.

- **Luke 7:29-30** - The publicans were baptized as a testimony that they believed the message of John and Jesus. The Pharisees' and lawyers' rejection of baptism was a testimony that they rejected the counsel of God.
 - **Acts 8:36-38** - The Ethiopian man's baptism was a testimony to Philip that he believed Philip's message concerning Christ.
 - **Acts 10:44-48** - Baptism was a testimony that Cornelius and those with him had received the Holy Spirit.
 - **Acts 16:14-15** - Lydia's baptism was a testimony that she believed Paul's message.
2. Baptism is not a testimony to God. God sees the heart, and He is simply looking for your heart to rest fully in faith in Jesus Christ. At that moment God's Spirit enters into your spirit and places you into the body of Christ. **Ephesians 1:13-14**
 3. Another human being cannot see your heart, so baptism is simply an external testimony of your faith in Christ and your separation from any previous belief system you might have held.

Baptism is a matter of personal liberty.

1. Baptism was an absolute requirement under Israel's program, but we do not see Paul teaching or exercising baptism as a legalistic requirement for Gentiles.
2. Paul does not **demand** it, nor does he **forbid** it. We see baptisms taking place on Paul's second missionary journey, but a total absence of any baptisms on his first journey.
3. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 1:17** that Christ sent him not to baptize, but Paul wrote many letters after this, and never does he forbid water baptism.
4. Paul makes it clear that there is only one baptism that can place you in the body of Christ and that is Holy Spirit baptism (**Ephesians 4:4-6**). But Paul never establishes a legalistic command forbidding water baptism, nor does he do this regarding other highly Jewish issues such as circumcision, eating of certain meats, Sabbath days, etc.
5. If a believer wanted to observe certain dietary restrictions or Sabbath days, Paul taught that this was a matter of personal liberty (Romans 14). But the believer is wrong when he attempts to foist his personal preferences on others and make it a legalistic law.
6. We even see Paul circumcising Timothy in **Acts 16:3**, taking a Jewish vow in **Acts 18:18**, and going to observe a Jewish feast in **Acts 18:21**. Paul understood that these things brought no spiritual merit before God. He did these things as a testimony to the Jews in an effort to open up doors for the gospel.
 - On the other hand, Paul refused to allow Titus to be circumcised. Titus was a Gentile and it would have sent the wrong message to others. Paul made some wise choices based on the situation he was in.
7. If a person desired to be baptized in an effort to be a testimony for Christ to unsaved loved ones and to identify themselves with their new faith in Christ, Paul would say, "Amen!" If it can be a bridge to reach others, Paul would say, "Go for it."
8. If a person felt that baptism would be counter-productive in their testimony to unsaved loved ones, Paul wouldn't have demanded it of them. **Illustration:** Mark Murdock

- Paul would say, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."
Romans 14:5

In Conclusion:

1. If you desire water baptism here are some questions to ask:
 - Am I doing this in an effort to please God and get Him to bless me? **Wrong reason.**
 - Am I doing this as a religious ritual as a means of attaining God's grace? **Wrong reason.**
 - Am I doing this to please and appease other believers? **Wrong reason.**
 - Am I doing this to identify myself externally with Christ (realizing I am already identified eternally with Christ) and thereby open up doors to share the gospel and my new faith with others? **The right reason!**
2. The first three motives result in nothing but a dead religious work. The last motive results in a demonstration of God's grace to others.