

BAPTISTS

KING'S CHURCH

WHAT'S THE STORY?

What happened in the New Testament when someone put their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour? We're told about this happening many times:

“Now when they heard [the gospel] they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins... So those who received his word were baptised, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:37-41)

“But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women.” (Acts 8:12)

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptised?’ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptised him.” (Acts 8:35-38)

“So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him [Saul/Paul] he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptised;” (Acts 9:17-18)

“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... Then Peter declared, ‘Can anyone withhold water for baptising these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ.” (Acts 10:44-48)

“One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptised, 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 16:14-15)

“Then he [the Philippian jailor] brought them [Paul and Barnabas] 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 baptised at once, he and all his family.” (Acts 16:30-33)

“Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptised.” (Acts 18:8)

“And Paul said, ‘John baptised with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.’ On hearing this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 19:4-5)

That’s a lot of people getting baptised after they hear and believe the good news about Jesus!

WHAT DOES “BAPTISE” MEAN?

Our English word is basically the same as the original Greek, which makes it difficult for us to automatically know what it means. In Greek, the word means “plunge, dip, immerse, drench, overwhelm.”

This definition is supported by what the New Testament tells us. In the story of the Ethiopian official mentioned above (Acts 8:35-38), the place of baptism is a river. This is also the case when John the Baptist was earning his nickname: “they were baptised by him in the river Jordan” (Matthew 3:6). When Paul speaks about baptism, one of the images he uses is burial and resurrection, implying that the baptised person gets put into/under water (Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12).

When you put all this together, the most obvious explanation of what was happening to the believers in Acts being “baptised” is that they were being fully immersed into water.

WHY DID THEY DO THAT?

Because Jesus told them to!

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Baptism is the public event established by Jesus to show that you have given your life to Him.

Baptism was to be a symbol of what Jesus had done for all who believe in Him, and who they now were as a result of this. The plunging under water and then coming up again is a picture of His death, burial and resurrection, which has bought us forgiveness and eternal life with God. This same pattern describes what has happened to every believer: they have died to their old way of life, and been born again into new life in Christ.

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4)

“...having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:12)

There is also a strong sense of Christ's ownership of us, in that we are responding to His command (Matthew 28:19), and being baptised “into” His name (Acts 8:16, Romans 6:3, Galatians 3:27). We belong to Him.

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, baptism symbolises how God has washed us clean of all of sins through Jesus:

“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” (1 Peter 3:21)

“Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” (Acts 22:16)

WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO WERE BAPTISED OR CHRISTENED AS INFANTS?

We get our definition of baptism from what we see in the New Testament, which is the public immersion in water of someone who has confessed their faith in Jesus. Because of this, we don't consider something done to an infant to be baptism as defined by the Bible. We understand that there are long traditions of this, and that infant “baptism” is practiced by many people who sincerely love God and want to follow Jesus, but we don't think that this legitimises changing what He told us to do.

WHAT DO WE DO AS KING'S THEN?

We baptise people who have declared their faith in Christ by full immersion into a pool of water in the church building, at an event that begins with them briefly telling their story of conversion.

Here are some of the practicalities if you're getting baptised:

Invite people

- Baptism is a brilliant opportunity to tell people who Jesus is what He has done for you, so let them know as soon as possible when it is and encourage them to come along.
- You might want to have a celebratory meal before or drinks afterwards which you could also invite them too.

Write your testimony

- Writing your story is helpful for you to think through what you want to say, and also so you have the words in front of you when speaking.
- Use a structure of "before, during, after": what life was like before Jesus rescued you, how you were saved, and what life has been like since. Don't think you need to make your story sound more dramatic than it is – it is amazing that Jesus saves anyone! Make sure you talk about what life is like now, the "life to the full" that Jesus promised.
- Read it out loud a couple of times beforehand so you know what it sounds like and to see how long it is. You'll probably be a bit nervous so try to speak slowly.
- Keep it to no more than five minutes.

Clothes and a towel

- Wear clothes that won't go see-through when wet! Jeans are very difficult to remove when soaked so we suggest thick leggings or shorts for women, shorts for guys, along with a dark T-shirt.
- Make sure your towel is nearby to the pool.
- Bring a complete change of clothes, you will need it!

Who baptises?

- Two people will be in the pool with you, one on either side. It's great to have people who are leading your small group, close Christian friends, or who helped you become a Christian.

What happens?

- You and the people baptising get into the pool.
- They pray for you, and share any prophecy or piece of Scripture that they feel God has given them for you.
- Then they ask you the question, "Is Jesus your Lord and Saviour?"
- Once you answer yes, they say, "Then we baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," after which they put you fully under the water and then bring you back up again straight away.