

# The 'Discipleship Check List' Transcript

A GV247.TV Programme presented by Stewart Menelaws

## DCL No5: Water Baptism

This series is for any Christian believer who is either at the very beginning of their journey with Jesus Christ or who has been a believer for some years but lacks a sound understanding of the Christian faith. It should also prove to be a helpful aid which interlinks with all our resources for Shepherds, overseers and believers reaching out to others.

Depending on the Christian denomination - and at this point, let it be understood from God's instruction that we are to be a follower of Christ with our name written in His Book of Life. You can find a wide range of views regarding water baptism, but as always, we are only concerned with what God teaches in His Word. We then have direct instruction from the Creator Himself and we can then choose to be obedient. Or not...

## Water Baptism - Have you been baptised in water? (Luke 3:1-22)

The first question should be:

- 1: What is meant by biblical water baptism?
- 2: The second is; do I need to be baptised?

To baptise comes from the Greek word '*baptizo*' and the root word '*bapto*' which is a term used in the first century for immersing a garment. The Biblical perspective is to '*to identify with*', so in the context, we identify with Christ's burial and resurrection.

The scriptures clearly instruct that those who make an informed decision to follow Christ; that is to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, must follow His example (Matt 16:24)

In the gospel of Luke 3:21 we read that Jesus Christ was baptised in both water and the Spirit whereupon He entered the water (The Jordan River) and went under the water (full immersion) and then came up out of the water.

## Why water baptism?

Jesus Christ gave the implicit instruction to go forth and make disciples baptising them in the name of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. (Matt 28:19)

- Water baptism is the requirement for every individual who turns to Christ (Acts 2:38)
- Where water baptism is not possible eg the repentant thief on the cross, we see no rule (Luke 23:39-43)

So first of all we see implicitly that water Baptism is an act of obedience. "Repent and be baptised" (Acts 2:38). It is not up for discussion. If you want to be recognised as a part of the body of Christ then water baptism should come right after the act of repentance.

Q; Does this always happen? A; No - and we will look at this later.

## **What does water baptism signify?**

We come from our world. One of self-will which is rebellion against God, wittingly or not, (Isaiah 53:6) and after reasoning that The Lord God Almighty is indeed the Creator (Isaiah 1:18), we make a decision to follow Him.

With a repentant heart (Acts 2:38), we enter the water and we are buried (the water covers you) with Christ (Col 2:12). It is here that we are making a public declaration that we desire to die to self. No more self-will, no more rebellion against the Creator (Gal 2:20), and we come up out of the water.

We are now a new creation and follower of Christ (2 Cor 5:17), signifying that we have been resurrected with Christ.

So, here we see a physical act that has spiritual implications but is also symbolic of what is to come; that being the actual resurrection and clothing with a new spiritual resurrection body (1 Corinthians 15:51-54) Repentance, Burial and Resurrection (Col 2:12).

We are now recognised as a member of the Body of Christ and we now go forward in our journey working out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12 & Gal 3:26-27 & Eph 4:4-6)

In the book of Exodus we read about a chosen people following a great prophet (Moses) through the waters (Parting of the Red Sea) and on into the desert to be tested and looking forward to a promised home of milk and honey. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, we are told that this is an example or type of what would be revealed when we come to follow Christ.

## **Where to be baptised in water?**

Water baptism may take place wherever there is water; the sea, a river, a pond or even a bath tub.

In Acts 8:36-39 we read about the account of Phillip who baptised an Ethiopian official at the side of the roadway. We see the immediate act of obedience and the public display of identifying with Jesus Christ's death and resurrection that is at the heart of this passage.

## **What if there is no water available?**

There are no magical properties at work in water baptism. It is an outward sign to both The Lord your God and to those who witness your declaration to follow Christ. It symbolises your identification with Christ's burial and resurrection. You too will be resurrected.

So, what if there is no water or perhaps you have a condition that would be harmful if you were immersed in water. Can other methods be employed to show forth the same sentiment? For example – stepping under a blanket and emerging from the other side.

At the very heart of scripture is God's perfect love and we see that His desire is that we love Him and we can show this by obedience to His instruction which can be manifestly seen when we love one another. (1 John 4:16-21)

Where an individual desires to follow The Lord's commands we will always see The Lord provide a way that will be an answer in any given situation where events are out-with one's control. The thief on the cross had no time to be baptised but what was most important – his heart was repentant.

## **Water baptism and children?**

As baptism signifies a reasoned conclusion in regard to denying self and following the way of the Cross, it cannot be undertaken without careful consideration. (Matt 16:24)

Therefore babies and small children cannot undergo water baptism and we see no example of this in the scriptures. However, God fearing parents should seek to dedicate a new-born to The Lord (1 Sam 1:21-22 & Luke 2:22) and affirm that they will bring the child up in the ways of The Lord (Deut 6:4-9). Water baptism will be required at the age of reasoning.

## Refusal to be baptised in water:

A professing believer who for no good reason withholds from being baptised brings into question their right to identify with Christ, since we are to follow in His footsteps (Rom 6:4). Such an individual with full knowledge who holds to this position should by the same token be wary of partaking in The Lord's Supper as only those who are recognised as fellow believers in the body of Christ are to partake, otherwise they may be in danger of bringing judgement upon themselves (1 Cor 11:29). The wilful refusal to be water baptised brings into question that individual's part in the body of Christ.

Once again, where a person has health issues (prayer, may / or may not change the circumstance), utilising another method signifying identification with Christ would clearly be acceptable.

## Is there a formal process in regard to water and Spirit baptism?

While there is no formal 'format', water baptism should be sought on accepting Christ as Saviour. Here are a few scriptures relating to both water and Spirit baptism.

- Jesus was baptised in both water and The Holy Spirit at the same time (John 1:29-34)
- The Household of Cornelius was baptised in the Spirit *before* water baptism (Acts 10:44-46)
- After Peter's preaching, 3000 Jews were baptised into Christ (Acts 2:41)
- Lydia and her household believed and were baptised (Acts 16:13-15)
- The Philippian jailer "believed" with his household and were baptised (Acts 16:16-34)

## Next week (DCL No6) we look at:

Who is Jesus Christ? This is a critical question that must be clearly understood.

The 'Discipleship Check List' series has been produced with the sole aim of encouraging the hearer / reader to study the Holy Bible so that faith in Jesus Christ will be built on Him alone. Every human work is fallible and whilst every effort has been made to represent the truths of God Almighty's Holy Words, this series is but an aid to help encourage study so that the Christian disciple of Jesus Christ will go onto maturity in the most Holy faith.

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