

Discipleship Training Course

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- The Old Testament tetragrammaton name of God (derived from the four Hebrew letters translated into English as YHWH) has been rendered LORD unless translated Jehovah or Yahweh
- Pronouns referring to the Trinity and some specific terms relating to the Trinity (such as Name and Word) have been capitalized
- Speech marks around entire quotes and at the beginning of new paragraphs have been omitted
- Anglicised spellings have been used
- All quotes begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop
- Some weights, measures and times have been replaced with easier to understand terms given in the footnotes using square brackets
- All verse numbers, footnote numbers and symbols have been removed
- Poetry has been indented and only new sentences start with a capital letter

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Chapter 4. Baptism in water

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1. Old Testament origins

Baptism symbolises **separation unto God**. Noah's ark symbolised baptism. It is the appeal of a clear conscience towards God:

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. **Baptism, which corresponds to this**, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him.*

1 Peter 3:18-22 (ESVUK)

Whilst this Scripture states that baptism saves us it is clear from other Scriptures that it is a sign of being saved, not a requirement for salvation. For example, Jesus promised the thief on the cross that he would be with Him in paradise without being baptised (Luke 23:40-43). Also, the Holy Spirit fell on the gentiles in Caesarea before they were baptised (Acts 10:34-48), indicating to Peter that they were already saved.

The Israelites **crossing of the Red Sea** and their **covering by the cloud of God's presence** were both symbols of baptism:

Now I would not have you ignorant, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

1 Corinthians 10:1-2 (WEBPB)

Baptism also symbolised **cleansing**, as seen in:

- Becoming a priest (Exodus 29:4)
- The laver: a bronze basin used for priestly washing (Exodus 30:17-21)
- Cleansing from touching the carcass of an unclean animal (Leviticus 11:24-25, 28, 40, 17:15-16)
- Cleansing from infectious skin diseases (Leviticus 13:6, 34, 14:8-9)
- Cleansing from unclean bodily discharges (Leviticus 15)
- The initiation of the Levites as servants in the tabernacle (Numbers 8:6-7)
- Cleansing the Midianite spoils of war (Numbers 31:21-24)

2. New Testament examples

John the Baptist practised a baptism of repentance:

And in those days John the Baptist came, proclaiming in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near." For this is he who was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord. Make His paths straight." Now John himself wore clothing made of camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then people from Jerusalem, all of Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan river, confessing their sins.

Matthew 3:1-6 (NHEB)

Jesus submitted to the baptism of John, validating it and confirming His clean heart before God:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. But John would have hindered Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and You come to me?" But Jesus, answering, said to him, "Allow it now, for this is the fitting way for us to fulfil all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up directly from the water: and suddenly the heavens were opened to Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming on Him. And suddenly a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Matthew 3:13-17 (NHEB)

Jesus also initially baptised His followers (John 3:22, 26).

The new believers were baptised by the apostles on the day of Pentecost:

*"Repent," Peter said to them, "**and be baptised**, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call." And with many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, "Be saved from this corrupt generation!"*

*So **those who accepted his message were baptised**, and that day about 3,000 people were added to them.*

Acts 2:38-41 (HCSB)

The Ethiopian eunuch was baptised by Philip after believing the gospel – nothing kept this from happening:

*As they went on the way, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "**Behold, here is water. What is keeping me from being baptised?**"*

He commanded the chariot to stand still, and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptised him.

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, and the eunuch didn't see him any more, for he went on his way rejoicing.

Acts 8:36-39 (WEBPB)

Saul was baptised immediately after Ananias prayed for his sight to be restored and for him to be filled with the Holy Spirit:

Ananias departed and entered into the house. Laying his hands on him, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord, who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately something like scales

*fell from his eyes, and he received his sight. **He arose and was baptised.** He took food and was strengthened.*

Acts 9:17-19a (WEBPB)

Peter ordered for the Gentile believers in Caesarea to be baptised after they received the gift of the Holy Spirit:

*While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, “**Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?**” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.*

Acts 10:44-48 (ESVUK)

Lydia was baptised along with her household after the Lord opened her heart to Silas and Paul's message:

*And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. **And after she was baptized, and her household as well,** she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.*

Acts 16:13-15 (ESVUK)

The Philippian jailer was baptised along with his household after believing in Jesus:

*And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and **he was baptized at once, he and all his family.** Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.*

Acts 16:29-34 (ESVUK)

Baptism also followed believing in Jesus in Corinth:

Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house. Many of the Corinthians, when they heard, believed and were baptised.

Acts 18:8 (WEBPB)

3. New Testament doctrine

3.1 The Baptisms of John and Jesus

John the Baptist prophesied about the baptism of Jesus:

*I indeed baptize you in water for repentance, but the One who comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to carry. **He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and with fire.** His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor. He will gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire.*

Matthew 3:11-12 (NHEB)

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However, this does not mean that followers of Christ should not be baptised in water. Jesus Himself taught that we should baptise when we make new disciples:

*Jesus came to them and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go and make disciples of all nations, **baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

Matthew 28:18-20 (WEBPB)

The Baptism of John was a **baptism of repentance**. Jesus' baptism involves also being filled with the Holy Spirit. This is seen in Apollos' teaching in Ephesus and the way he was corrected by Priscilla and Aquila. Later the effects of his teaching were corrected by Paul:

*Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus. He was mighty in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, although **he knew only the baptism of John**. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside, **and explained to him the way of God more accurately**.*

Acts 18:24-26 (WEBPB)

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus and found certain disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They said to him, "No, we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

He said, "Into what then were you baptised?"

They said, "Into John's baptism."

*Paul said, "**John indeed baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in the One who would come after him, that is, in Jesus.**"*

*When they heard this, **they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus**. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke with other languages and prophesied. They were about twelve men in all.*

Acts 19:1-7 (WEBPB)

Baptism in the Holy Spirit normally followed baptism in water in the name of Jesus but it also sometimes required the laying on of hands:

*Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for as yet He had fallen on none of them. **They had only been baptised in the name of Christ Jesus**. Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*

Acts 8:14-17 (WEBPB)

When Peter recounted salvation coming to the Gentiles he remembered Jesus' words about His baptism:

As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptised in water, but you will be baptised in the Holy Spirit.' If then God gave to them the same gift as us, when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God?'

Acts 11:15-17 (WEBPB)

3.2 The meaning of the baptism of Jesus

Jesus described **His death and resurrection** as a baptism that He needed to undergo:

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came near to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we will ask."

He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

They said to Him, "Grant to us that we may sit, one at Your right hand, and one at Your left hand, in Your glory."

*But Jesus said to them, "You don't know what you are asking. **Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?**"*

They said to him, "We are able."

Jesus said to them, "You shall indeed drink the cup that I drink, and you shall be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with; but to sit at My right hand and at My left hand is not Mine to give, but for whom it has been prepared."

Mark 10:35-40 (WEBPB)

*I came to throw fire on the earth. I wish it were already kindled. But **I have a baptism to be baptised with**, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!*

Luke 12:49-50 (WEBPB)

Baptism in water symbolises that **we have died to our old way of life**. It is a picture of us being united in Christ in His death and resurrection.

*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? May it never be! We who died to sin, how could we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that **all we who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death**? We were buried therefore with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.*

Romans 6:1-4 (WEBPB)

3.3 Baptism as a believer's initiation rite

Paul also taught this in his letter to the Colossians where he also likened baptism to **circumcision**:

For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

*When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision – the cutting away of your sinful nature. **For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized**. And with Him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.*

Colossians 2:9-12 (NLT)

Baptism therefore replaced circumcision as **the initiation rite of new believers**: it is an **outward sign of an inner transformation**.

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul taught that baptism is one of the essential elements of the Christian faith:

*I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and humility, with patience, bearing with one another in love, being eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as you also were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all, and in us all.*

Ephesians 4:1-6 (WEBPB)

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*So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. You don't need further **instruction about baptisms**, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*

Hebrews 6:1-2 (NLT)