

SECRETS OF PROPHECY

BURIED UNDER WATER



it is written
OCEANIA





Just outside the ancient city of Pompeii, a life-size fresco has been discovered on the walls of the Villa dei Misteri (Villa of Mysteries). This painting depicts an initiation ceremony of a young girl into the mysteries of the religion of Dionysus, the wine God from Greek mythology. Among other things, a female attendant is seen pouring “holy water” into a basin to be used by a priestess in the ceremony. The secret initiation rites appear to include pouring or sprinkling drops of water onto the woman as a symbol of entry into the mystery religion.

The practice of using “holy water” to cleanse the soul can be traced back to the ancient mysteries of Babylon. Newborn infants were “baptised”, entitling them to become a part of this mystery religion. Entry into the mysteries of Mithra, Isis and a variety of other pagan religions all used the symbolism of water. A common form of “baptism” was to sprinkle water, which had been blessed by a pagan priest or priestess, onto the head of a young baby.

The Bible says that Jesus Christ was baptised by water in the River Jordan. When Jesus was about 30 years of age, He went to His cousin John the Baptist and asked him to baptise Him in the river. Following the baptism, the onlookers heard a voice from God in heaven saying how pleased He was with Jesus and what He had done through His baptism.



Was Jesus simply following the customs of the ancient pagan religions or was His baptism different? Was the baptism of Jesus a fulfilment of prophecy? Is water baptism still relevant today? If so, how important is

it? Why is it that different churches seem to baptise in different ways, and does it really matter? In this study guide, you will discover the rich meaning behind the symbol of biblical baptism.

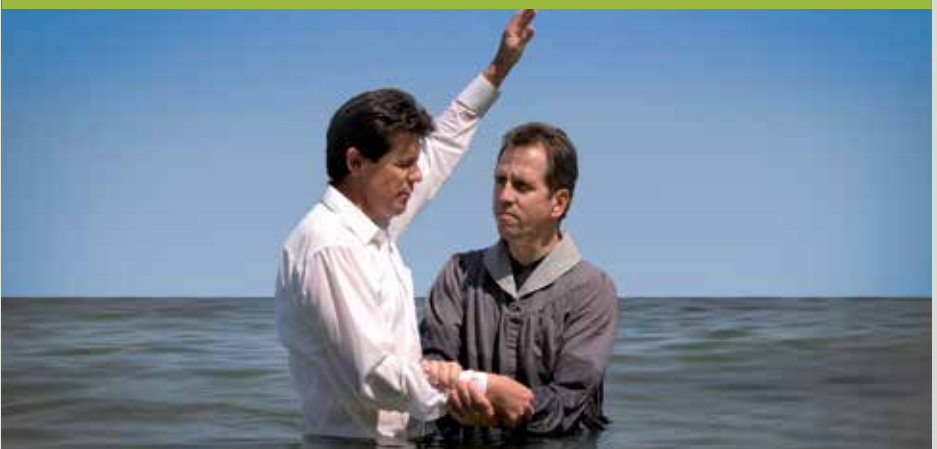
Q1 HOW IMPORTANT IS BAPTISM?

Mark 16:16 He who believes and is _____ will be saved

According to Jesus, all Christians need to be baptised. It is essential to believe in Jesus, but it is also essential that you publicly demonstrate your belief, through baptism. Jesus clearly says that the practice of baptism, which is mentioned nearly 100 times in the Bible, is a prerequisite for entry to heaven (see also John 3:5).

In the case of someone who is unable to get baptised, such as the thief on the cross (Luke 23:42,43), the baptism of Jesus is substituted in the place of that person. Jesus does not expect us to do something that is physically impossible. However, that situation is very much the exception. It is not an excuse for those who want to avoid the beautiful experience of biblical baptism.

Why is it that different churches seem to baptise in different ways, and does it really matter?



Q2 WHAT WAS ONE OF THE LAST INSTRUCTIONS THAT JESUS GAVE TO HIS DISCIPLES?

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,



_____ *them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*

The last words of someone are often significant. Here we find Jesus sharing his vision for the new Christian church. The leaders of this church were commissioned to share the gospel all over the world, encouraging people to accept Jesus and be baptised. Any church which does not teach or practice baptism is not following the instructions of Jesus.

Notice also the need to baptise in the name of the entire Godhead; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All three have power in their name as God, and all three play a vital role in our spiritual experience. Among other things, the Father cares for us, the Son saves us and the Holy Spirit empowers us.



Q3

HOW MANY METHODS OF BAPTISM ARE RECOMMENDED IN THE BIBLE?

Ephesians 4:5 *one Lord, one faith, one _____*

Just about every religion on the planet has a unique method of baptism. Some religions baptise in blood. Others use oil or even salt. In the Christian faith, up to 15 different approaches to baptism are used, depending on the culture or tradition.

The Bible indicates that the method of baptism is really important and

there is only one true baptism.

The word baptism literally means “to immerse” or “to submerge”. It comes from the Greek word “baptizo”. Therefore, another word for baptism would simply be immersion. The Bible never uses the words to “sprinkle” or “pour” as an appropriate method of baptism.

The one true baptism of the Bible is baptism in water, by full immersion.



Q4 HOW WAS JESUS BAPTISED?

Mark 1:9, 10 It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming _____ the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove

Jesus went “in” the Jordan and then came “up from” the water. John the Baptist specifically chose to baptise people at a deep part of the river “because there was much water there” (John 3:23). Jesus was baptised in water by full immersion.

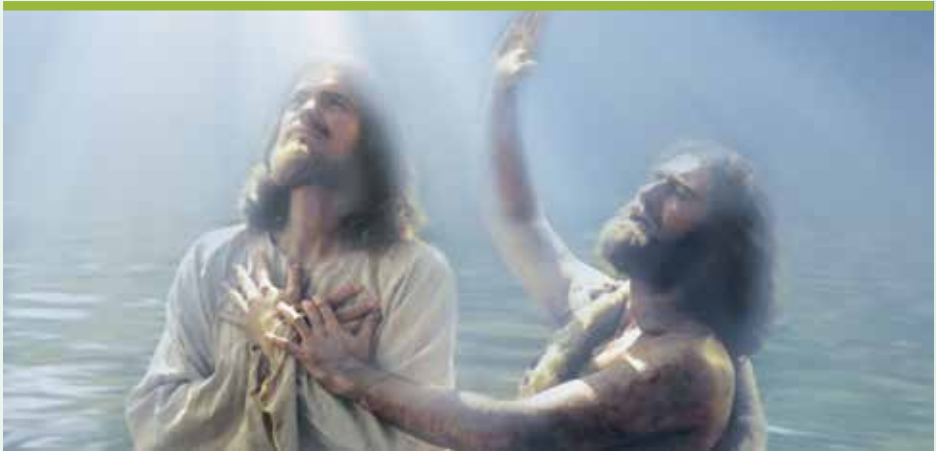
It is also important to note that Jesus was not baptised as a baby. Jesus chose to get baptised at the age of 30, when He could make a decision for Himself, and just before He began His public ministry. When Jesus was baptised God the Father said that he was “well pleased” with what Jesus had done (Mark 1:11). As Christians, we are asked to follow the example of

Jesus was not baptised as a baby. Jesus chose to get baptised at the age of 30, when He could make a decision for Himself, and just before He began His public ministry.



Jesus and as a believing adult, be fully immersed in baptism “to fulfil all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15).

The baptism of Jesus was a direct fulfilment of prophecy (Daniel 9:25). It was at this point that Jesus left His trade as a carpenter and entered His ministry as the Messiah (see study guide “The Mystery Man of Prophecy”). Clearly, the baptism of Jesus was a very important event.



Q5

HOW DID PHILIP BAPTISE THE MAN FROM ETHIOPIA?

Acts 8:38,39 ... *And both Philip and the eunuch went _____ of the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came _____ of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing*

It is clear from this passage that the apostles did not change the method of baptism. Here we find Philip and the Ethiopian man going down into the water, and then coming back up out of the water. They didn't perform the baptism on the riverbank or in the chariot with a cup of water. They both went right into the water to ensure the baptism was conducted by full immersion, according to the example of Jesus.

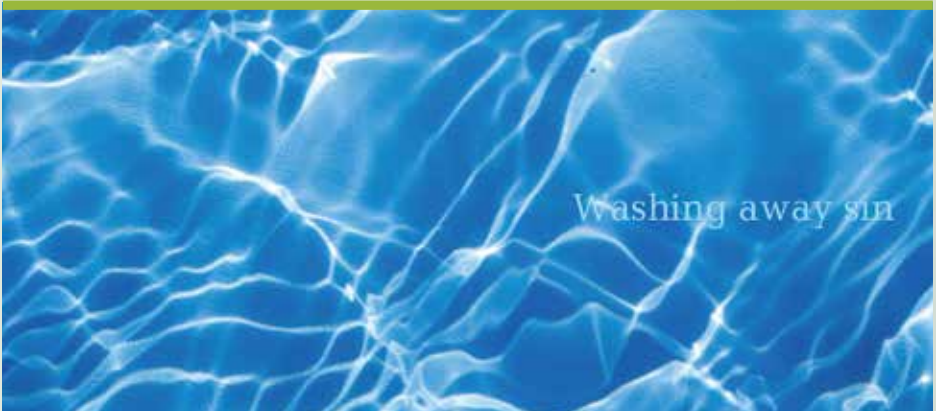
Q6

WHAT DOES THE SYMBOL OF WATER REPRESENT?

Acts 22:16 *And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and _____ away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*

The symbol of water is used to represent cleansing through washing. It symbolises purity and a fresh start. All of us have done things in our life we are ashamed of. Sometimes we still feel the heavy shadow of guilt from our past. If you would like to have your sins, hurts and discouragements washed away, and have a fresh start in life, then why not consider being baptised.

Baptism symbolises a turning point in your life. A washing away of the old life (inside and out) and beginning a new life in Jesus Christ. There is no power in the water itself to wash away our sins. It is purely symbolic of what God does in our life.



Because baptism symbolises the washing away of sins, sprinkling or even pouring water does not suffice. You can't sprinkle away your sins – they need to be washed away. Only baptism where the whole body is immersed, truly represents the washing away of sins.

Q7

WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE OF BAPTISM ITSELF SYMBOLISE?

Romans 6: 3-6 *Therefore we were _____ with Him through baptism into _____, that just as Christ was _____ from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (v4)*

Just as Jesus died, was buried and then resurrected, so the

Only baptism where the whole body is immersed, truly represents the washing away of sins.



new Christian dies to the old life of sin, is buried beneath the water in baptism and then rises to live a new life. A life empowered by the Holy Spirit. This symbolism is at the heart of the meaning and importance of baptism. The person who is baptised firstly chooses to lay down their life of sin. Secondly, there is a brief moment where the eyes close and breathing stops as that person is fully placed under the water. This is followed by a lifting up out of the water to live a totally new life, as symbolised by the resurrection of Jesus.



A) The death of your old life

The Christian life is not just a matter of being a “better person” – it is a death to the old life. The apostle Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20). It is no use wanting to be baptised if you are not prepared to allow your old life to pass away. You would simply come out of the water a wet sinner instead of a new Christian. You would be “buried alive” and simply go back to living your old life. Sprinkling or pouring some “holy water” could never symbolise the death of the old life. You don’t just want the old life sprinkled, you need it drowned!

B) Burial of your old life

The Bible says we are “buried with Him in baptism” (Colossians 2:12). No-one is truly baptised until they have been submerged or buried in water. Once again, no amount of sprinkling could ever “bury” you. We need to be baptised fully by immersion.

C) Your new life in Jesus

Once your old life is dead and buried, you are raised out of the water a new person. In fact baptism symbolises your decision to be married to Jesus. Whereas you were married to the “old man”, now you are married to Jesus Christ. Baptism is as important to the Christian life as a wedding is to a marriage. That is another reason why only adults should be baptised. Baptism is a public statement that you choose to live a new life in an intimate relationship with Jesus. Any thought of a baby being married is totally inappropriate. So baptism is a conscious choice of love, by a believing adult.

Baptism is a public statement that you choose to live a new life in an intimate relationship with Jesus.

Q8 WHOSE NAME DO PEOPLE TAKE WHEN THEY ARE BAPTISED?

Galatians 3:27 *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have _____ on _____*

When we are baptised we are firstly baptised into Jesus. This means that we have accepted Him as our best friend and personal Saviour. Secondly, we also “put on Christ”. Just as a woman usually takes the name of her husband, so we take on the name of Christ. We are now known as “Christians”.



Q9 DOES IT REALLY MATTER WHICH FORM OF BAPTISM IS USED?

Galatians 1:8 *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be*



The reason why it matters how and when we are baptised revolves around the symbolic meaning of baptism. Everything about baptism is symbolic. If we get one aspect wrong then the whole practice of baptism is made meaningless. Parents may be very sincere when they baptise their children, however the practice has no bearing on the salvation of the child.

According to the Bible, belief, repentance, confession and being taught the Scriptures all precede baptism. That is why you will never find one instance of a baby baptism in the Bible.

The Bible teaches one form of baptism. It is vital that we follow the example of Jesus and adhere to the clear teaching of God's Word.



Q10

ON WHAT BASIS DO WE FIND OTHER FORMS OF BAPTISM ENTERING THE CHURCH?

Mark 7:8 *For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the _____ of men*

Baptism of adults by full immersion was the baptism practised by the church for hundreds of years after the cross. In fact, one can go to many of the ancient churches in Europe and still see the large baptismal fonts or tanks that were clearly used for biblical baptism. Over time the whole symbolism of baptism was lost as the church incorporated pagan practices, including the baptism of babies by sprinkling.

The church of the fourth and fifth century developed the idea that babies

were born guilty of the “original sin” of Adam, and therefore lost. All babies needed cleansing and initiation into the family of God. The practice of baptising infants was officially sanctioned by the church at the Council of Mela in 416 AD. Over time, this practice of baptism became a tradition that was enforced by the church.



Baptistry of the Patriarchal Basilica in Aquileia

Throughout Christian history many people defied the church and practised biblical baptism. These people had such a conviction to obey the teachings of Jesus that they were prepared to die for their faith. Thousands of people were killed by the church and state authorities. Ironically, many were drowned in the rivers they had previously been baptised in.

Q11 HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU ARE READY FOR BAPTISM?

- When you love Jesus (Matthew 22:36,37)
- When you have accepted Jesus as your personal Saviour and experience the new birth (2 Corinthians 5:17, John 3:3,5)
- When you understand the teachings of Jesus (Matthew 28:19,20)
- When you believe in all the teachings of Jesus (Mark 16:16)
- When you have repented of past sins (Acts 2:38)
- When you have agreed to turn away from sin (Romans 6:5,6, Luke 3:7,8)

It is vital that we follow the example of Jesus and adhere to the clear teaching of God's Word.



Baptism is for those who have accepted Jesus and want to live a life together with Him. When two people begin to love each other they usually spend some time getting to know each other before they are married. Baptism is an exciting but serious decision. Jesus wants you to get to know Him and fully understand the commitment you are making.



Q12 WHAT MUST ACCOMPANY THE BAPTISM OF WATER?

John 3:5 ... *Unless one is born of _____ and the _____, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*

The baptism of water needs to be accompanied by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. To be baptised with the Holy Spirit means to be “fully immersed” with the Holy Spirit. We need to ask for the Holy Spirit and allow the Spirit to change our life. The role of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of sin and to show us the righteousness of Jesus as the solution to sin (John 16:8). It is also the Holy Spirit who helps us understand the teachings of God’s Word (John 16:13). The baptism of the Holy Spirit is demonstrated through producing the good fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23) as well as receiving the gifts of the Spirit. This enables us to effectively share the good news about God’s love (1 Corinthians 12).

Q13 DOES BAPTISM HAVE ANY CONNECTION WITH JOINING A CHURCH?

Acts 2:41,47 *Then those who gladly received his word were _____; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them ... And the Lord added to the _____ daily those who were being saved*

Colossians 1:18 *And He is the head of the body, the _____*

1 Corinthians 12:13 *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one _____*

There are some people who wish to be baptised into Jesus, but they don't want to join a church. The Bible is very clear. When we are baptised into Jesus, we automatically become part of His body, the church. The church is God's chosen body of people to help nurture us in our spiritual life as well as work with us to spread the gospel. When we decide for baptism we are also making a commitment to become an active member of God's church.

The church is God's chosen body of people to help nurture us in our spiritual life as well as work with us to spread the gospel.



Q14 IS REBAPTISM EVER APPROPRIATE?

Acts 19:2-5 ... *So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they _____ this, they were _____ in the name of the Lord Jesus*



Although baptism is ideally a once only experience, there are instances when rebaptism is not only appropriate but recommended.

A) When substantial new truth is discovered

When Paul was preaching at Ephesus he found a group of people who had been baptised by John the Baptist, but who had never heard of the Holy Spirit. Paul took these people aside and taught them the wonderful truth about the work and power of the Holy Spirit. This truth had such an impact in their lives that they chose to become rebaptised. This example clearly shows that when significant new truths are learnt, that make a major change in the Christian life, then rebaptism is appropriate.



B) When you have left Christ

Baptism is your marriage ceremony with Jesus. If you have left Jesus and abandoned this relationship, then it is also appropriate to get rebaptised. A “fresh start” in your relationship with Jesus is the result as you once again pledge your love and loyalty to Him.

Q15 WHEN THE APOSTLE PAUL WAS TEMPTED TO PUT OFF HIS BAPTISM FOR A LATER TIME, WHAT ADVICE DID HE RECEIVE?

Acts 22:16 *And now why are you _____? _____ and be*

One of the most effective tactics of the devil is to cause people to procrastinate. To put off making a decision. The Bible says, “why are you waiting?” Don’t put off baptism until you think you are “good enough”. Don’t wait until you feel clean. Don’t wait for the approval of other people. The Bible says to “arise and be baptised”. Don’t delay – make plans today for a fresh start in life through baptism.

Three Points to Remember:

- Baptism is one of the most important aspects of being a Christian
- Only baptism by full immersion of a believer is biblical and reflects the meaning behind the symbolism of baptism
- Baptism is the entry point into God’s church

The Story:

Ken was a middle-aged man with a devoted Christian family. His wife prayed for Ken each day but it seemed as if he would never budge. In Ken’s mind there was no way he would ever become a Christian. For decades there was little response until one day Ken agreed to go to church with his wife.

Ken was quite impressed with the information he heard so he agreed to go back to church. Over time Ken was convicted by the Holy Spirit to commit his life to Jesus. Ken was at church on one occasion when an appeal was made at the end of the sermon. The pastor asked for the show of hands of all those who would like to be baptised.

There was no holding back Ken. Ken decided to not only put one hand up. He held up both hands! He was afraid the pastor would miss seeing him. As Ken was sitting up in the balcony of the church he was still concerned the pastor would not see him. So Ken stood up – still with both hands in the air!

Shortly after his decision, Ken was baptised and became a vital member of God’s church.

How do you feel about Ken’s experience? What do you think made him so definite in his decision?

Don’t put off baptism until you think you are “good enough”. Don’t wait until you feel clean. Don’t wait for the approval of other people. The Bible says to “arise and be baptised.”



Relational questions:

1. Why do you think Jesus sees baptism as such an important issue?
2. What should you do if you feel you are not “good enough” for baptism? When will you feel “good enough”?
3. Does baptism mean that you will never sin again? If you do sin, does that mean you need to be baptised all over again?

Your response:

Is it your desire to follow the example of Jesus, have a fresh start in life, and begin preparing for your baptism according to the Bible? _____



ST. MATTHEW
 Son of God, command
 stones be made bread.
 4 But he answered and said
 It is written, "Man shall not live
 by bread alone, but by every
 word that proceedeth out of the
 mouth of God."
 Then the devil taketh him up
 into the holy city, and setteth
 him on the pinnacle of the temple,
 and saith unto him, If thou
 wilt, I will give thee all this
 kingdom of the world, and the
 power thereof, if thou wilt
 worship me.

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Images: Phil McKay, Istockphoto.com

Production: AMN Design

Printed by: Signs Publishing Company

Scripture taken from the New King James

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