

## Th122 Foundation Doctrines

### *Lesson Th122 – 12 Baptism: Water*

In this course we are learning about the six foundation doctrines that every Christian should know. The author of the Book of Hebrews wrote this: "Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment" (Heb 6:1-2). In this lesson we begin learning about the doctrine of washings or baptisms.

The Bible tells us a wonderful story about a man named John. The story begins with Zechariah, who was of the descendants of Aaron, the brother of Moses. The descendants of Aaron were the priests in Israel. Zechariah was married to Elizabeth. She was related to Mary, who would become the mother of Jesus.

Now Zechariah and Elizabeth had grown old. They had never had children, because she was unable to conceive. One day while Zechariah was performing the priestly duties in the temple, an angel appeared to him. The angel told him that his wife Elizabeth would become pregnant in her old age and that a son would be born to them. It happened exactly as the angel had predicted and Zechariah and Elizabeth had a son. They named him John.

John grew up and lived in the wilderness by the Jordan River, not far from Jerusalem. He wore simple clothes made of camel hair and ate locusts and wild honey. John became a prophet in the land of Israel. He went about proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matt 3:2). Everyone marveled at his message and many argued as to who he was—a madman or a prophet. But the Bible goes on to say that John was the one spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

People came to him from Jerusalem and all of Judea, confessing their sins. John baptized them in the Jordan River. The baptism was a sign of a person humbling himself and recognition of the person's repentance. Even some of the Jewish leaders came out to see John. Their interest was not so much in repentance, but in finding out who this man was and what he was teaching. John warned them that true repentance would produce righteous deeds. He then said, "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matt 3:11).

Jesus himself would be baptized by John. Now John recognized Jesus as the Son of God and at first refused to baptize him saying, "I need to be baptized by you!" But Jesus replied to him, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15). Jesus did not need to repent, but he was willing to humble himself and be baptized. Some of John's disciples would leave him and become disciples of Jesus.

Baptism was to become a very important event in the ministry of the church. These are the final words of Jesus, given to his disciples, just before he ascended into heaven: "All

authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:18-20).

We have learned in previous lessons that salvation comes through faith and repentance. There is, however, a very important third step. Everyone who makes Jesus the Lord of their life should be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Baptism declares that the new believer has become a follower or disciple of Jesus. In baptism we follow Christ’s example and identify with him.

The Bible tells the story of an Ethiopian official, who was riding along the road in his chariot. He was reading from the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah. Meanwhile Philip, one of the first deacons, was led by the Lord to go to that very road. There he met the Ethiopian in the chariot and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

“How can I,” the Ethiopian said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So Philip jumped up into the chariot and explained how the prophet Isaiah had predicted the life, ministry, and death of Jesus. As they rode along the road they came to a place where there was some water and the Ethiopian said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" Immediately they stopped and Philip baptized the Ethiopian official (Acts 8:26-38).

Many have asked if it is possible to be a Christian and not be baptized. Jesus said this, "Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them” (John 14:21). It is the command of Jesus that everyone who would be his disciple should be baptized. Thus every believer should be baptized. We saw this with the Ethiopian. As soon as he believed, he wanted to be baptized.

The world also recognizes the importance of water baptism. Most religions do not recognize that a person has become a Christian until they are baptized in water.

This story is **important** because it teaches that every person who becomes a follower of Jesus should be baptized in water.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that by being baptized in water, a believer follows Christ’s example and his command. Through baptism a person testifies that he or she has become a Christian.

Let’s **review** what we have discovered in this lesson:

1. In our lesson today we have learned that once a person comes to Christ he should do what with water? [Pause]  
A. If you said, “Be baptized,” then you answered correctly.
2. In whose name should every believer be baptized? [Pause]

A. If you said that every believer should be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are right.

3. Jesus had a relative named John who preached repentance and did what? [Pause]

A. If you said that John baptized in water people who repented, you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the lesson at least three times until you understand the principle of baptism in water. Then find someone and discuss the importance of water baptism in the life of a believer.