
How to Start Life Over Again



DID YOU EVER NOTICE how small children always seem to look forward to the future? If you ask their age, they'll likely answer "Five and a half," instead of just "Five." They want to get older so they can go to school...graduate...vote...get married. But older folks always seem to look back and get sentimental about birthdays and other special days in the past.

Of course, not everyone likes to look back *or* forward. Many of us have regrets from the past and fears about the future. Worrying doesn't change things; but what if we could dig a huge hole, throw in all our guilt, regrets, hurts, and embarrassments, fill in the hole, and walk away with a fresh start? Wouldn't that be just great? God says we can!

Thoughts to Remember:

- ♦ Final words are important simply because of when they're spoken. The last thing Jesus told His disciples before He returned to heaven was, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all things which I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19, 20). Baptism is mentioned 80 times in the New Testament.
- ♦ There's much confusion about the method of baptism. Current methods include sprinkling, immersing babies, pouring water on children, immersing adults, and many others. Does the Bible say anything specific about how to be baptized? Is it really important which way we use?
- ♦ "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and of the Spirit" (John 3:5). "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16). If God's Word links baptism to salvation, baptism is essential!
- ♦ "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). There is only one God; only one faith (or path to salvation), Jesus Christ; and only one baptism. How was Jesus, our example, baptized? John the Baptist was baptizing people in the Jordan River "because there was much water there" (John 3:3). John baptized Jesus; then "He went up out of the water" (Matthew 3:16, 17). John needed a lot of water to baptize, and Jesus went down into the water for His baptism, then came back out of the water. This certainly sounds like immersion!
- ♦ As the apostle Philip walked to Gaza, he was overtaken by an Ethiopian eunuch in a chariot

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studying the Scriptures. The Ethiopian invited Phillip into the chariot to explain to him what he was reading, and Phillip explained the gospel. "As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?...' Then both Phillip and the eunuch went down into the water and Phillip baptized him" (Acts 8:36-38).

- Baptism is a symbol of death, burial, and resurrection. "Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:3, 4). The old person is buried; Christ gives a new life. We die to the sins and habits of the old life. We're clean and new in Jesus. God is a God of new beginnings!

- "But I'm such a great sinner, God can't possibly forgive me. I've been a drug addict" (alcoholic, immoral, proud, a gossip, critical...). "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Baptism is a dividing line in life between dying to the past life of sin, and resurrection to a new life in Christ in which we commit to following Christ and obeying His will.

- If you visit ancient church sites such as Phillippi, the Church of St. John Lateran, and the Leaning Tower of Pisa, you will find full baptisteries for adult baptism by immersion. Sprinkling, pouring, and the baptism of infants was not accepted until endorsed by the Council of Ravenna in AD 1311. This decision was made without Biblical support. What kind of God would say that an unbaptized baby couldn't go to heaven because it had the sin of Adam within it? A baby can't repent. Bible baptism was never a symbol of forgiveness for the sin of Adam; it is an informed personal decision, a symbol of our individual acceptance of Christ as our Lord and Redeemer.

- The Greek word *baptizo* from the New Testament, means "to dip, to immerse, to plunge under water." How do you know if you're ready for baptism? How do you know God is leading you? There are three Biblical steps to salvation:

- **Repent**—we will experience a genuine sorrow for sin.
- **Believe**—we will accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord.
- **Learn**—study the essentials of Biblical faith.

Then make the decision to be baptized.

- "I want to be baptized," you say, "but I don't want to join any church." "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...And He is the head of the body, the church" (1 Corinthians 12:13, Colossians 1:18). We are not baptized into a man-made, earthly organization, but into a church where God Himself is the head. When we're baptized, we become part of a commandment keeping people who are awaiting the Second Coming of Jesus (the Advent). We become part of an Adventist, Sabbath-keeping people whom God graciously leads.

The "take-home" message for you . . .

- Whether you were sprinkled or immersed as a baby, immersed as an adult, or you have been a faithful Baptist, Pentecostal, Catholic, Christian...you have needed Jesus. Now you have learned new truths: the Sabbath, the state of the dead, and more. Now is the time to follow Jesus into baptism.

Just between you . . . and God:

- Have you repented of your sin? Do you believe that Christ is your Savior? Do you want to follow His example in baptism? Baptism is a vitally important symbol in your relationship with Christ, who loves you and died for you.

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