

## WATER BAPTISM (by Karen Gan)

### Introduction to Water Baptism

As a follower and disciple of Jesus Christ, your obedience is key your spiritual growth. It is commendable to sacrifice freely of your time, energy and resources, but there is no substitute for obedience to God.

(1Sam15:22-23, Matt 28:19-20, Psalm 119:60)

Until one obeys Jesus through a personal relationship with Him , your spiritual progress will be very limited. Obedience, not head knowledge, determines our growth as a disciple and follower of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament contains a number of commands related to water baptism. One of the initial commands we choose to obey as a follower of Christ is to be baptized in water.

### Required Passage Reading: Rom 6, Mat 3, Mat 28

### The Doctrine/Teaching of Baptisms

The Doctrine of Baptisms is one of the foundational doctrines of our faith in Christ as listed in Hebrews 6:1–6. The doctrine of baptisms is built upon the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith toward God.

Repentance and faith in what God has done for us in Christ is the only means to true righteousness. Any effort on our part to earn or merit right standing with God by the works we do is a grave error which is soundly condemned in numerous places in the New Testament. There is a proper place for works: good works follow and proceed out of true faith.

One of the first acts of obedience which should proceed from true faith in Jesus is to be water baptised. Before we study the New Testament teaching on water baptism, however, let's consider the general teaching of the Scriptures on baptisms (plural) or "the doctrine of baptisms," as stated in Hebrews 6.

A baptism is a transition—out of an old way of life and an old way of living and being immersed into a totally new way of living. **It is a total immersion; all of our being is involved.**

Let's look again at the Scripture passage we are studying: Heb 6:1-2 "Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles [or basic truths] of Christ, let us go on to perfection [completion, maturity], not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."

The "doctrine" of baptisms simply means "teaching about" baptisms. Notice that the word baptism is plural: baptisms. There are actually different baptisms mentioned in the New Testament, each of which we will study in due course.

2 of the baptisms we will look at are:

- 1) water baptism into Christ
- 3) the baptism into the Holy Spirit – which Repent, Be water baptized, Be thirsty, Come to Jesus Ask, Receive, Drink, Yield to the Holy Spirit, Manifestations of gifts of the Holy Spirit, Speak in other tongues/languages. (which we will deal with this Baptism in the Holy Spirit next)

Water baptism and baptism into the Holy Spirit are two distinct and separate baptisms.

### What does the word "Baptism" mean in the original language?

To Baptize—The word baptize is not really an English word, but a Greek word written in English letters. Technically, it is a transliteration (i.e. transference of alphabets from one language to the

## WATER BAPTISM (by Karen Gan)

other). The word is taken directly from the Greek word, *baptizo*, which is not translated but just written in English letters.

There are various possibilities as to why this word was transliterated rather than translated according to its true meaning. It may be just church tradition, or it could be that the translators of the King James Version did not want to offend the Anglican Church by using the true meaning of the word.

However, if we go back to the Greek word, there is absolutely no question about the correct meaning of the word. It means “to immerse.” It comes from a root word, *bapto*, which means “to dip into.”

You can immerse something in water by putting it down into the water so that it is fully covered, or you can immerse something by pouring water over it until you are fully surrounded by water. But whichever way you do it, it is total immersion, not partial.

Therefore, when we think of a baptism in the New Testament, we must think of it as a **total immersion**. Every kind of baptism spoken of in the New Testament represents a complete transition. We move out of one place into another. Our whole person moves, not just part of us. For that reason, we need to emphasize that baptism is total immersion.

### I. Requirements for Water Immersion (Baptism)

1. Mark 16:16—You must believe the gospel of Christ and His Kingdom
2. Acts 2:38—You must repent, i.e., turn from your own rebellious and selfish ways and from sin and submit to God and His ways.
3. Matt. 28:19–20—You must commit to obey and teach others to obey, i.e., commit yourself to disciple others as you yourself are being disciplined.

### II. Why Do We Need to Get Water Immersed (Baptized)?

1. Jesus commanded it and His disciples obeyed (Mark 16:16, Matt 28:16-20, Acts 2:37-47)
2. Jesus Himself was baptized. (Matt 3:13-17)
3. If we love Him, we will obey His commandments. (John 14:15)
4. We show our commitment to Christ and his commands by baptism in water (Matt 28:19-20)
5. We start our first steps in the journey as a follower of Christ in immersion into His death, burial and resurrection (Rom 6:3-11)
6. You must be able to answer God with a good conscience. 1 Pet. 3:21 compares baptism to Noah and his family in the ark. In the ark (= Christ) you pass through the waters (= baptism) into a new life in the kingdom of God through Christ.

#### **Q: Must I be baptized to be saved?**

Firstly, let's understand what it means to “be saved”. What are we saved from? What are we saved to?

We are not just saved from hell or damnation when we die, but we are saved from our sins! We are being saved now! It is not a future event. It is a process and a continuum. Baptism is the first step on the continuum of **being** saved. In fact, it is the start of your spiritual journey of being saved!

Let us look at the instances of water baptism in the early church in the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

## WATER BAPTISM (by Karen Gan)

### III. Instances of Water Baptisms from The Book of Acts

In the instances recorded in the book of Acts, when people repented and believed in Jesus, many were baptised in water on the same day, and some that very hour! Believing, repentance and turning to Christ in faith, and baptism in water were all one act done in conjunction. It also includes the kingdom of God being opened and spreading to the whole household ("Oikos" in Greek)

1) 3000 who believed when Peter preached (Acts 2:41) "Then those who gladly received his word were **baptized**; and **that day** about three thousand souls were added *to them*

2) Ethiopian eunuch being baptised in water in the desert (Acts 8:36 "Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the **eunuch** said, "See, *here is* water. **What hinders me from being baptized**

3) Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9) - his baptism happened 3 days after his encounter with the Lord, because God needed to heal his blindness. Immediately after scales fell off his eyes (in other words, once his eyes were opened to see), he was baptised in water. In Acts 22:16 - Paul recounting his encounter with Christ and him being baptised in water, "And now, **why do you delay**

4) Cornelius, a Roman officer and his household whom Peter preached to, were baptised in the Holy Spirit as he preached. They were then immediately baptised in water. (**Acts 10:47 "Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?)**

5) Lydia and her household (Acts 16)

6) Jailer at Philippi and his household.

Acts 16:31-33 "They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." **32** And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. **33** Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were **immediately baptized**.

7) Crispus

In fact in several instances, it was not just the person who believed, repented and was baptised, but their whole household as well (which in those days included servants and maidservants and many of their relatives living together under one roof, as a community).

8) John the Baptist's followers, who had been baptized by John, were baptized again, this time into the name of Jesus. Acts 19:1-5 (AMPC)

<sup>4</sup> And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, continually telling the people that they should believe in the One Who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus [having a conviction full of joyful trust that He is Christ, the Messiah, and being obedient to Him].

<sup>5</sup> On hearing this they were **baptized [again, this time] in the name of the Lord Jesus**.

We are saved by grace through faith, not of our own works lest we should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Water baptism is **not our own works**, but a commandment to be obeyed physically with God's intended spiritual outcome and power.

**Q: Isn't water baptism just symbolic?**

**No, it is not symbolic. It is an actual experience and faith encounter into Christ's death, burial and resurrection. The better question to ask is what does Water Baptism do to us?**

#### **IV. Spiritual Outworkings of Water Baptism**

##### **1. Immersed into Christ's death, burial and resurrection**

a) Rom. 6:4–6 (NKJV)

“Therefore 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.

b) Colossian 2:12-15 (NIV) “having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you<sup>l</sup> alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

c). Col 3:1–4 Separation from sin by being baptized into His death

“For you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3)

Think of it as the start of a life immersed into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You are being immersed into the identity, ways, values, culture of God and His kingdom through Jesus, without which there is no new life apart from it in your own strength!

##### **2. We are entering into the righteousness of Christ, who Himself “fulfilled all righteousness”, by following in His example to be water baptized.**

“But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him.” (Matthew 3:15)

If Jesus who is the “sinless Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” did it, how much more we as sinners need to be taking this step of faith in obedience.

##### **3. Our response to God by appealing with a good conscience**

1Peter 3:21 (NLT) <sup>19</sup> So he went and preached to the spirits in prison— <sup>20</sup> those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood. <sup>21</sup> And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

##### **4. We are clothed with Christ, likening to putting on “new clothes”**

Here is the thought of being clothed in Christ. The outcome is that we start to experience Him all around us and over us. This is very much needed to keep us from falling back to the flesh, where after we are baptized into Christ, continue to put off, put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, and put on Christ! (Col 2)

Galatians 3:27 “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

Romans 13:14 “put on the Lord Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts”

## WATER BAPTISM (by Karen Gan)

### **5. We are raised to the newness of life in the power of Christ's glorious resurrection**

It is the same resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead that we now have access to, so that we are able to live a crucified life by that power (not our own strength). (Romans 1:4, Romans 6:6, Romans 8:10)

### **IV. Old Testament Patterns/Types Fulfilled in New Testament Reality**

#### **(Read the account in Exodus 14)**

The children of Israel followed Moses (who is a foreshadow and a type of Christ) who led them out of their bondage of slavery by Egypt (a type of the "world") and Pharaoh (a type of "Satan").

As they crossed the Red Sea to leave Egypt, with Pharaoh and his armies chasing after them, they all escaped the enemies' pursuit and clutches when all Pharaoh and his army were drowned by the Red Sea. We also cross into victory through Christ overpowering the powers of the world, Satan and his armies of demons. Just as the children of Israel escaped from the bondages of Pharaoh, the kingdom of Egypt and its army, we are being set free to enter into the plans and promises of God, when we obey Christ to be water baptized and "cross the red sea".

Just as the crossing the red sea is the starting point of the journey of the children of Israel into God's promised land of Canaan and arriving and dwelling at Mount Zion, where the fullness of God's glory dwells; our journey of faith and obedience in following Christ only begins at water baptism until we come to the fullness of God's glory.

### **V. When Should You be Water Baptized?**

See **PART I. Requirements for Baptism**

#### **Q: What about infant baptism?**

Practice of infant/baby baptism started around A.D. 400 under Augustine of Hippo, a philosopher in those days, after the death of Constantine. Customs of infant baptism was not specifically commanded by Christ or done until the reign of Constantine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century who caused the church to slip back into Old Testament ways with priests, altars, incense and other "temple" features as soon as church buildings were erected.

Under Emperor Constantine of the then Roman empire, the empire was "Christianized" causing distinction lines as a citizen of the Roman empire to be blurred with being a citizen of the Kingdom of Christ/God. So citizenship in one also became both where a baby who was born into citizenship of Rome also became citizenship of heaven through the practice of baby baptism.

This clearly goes against the teachings of Jesus who taught that one must be "born again" to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3,7).

In those days, infant mortality rate was very high and therefore parents wanted their newborns to be baptized as soon as possible fearing the child would go to hell if they had not been baptized. This extra-biblical doctrine and practice became popular with the idea of "godparents" being introduced as well to cover for the biological parents' deficiencies.

This went further into human customs being practiced for those "christened" babies to be further "confirmed" for the now-grown child to go through "confirmation". Such ceremonies are not necessary at all when water baptism was for penitent believers in the New Testament. In fact,

## WATER BAPTISM (by Karen Gan)

wouldn't the best confirmation be to be take the step of obedience and faith to be water baptized as well?

Jesus and the apostles of Christ taught no such traditions to be followed except that when one believes in Him and confesses, repents and is born again to be water baptized.

A baby or child with NO awareness of sin, CANNOT profess to believe and confess their sins and much less to repent from them.

In other words, the converse is true that only someone who believes in Jesus and His finished work on the cross through His death and resurrection, and has awareness and acknowledgement of their sins, can profess to believe and confess their sins and repent, can and should be water baptized.

Repentance and faith towards Jesus Christ, always preceded water baptism. Therefore it is a "Believer's Baptism".

- All who believe (Mark 16:16)
- The Samaritans (Acts 8:12)
- The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:37)
- The Gentiles (Acts 10:47-48)
- The disciples of John the Baptist, at Ephesus (Acts 19:3-5)

### **VI. Who can Baptize?**

According to the commands of Christ to His disciples in Matt 28:19-20 before His ascension to heaven, **any disciple of Christ who has already been baptized in water and are obeying the Lord Jesus to make disciples** can baptize you in water.

The most important focus is on the one being baptized whether you have repented of your sins and sought for forgiveness through the shed blood of Christ, not so much on the baptizer.

Read more at:

### **VII. What should I do now?**

#### **My Response**

##### **➤ OBEY CHRIST & TAKE ACTION!**

1) Confess your sins to God in the presence of the disciple who shared Christ with you and led you to Christ, and are discipling you, and ask God to forgive your sins.

The one who is discipling you, can and should be led by the Spirit of God (since he or she is a disciple of Christ) to ask you questions of your past, your sins, your attitudes, your life, lifestyle, values that are not aligned to God's kingdom values and culture. (As your discipler walks with you, he/she would have already noticed such issues/sin actions, habits or attitudes). Confess your sins to the disciple of Christ who is walking with you, (same gender preferred) who is part of an authentic spiritual community who are accountable to one another to obey Christ and His words.

**What if there is no one walking with me or discipling me?**

## WATER BAPTISM (by Karen Gan)

If there is really no one who is sharing Christ with you now and you have encountered Christ and His words on your own, you should pray and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to a disciple of Christ whom you can walk with and account your life to and be part of the spiritual family/community he or she is a part of.

(There are many criteria which Jesus has given in order to know if the one you are journeying with is a disciple of Christ or not! Read the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John in your bible!) The spiritual community (not necessarily “church/cell group as we know it”) should be seeking to obey Christ – Love God, Love others and also fulfilling the mission which Jesus gave, seen in the works and fruit as a community.

This will break the cycle of disobedience where for centuries, many new converts “go to church” but are not disciplined at all. They might be going even to a “cell group” but are not disciplined or taught to obey Christ and all His commands, which includes the basic commands of being disciplined to disciple others.

The cycle of obedience where disciples are making disciples can start with you right now as you obey. **Without obedience, you cannot be His disciple. And it will not be possible for you to make another disciple of Christ without first your own obedience.**

2) Your discipler should pray together with you and for you as led by the Spirit of God. (this is a given!)

3) As you have repented, you can look for a pool, or a body of water, or bath tub, and ask your discipler to baptize you in water. (Your discipler should obviously have already been baptized in water, and trying to make a disciple of Christ out of you! That’s the whole idea behind the mission Jesus gave!)

Now after being baptised in water into Jesus Christ death and resurrection, you can continue to obey Christ’s commands and also teach others to obey the same:

Matt 28:19-20

**<sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

### **VIII. What Next?**

The other **baptism/immersion is in the Holy Spirit**, and that will be the next thing we teach others to obey and to receive from God.