

GOSPEL GAZZETTE

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BAPTISM What does it mean?

Most adults don't give too much thought about baptism because they were baptized as a child many years ago. But, have you truly looked into what baptism really means? Should people get baptized? If so, why? If so, when? Let's look into the pages of the bible to see what GOD has to say about this subject.

We are told in the gospel of Mark that John was preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Let's read it:

*John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.
Mark 1:4*

Did you read that? What is the baptism of repentance? What does the remission of sins mean? Let's take these one at a time.

WHAT DOES IT
MEAN TO BE
REPENTANT?

Strong's Concordance is a book that lists every word that is written in the bible, and gives its literal translation for that word. Here is what Strong's defines repentance as:

3341 { met-an'-oy-ah }

1) A change of mind, as it appears to one who repents, of a purpose he has formed or of something he has done.

To be repentant, you must have a change of heart. You must understand that many things you've done in your life were not according to God's plan for your life, and those things that are contrary to God's way are called sin. You must not only be sorry (repentant) for those mistakes, but also have a change of heart to not want to make those same mistakes again. It's not enough to just say you're sorry; you have to WANT to change your life. That's the first part. The second part is called remission.

WHAT DOES
REMISSION OF SIN
MEAN?

Again, I'll go back to Strong's for the definition:

859 { af'-es-is }

1) Release from bondage or imprisonment

2) Forgiveness or pardon, of sins (letting them go as if they had never been committed), remission of the penalty.

We see here the second part has to do with the penalty for sin, or in this case, the release or pardon of the penalty.

We would need to go back into the Old Testament for a bit to study the laws that were in place when someone committed a sin. For the sake of time and space, I will sum it up for you, but please take the time to research and study this on your own.

When a law of God is broken, a sacrifice MUST be made to pay for that sin. In the Old Testament, there are many chapters and books describing these sacrifices. Depending on what law was broken, determined what was to

be sacrificed and how it was to be done. In the Old Testament it should have been very humbling for that person that sinned to realize that when they committed a sin, they needed to find an “innocent” and perfect animal and kill it to pay for their sin.

These sacrifices of animals for sin all ended with Jesus Christ, who paid the ultimate price and was our sacrifice for each and every sin.

Let’s read this:

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

Heb. 10:4

There needed to be a perfect sacrifice, and that sacrifice is Christ.

...by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal

Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Heb. 9:12-14

Is there still a sacrifice for sin? Yes, Jesus’ blood. He paid the price once, for everyone. It should now be humbling to “us” to know that when we sin, we have a personal role in the actual sacrifice of our savior. It was “our” sins that he died for.

Pretty sobering isn’t it?

But think on this...What is positive in all this is that everything we have ever done or will do that has been wrong and sinful and abominable can all be forgiven AND forgotten too. Isn’t that amazing?

When we have a repentant heart (a mindset that is not only sorry for what we’ve done, but willing to CHANGE) and we are baptized, not only are our sins forgiven, they are forgotten by God and never brought back to memory again by him!!!

WIPED CLEAN!

Who in this world does not NEED a CLEAN SLATE? I know I do!

Many people don’t like to talk about the word sin, but that word means, “Transgression of the law.” To break one of God’s laws is called sin, and there is a penalty that must be paid.

We need to grow and understand and study what God’s laws are, and then begin to apply his ways in our life. As you begin your walk to follow after God’s ways you will need some help and guidance and strength. That is another function of baptism.

This next passage is John speaking to the people who had a repentant heart and wanted to be baptized:

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

Matt 3:11

In this next passage we see that we are given something else when prayers are offered and with the laying on of hands:

...They...prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. Acts 8:15-17

Let's back up a little and review what we have learned so far. The reason for baptism is the acknowledgement that you are a sinner and that you need and want forgiveness. Baptism is an outward sign of our inner beliefs that you have a willingness to change your life and live the life that God wants you to live.

The desire to be baptized happens when the person who wants baptism has a repentant attitude and a willingness to change their life and live for God. . Once baptized, prayers are offered on their behalf and with the

laying on of hands, they receive the Holy Spirit.

WHAT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Holy Spirit is the "power" of our Lord. It is implanted in us, and gives us the understanding and the strength to change.

Jesus is telling his disciples that he must leave, but when he leaves he will send the comforter (the Holy Spirit, the spirit of truth) that will lead them into all truth:

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: John 16:7-8

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: John 16:13

We are not left to figure this out on our own, nor are we abandoned. The

awesome mystery is that once baptized and we receive the holy spirit, he lives INSIDE us!

SPRINKLE OR SUBMERSION?

Does it matter "how" you are baptized? To answer that question, go back into the bible to see if they give examples. Yes they do. It's the example of Christ's baptism, and one we should follow:

And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: Mark 1:9-11

This example shows that we are to submerge the body in water... Completely! There is an analogy of baptism that must be understood as well and it will help to understand this process. Baptism is likened to death. It is the death of the old man, that old person that we no longer want to be. When we are baptized, it is as

though that old person dies with Christ, and when we rise up out of the water, we are a NEW CREATURE. Let's look to the bible for this analogy:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth

*unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Rom 6:3-11*

*And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again
2Cor 5:14-15*

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.
2Cor 5: 17-18*

We see that baptism destroys that old person, and when we come up out of that water, we are NEW. We are washed completely clean!

How AWESOME is that?

If all this isn't enough, there is something else that he promises us. He promises us that those

who are his, those that have the Holy Spirit have become the CHILDREN OF GOD!

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our

spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. Rom 8:9-17

The blessings keep coming and coming. Children of God! Joint HEIRS with Christ!

Again, how AWESOME is that??

INFANT OR ADULT?

Many people believe that they should baptize their infants, but is this scriptural? We have read that the one being baptized must understand first that they are a sinner. Does an infant know what sin is? Have infants really committed any sins of themselves? I think not. Can an infant understand repentance, or for that matter even a young child? My guess would be, probably not. Yet, all of these are a biblical condition for baptism. Many baptize their infants because of a misunderstanding about death and salvation.

[Request the article RESURRECTION to understand God's plan for us after death.]

Most of these baptisms were not done with complete submersion into water nor with the understanding of the individual that they have buried that old person they don't want to be, and are now a new creature, a new being, who is living for God and not themselves. This is very powerful and not to be taken lightly. It is not for someone else (in this case a parent) to decide "for you" to be baptized. It must be an individual decision with a very clear understanding of what you are doing and why.

NOW OR LATER?

When should you be baptized? Is there any reason you can think of to wait?

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior, and you believe that he died for your sins, then ask yourself the following questions and you'll know the answer:

When do you want to be forgiven?

When do you want your slate to be wiped clean and your sins to be remembered no more?

When do you want to put away the person that you are, to become a new person in Christ?

When do you want to receive the Holy Spirit, the comforter that will lead you into all truth?

When do you want to become a child of God and become joint heirs with Christ?

If you are reading this and can understand and grasp the magnitude of these awesome gifts, then I can think of no better time than....

NOW.