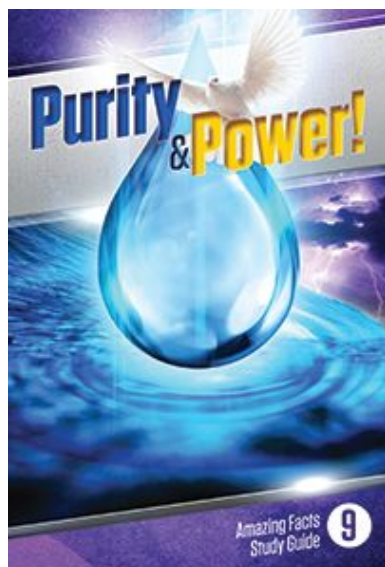


Purity & Power



Lesson 9

Are you tired of hurting your loved ones? Do you live in constant regret for your past mistakes? Have you ever wished you could be washed clean inside and out? Then we have great news—you can be! God has a plan that can completely wash all your sins away and supercharge your character. Preposterous? Not at all! The Bible says, “We were buried with [Christ] through baptism” (Romans 6:4). When you accept Christ, the old life dies and the Lord promises to forget all your sins! Not only that, He can help you overcome every sinful habit. Did you know that while the cross is mentioned 28 times in the Bible, baptism is mentioned 97 times? It must be pretty important—and no wonder, it signifies a new life with the haunting, sinful past buried and forgotten. Read the Bible’s amazing facts!

1. Is baptism really essential?

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

Answer: Yes! How could it be made any plainer?



2. But the thief on the cross was not baptized, so why should we be?

“He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust” (Psalm 103:14).

Answer: Neither did the thief on the cross restore what he had stolen, as the Lord directs His people in Ezekiel 33:15. God holds us accountable for what we can do, but He also recognizes the limitations of “dust.” He will not require a physical impossibility. Could the thief have come down from the cross, he would have been baptized. Every person who is able should be baptized.

3. There are many ordinances called “baptism.” Isn’t any one of these acceptable, provided a person is sincere about it?

“One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5).

Answer: No. There is only one true baptism. All other so-called baptisms are counterfeits. The word “baptism” comes from the Greek word “baptisma.” It means “to dip under or submerge or immerse.” There are eight Greek words in the New Testament used to describe the application of liquids. But among these various words—meaning to sprinkle, to pour, or to immerse—only the one meaning “to immerse” (baptizo) is used to describe baptism.

Note: *The devil’s “buffet” plan for baptism says, “Take your pick. The method of baptism doesn’t matter. It is the spirit that counts.” But the Bible says, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” It also says, “Obey the voice of the Lord which I speak to you” (Jeremiah 38:20).*



4. How was Jesus baptized?

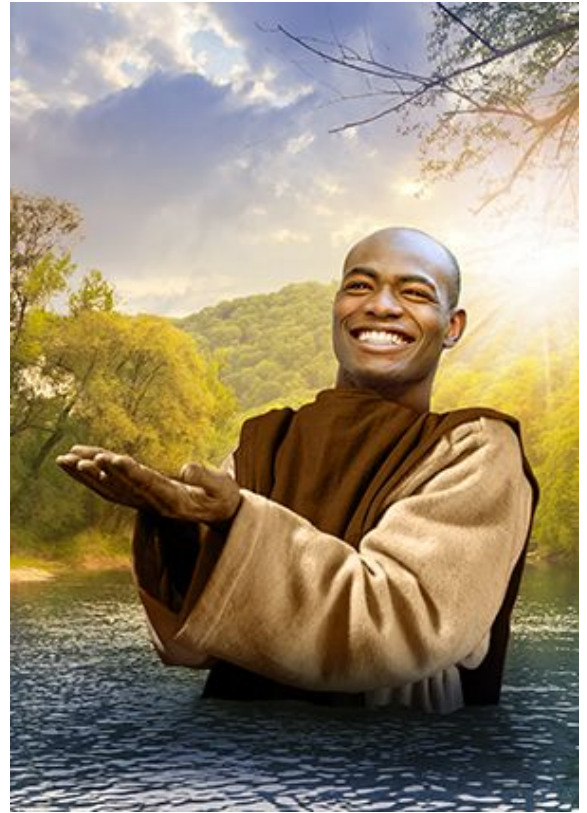
“Jesus ... was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water ...” (Mark 1:9, 10).

Answer: Jesus was baptized by immersion. Notice that after the ordinance, He came “up from the water.” Jesus was baptized “in the Jordan,” not on the bank, as many believe. John the Baptist always found a place to baptize where “there was much water” (John 3:23), so it would be deep enough. The Bible says we are called to follow Jesus’ example (1 Peter 2:21).

5. But didn’t the early church leaders change the method of baptism?

“Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away” (Acts 8:38, 39).

Answer: No. Please notice that Philip, a leader in the early Christian church, baptized the treasurer of Ethiopia by immersion precisely as John the Baptist baptized Jesus. No person, no matter his or her position in the church, is authorized to change God’s direct commands.



6. Since Jesus and the disciples baptized by immersion, who introduced the other so-called baptisms that exist today?

“In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9).

Answer: Misguided people have introduced other forms of baptism in direct contradiction to God’s Word. Jesus said, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of

God because of your tradition? ... Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition” (Matthew 15:3, 6). Worship that follows human teaching is vain. Just think of it! People have tampered with the sacred ordinance of baptism in an attempt to make it of little consequence. No wonder the Bible exhorts us to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3).

7. What must a person do to prepare for baptism?

Answer:

A. Learn God's requirements. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them ... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19, 20).

B. Believe the truth of God's Word. “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16).

C. Repent and turn away from your sins and experience conversion. “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19).



When I am baptized, I affirm my belief in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

8. What is the meaning of baptism?

“We were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with,

that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (Romans 6:4–6).

Answer: Baptism represents the believer uniting with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. This symbolism is filled with deep meaning. In baptism the eyes are closed and the breath is suspended as

in death. Then comes burial in the water and resurrection from the watery grave to a new life in Christ. When raised from the water, the eyes open and the believer begins breathing again and mingles with friends—a likeness of resurrection. The great difference between Christianity and every other religion is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. In these three acts is made possible all that God desires to do for us. To keep these three vital acts alive in the minds of Christians until the end of time, the Lord instituted baptism by immersion as a memorial. There is no symbolism of death, burial, and resurrection in the other forms of baptism. Only immersion fulfills the meaning of Romans 6:4–6.

9. But a person shouldn't be baptized until he is certain he will never slip and sin again, should he?

“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

Answer: This is like saying a baby should never try to walk until certain she will never slip and fall. A Christian is a newborn “baby” in Christ. This is why the experience of conversion is called “being born again.” A person’s sinful past is forgiven and forgotten by God at conversion. And baptism symbolizes the burial of the desires of that old life. We begin the Christian life as babies, rather than adults, and God judges us on our attitude and the trend of our lives, rather than on a few slips and falls that we may experience as immature Christians.



New Christians are like toddlers learning to walk. They sometimes slip and fall.

10. Why is baptism an urgent matter for a converted sinner?



“Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

Answer: Baptism is a public testimony that a repentant sinner has been forgiven and cleansed by Jesus (1 John 1:9) and that her sinful past is behind her. No incriminating evidence against a person exists after conversion. Men and women today struggle under heavy

loads of sin and guilt, and this contamination and burden is so devastating to the human personality that people will go to almost any length to achieve a sense of forgiveness and cleansing. But real help is found only in coming to Christ, who says to all who approach Him, “I am willing; be cleansed” (Matthew 8:3). Not only does He cleanse, but He also begins crucifying the old nature of sin within you. Baptism is of utmost importance because it is our public acceptance of Jesus’ astonishing provision for us!

At conversion, God:

1. Forgives and forgets our past.
2. Miraculously begins to transform us into new spiritual beings.
3. Adopts us as His own sons and daughters.

Certainly no converted person would want to delay baptism, which publicly honors Jesus for working all these miracles.

11. How long does it take to prepare for baptism?

Answer: That depends on the person. Some grasp things more quickly than others. But in most cases, preparation can be made in short order. Here are some Bible examples:

A. Ethiopian treasurer (Acts 8:26–39) baptized on the same day he heard truth.

B. Philippian jailer and his family (Acts 16:23–34) baptized the same night they heard truth.

C. Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1–18) baptized three days after Jesus spoke to him on the road

to Damascus.

D. Cornelius (Acts 10:1–48) baptized on the same day he heard truth.



12. How does God feel about the baptism of a converted person?

Answer: He said at His Son's baptism, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

Those who love the Lord will always strive to please Him

(1 John 3:22; 1 Thessalonians 4:1). There is joy in heaven over a truly converted soul!

13. Can a person experience true baptism without becoming a member of God's church?

Answer: No. God clearly outlines this:

A. All are called into one body. "You were called in one body" (Colossians 3:15).

B. The church is the body. "He is the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18).

C. We enter that body by baptism. "By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

D. God's converted people are added to the church. "The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).





If Jesus is speaking to you about baptism, do not put it off.

14. Notice four things that baptism does not do:

Answer:

First

Baptism itself does not change the heart; it is a symbol of a change that has taken place. A person might be baptized without faith, without repentance, and without a new heart. He might even be immersed after the example of Jesus, but he would simply come up a wet sinner instead of a dry one—still without faith, without repentance, without a new heart. Baptism cannot make a new person. Neither can it change or regenerate anyone. It is the transforming power of the Holy Spirit that changes the heart. One must be born of the Spirit, as well as of water (John 3:5).

Second

Baptism does not necessarily make a person feel better. It doesn't necessarily change our feelings. Some people are disappointed because they do not feel different after baptism. Salvation is a matter

not of emotion, but of faith and obedience.

Third

Baptism does not remove temptations. The devil is not through with a person when he is baptized. Then again, neither is Jesus, who promised, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). No temptation will come without a way of escape. This is the promise of Scripture (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Fourth

Baptism is not some magical rite that guarantees salvation. Salvation comes only as a free gift from Jesus Christ when one experiences the new birth. Baptism is a symbol of true conversion, and unless conversion precedes baptism, the ceremony is meaningless.

15. Jesus asks you to be baptized as a symbol that your sins have been washed away.

Would you like to plan for this sacred ordinance soon?

Answer:

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Is it ever proper to be baptized more than once?

Yes. Acts 19:1–5 shows that the Bible endorses rebaptism in certain cases.

2. Should infants be baptized?

No one should be baptized unless he or she (1) knows the truth of God, (2) believes it, (3) has repented, and (4) has experienced conversion. No baby could possibly qualify here. No one has a right to baptize a baby. To do so disregards God’s direct commands regarding baptism. Misguided men in the church years ago decreed that unbaptized babies were lost, but this is biblically untrue. It defames God as an unjust tyrant who would destroy innocent infants simply because their parents failed to have baptism administered. Such teaching is tragic.

3. Isn't baptism a matter of personal opinion?

Yes—but not your opinion or mine. It's Christ's opinion that matters. Christ says baptism is important to Him. "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). To refuse baptism is to refuse the direct counsel of God (Luke 7:29, 30).

4. How old should one be to qualify for baptism?

Old enough to understand the difference between right and wrong and to make an intelligent decision to surrender to Christ and follow Him. Many children are ready for baptism at 10 or 11 years of age, some at 8 or 9. And some are not ready at 12 or 13. No age level is specified in the Bible. Children have different levels of experience and understanding. Some are ready for baptism earlier than others.

5. Can baptism in and of itself save you?

No. But refusing baptism can cause one to be lost, because it means disobedience. Salvation is for "all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9).

6. Isn't baptism of the Holy Spirit all that is necessary?

No. The Bible shows in Acts 10:44–48 that water baptism is necessary, even when the baptism of the Holy Spirit has preceded it.

7. Shouldn't we be baptized in Jesus' name only?

In Matthew 28:19, we are told to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These are Jesus' sacred words. In the book of Acts, we find the new believers were baptized in the name of Jesus. Identifying Jesus as the Messiah was a particularly crucial step for the people of that day; therefore, it was specified for them to be baptized in His name. We believe it is very important for today as well. Combining the testimonies of Matthew with the book of Acts, we baptize people in the name of the Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. Following this method prevents exalting one Scripture above another.

8. There is one sin that I struggle to surrender. Should I be baptized?

Sometimes we struggle with a particular sin and feel that we cannot overcome it. Don't despair! God wants you to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). God can give you victory over any sin! But

you are not ready to be buried in baptismal waters unless you can make that surrender, because the old life of sin is not dead. Only as we die to ourselves can we live for Christ.

9. Can you explain Galatians 3:27?

Here God essentially compares baptism to marriage. The person who is baptized publicly acknowledges that he or she has taken—put on—Christ's name (Christian), just as many brides publicly announce the taking of their husband's name at the time of the wedding. In baptism, as with marriage, several principles apply:

- A.** It should never be entered into unless true love rules supreme.
- B.** It should never be entered into unless the candidate desires to be faithful through thick and thin.
- C.** It should be approached with full understanding.
- D.** It should not be premature or unduly delayed.

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. The Bible tells us there is one Lord, one faith, and (1)

- _____ 15 baptisms.
- _____ 5 baptisms.
- _____ 12 baptisms.
- _____ 1 baptism.

2. Did Jesus teach the necessity of baptism? (1)

- _____ Yes.
- _____ No.

3. Jesus was baptized by (1)

- _____ Pouring.

_____ Sprinkling.

_____ Immersion.

4. The word "baptize" means to (1)

_____ Be happy.

_____ Sprinkle.

_____ Pour.

_____ Dip under, or immerse.

5. The many counterfeit baptisms of today were given to us by (1)

_____ Christ.

_____ The apostles.

_____ Misguided men.

6. Mark the things a person should do to prepare for baptism: (4)

_____ Read the Bible through five times.

_____ Believe the truth.

_____ Experience conversion.

_____ Pray for 10 days straight.

_____ Spend 40 days fasting.

_____ Learn God's requirements.

_____ Repent of and forsake sin.

7. Baptism is a symbol of (1)

_____ The creation of the world.

_____ The Bible.

_____ Heaven.

_____ Christ's death, burial, & resurrection.

_____ The angels.

8. A newly baptized Christian is a (1)

_____ Spiritual baby.

_____ Spiritual adult.

9. Baptism, when entered into with prayer, sincerity, and understanding (1)

- Publicly acknowledges conversion.
- Means no more than going swimming.
- Assures a person he will never be tempted again.

10. Is infant baptism scriptural? (1)

- Yes.
- No.

11. Some children are ready for baptism earlier than others. (1)

- True.
- False.

12. Which of the following statements are true about Bible baptism? (6)

- The Bible compares baptism to marriage.
- Holy Spirit baptism is all you need.
- God's teachings are superior to man's teachings.
- Jesus was baptized as an example for us.
- There is an example of rebaptism in Scripture.
- Baptism is a sign of a new birth.
- The old life is buried in baptism.
- You should be baptized seven times.

13. Is it always necessary for a person to take many weeks or months to prepare for baptism? (1)

- Yes.
- No.

14. Can a person experience true baptism without becoming a member of the church? (1)

- Yes.
- No.

15. I want to be baptized by immersion as soon as possible.

_____ Yes.

_____ No.

_____ I have been baptized by immersion.

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