

Di122 Essentials of Christianity

Lesson Di122-5 Water Baptism

You have now studied four lessons concerning salvation, the beginning point of Christianity. The first essentials included believing in Jesus, repenting of sin, submitting to him, and learning to have faith. The next group of three lessons concern following Jesus in obedience. You will learn the essentials of following the Lord in water baptism, study of the Scriptures, and taking communion as part of the body of Christ. This lesson teaches the importance of baptism in water, according to the teachings of Christ and Paul, the apostle.

Many kinds of commitment are sealed by some kind of symbol. Often the giving of certain gifts or wearing of different clothing signifies that a man or a woman has moved from being single to being married. This varies from culture to culture. Other visible signs may signify the transition from childhood to adulthood, for instance. The last few lessons have helped you to understand what it means to become a Christian. This lesson will discuss one of the first essential steps every Christian should take: water baptism. It is an outward sign of an inward change. Jesus himself modeled the behavior he desires in his followers. He said that it is proper for us to do this, so we follow him in obedience to his example.

We don't know the man's name, but he had a long ride back to Ethiopia after an eventful week in Jerusalem. As the treasurer to the Queen, he had time to read in his chariot as he traveled. This powerful man, a Gentile God-fearer, chose to read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. God had great plans for this man. He was about to meet someone who would tell him how to know God and how to be his obedient servant. His next step was to know and follow Jesus.

Philip, the evangelist, had been appointed by the church to be one who served the body of Christ. He was a man full of the Holy Spirit. He had developed a reputation as a wise good man, understanding the will of God. Being a faithful man, he loved and served God. He was open to whatever God asked. Sure enough, this day God asked Philip to go to the desert road that went from Jerusalem to Gaza (Acts 8:26). This was strange because revival was happening in Samaria. Many people were coming to believe in Jesus as Lord because of Philip's evangelism. God was using Philip to proclaim Jesus to the crowds and perform miracles in his name. But Philip obeyed God without question. He was prepared to travel the 64 long desert kilometers (40 miles), without so much as a hint as to why! Scripture says, "So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian" (Acts 8:27).

As Philip traveled, the Spirit told him to go up to the Ethiopian's chariot and stay near it. He happened to be reading aloud from Isaiah's writing, chapter 53. Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

"How can I," the man replied, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. He had questions concerning this passage, which by God's Spirit, Philip answered. Philip told him the good news about Jesus. With those answers the Ethiopian truly gave his life to the Lord Jesus, committing to follow him the rest of his life. Philip undoubtedly taught him about this new life he had chosen and how to walk in faith.

The first thing taught was perhaps from Jesus' words that those who become his disciples must be obedient. One of the first acts of obedience included being water baptized. Philip remembered Jesus' commission: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Jesus had told his followers to baptize new believers in water and to teach them his words. Beginning on the Day of Pentecost, the 3,000 people who accepted Peter's message about Christ were all baptized in water and added to the church.

God's timing is perfect. As they traveled along they came by a pool of water and the Ethiopian insisted that Philip baptize him in accordance with Jesus' words. In that simple act he told the world that he was now a disciple of Jesus Christ. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit suddenly took Philip away, and the man did not see him again. The Book of Acts tells us that the Ethiopian, however, went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39).

This Ethiopian man is a great example of what all new believers should do as soon as possible in their faith walk with Jesus. Our life in Jesus Christ is not a secret faith. It soon becomes very public as people see that we have been changed by the Holy Spirit. This man could hardly wait to tell his family and friends about Jesus. With God's help he would be an instrument of the risen Lord in his homeland of Ethiopia.

Jesus modeled the need for water baptism when he went to John the Baptist to be baptized. So we follow his example and teaching. The apostle Paul taught water baptism as one of the ordinances of the church. He explained to the Colossian Christians that water baptism is an outward action of testimony to nonbelievers. When we give our lives to Jesus Christ, we are symbolically buried with him in his death by being immersed in water. When we come up out of the water, we are raised to resurrection life with him, through "faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col 2:12). Thus new converts declare to the world that they have died with Christ and that they also have been raised with him to walk in newness of life.

Water baptism will bring great rejoicing in our lives as it did to the Ethiopian. It is one of the first essentials of Christianity, as we seek to follow Jesus.

This lesson is **important** because it teaches all believers that one of the first actions after committing one's life to Lord Jesus and repenting should be water baptism.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that water baptism shows obedience to Christ and demonstrates to those people around you that you have given your life to follow him as his servant.

Your **review** questions for this lesson are:

1. Why is it important for all believers to be water baptized?
 - A. [Pause] If you answered, "To follow Christ's example and instruction that all disciples should be baptized," you have answered correctly.
2. Who was baptized in water by Philip in Acts 8?

A. [Pause] If you said, “the Ethiopian treasurer,” you are right.

3. Who taught specifically about water baptism to the believers in Colosse and what did he teach?

A. [Pause] If you answered that the apostle Paul taught them the symbolism of water baptism as being buried with Christ and being raised with him to new life, you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it three or four times until you have a good grasp of the content and can teach it to someone else. Memorize Matthew 28:19, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Invite three or four others to a small group and teach them about the importance of water baptism for those who repent and believe on Christ as their Savior. Ask them, “Have you been obedient to Jesus by being water baptized after you committed your life to him and repented of your sins?”

Prayer: Father God, thank you for providing everything we need to become your people. Thank you for the resurrection life given to those who are baptized in water. Please bring your wonderful power to us to tell the Good News. Please give to us all, the understanding of the Scriptures. May we tell others of the freedom, forgiveness, and cleansing you give in our new life. In Jesus wonderful name, amen.