



# Lesson Ten

## Baptism

### One True Baptism

**Guided by** an angel, the apostle Philip was sent to the desert road in the south. There, he found an Ethiopian man whose desire to learn the truth about Yahweh was sincere. They talked for hours, with Philip teaching the man everything he knew about the Old Covenant and the new Gospel teachings.

Thoroughly moved by what he was learning, the Ethiopian man immediately

requested that he be baptized in accordance with what he'd learned. They pulled the cart they were riding in over to the side of the road, where Philip proceeded to baptize the man in a pond that was located there.

This account not only highlights the growth of the early assembly but also teaches an essential truth about the sacred act of

baptism. By this point in your study, you have learned many Bible teachings that may have been new to you. These truths have likely strengthened your faith and drawn you closer to God. Like the Ethiopian man, you may now find yourself asking how you can serve God more fully, and whether baptism is a step you should take. But what exactly is baptism, and why does it remain so vital for true Christians today?

Baptism is a Christian rite in which an individual is fully immersed in water. The Scriptures consistently use the Greek word *βάπτισμα* (*báptisma*), which literally means “immersion,” “submersion,” or “to dip.” When Philip baptized the Ethiopian man, he carried out the act in this very manner. Other accounts show the same pattern, including the

baptism of Jesus the Messiah, who was immersed in the waters of the Jordan River.



Jesus was baptized by immersion in the Jordan River.

Some religious groups today practice baptism by sprinkling or pouring water over a person. Yet this method is absent from the Scriptures and from the early history of the assembly. At no point does the Bible describe baptism as anything other than complete immersion in water. The consistent example of the Messiah and the first-century believers shows that full submersion is the proper and scriptural form of Christian baptism.

Baptism is performed by an anointed member of the congregation, typically a pastor or minister. Never in scriptures did a husband or wife baptize each other, nor did anyone ever baptize themselves. Even Jesus went to his cousin, John the Baptizer, for his own rite.

While immersion is the outward form of baptism, the act itself is profoundly spiritual. The Scriptures describe baptism as a renewal of one's spirit, a decisive turning point in a believer's life. When a person is baptized, they are not simply being dipped in water; they are making a heartfelt pledge to God, motivated by genuine spiritual zeal. In response to this dedication, Yahweh graciously extends many spiritual blessings, drawing the baptized one into a closer relationship with Him and His assembly.

For a baptism to be genuine, a person must possess a sincere desire to uphold Yahweh's standards. This is because baptism is a sacred and binding commitment. When one is baptized, they are making a lifelong vow to live according to God's ways and to worship Him in purity. Among the promises we make is the determination to place God's will above our own desires. Such a vow requires a real change in our outlook, priorities, and daily conduct. The Apostle Paul describes baptism as a "death" to one's former self and a rebirth through Christ Jesus (**Read: Romans 6:3–4**). His words remind us just how seriously we must view our baptismal dedication.

**Discussion:** Why is it appropriate to liken baptism to "death" of our old selves and "birth" of a new self?

Once baptized, an individual is bound by their vow (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5). God makes it clear in the bible that He will hold us accountable to our baptismal promises. The Apostle Peter says that it's better for to have never known the truth than to turn our back on it (2 Peter 2:21). When a person willfully denies their baptismal vows, and commits to the way of sin without repentance, there can be no salvation for such person (Hebrews 6:6). Of course, this punishment is only reserved for the unrepentant, not the imperfect. If a person makes a mistake, they are still forgiven so long as they are heartily sorry for it.

This change in our heart is essential for salvation. Some modern churches teach that baptism itself is not required, claiming that a sincere heart alone is enough. To support

this idea, they often point to the criminal who was executed beside Jesus. It is true that while Jesus was on the cross, he assured the repentant criminal, who openly expressed faith in Jesus as the Messiah, that he would experience Paradise. However, this statement does not mean that the man entered Paradise that very day, nor does it excuse Christians today from the requirement of baptism.

The account of the thief illustrates an important truth: Yahweh looks at the heart when a person is physically unable to take the steps required of a disciple. The thief had no opportunity to learn, repent fully, or be baptized, yet his sincerity secured him a place in paradise through the second resurrection. It is important to remember that the second resurrection – or the

Resurrection of Judgement – will occur in which people will be judged by their hearts. Since the thief expressed a sincere heart of faith, he has received a positive judgement. By contrast, those who come to know the truth in this life and respond to it through repentance and baptism become part of the first resurrection, the group raised to eternal life at the beginning of the Messiah's Kingdom. Thus, while the thief's heart condition prepared him for future restoration, baptism remains a necessary step for all who seek to share in the first resurrection today.

While baptism is a serious commitment, the blessings it brings are just as compelling. In His great mercy, Yahweh not only forgives the sins we have committed but chooses to remember them no more. Through no merit of our own,

He grants us a standing of purity that we could never achieve by human effort. Even though we still fall short at times, a baptized Christian is viewed as "blameless" before Yahweh because of His gracious forgiveness.

At baptism, Yahweh wipes our past clean and grants us a pure heart. One of the greatest gifts He provides to help us maintain a life of pure worship is His holy spirit. As we discussed in the previous chapter, the holy spirit is essential for true worship – but it does even more than sanctify our service. When Yahweh grants His spirit, He gives the baptized Christian a measure of His own active power, supplying the strength, courage, and endurance needed to face the challenges of this present age. By relying on the holy spirit, a believer is empowered to uphold

Yahweh's commands and  
remain steadfast even during  
severe trials.

# The Meaning of Baptism

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Baptism is far more than a symbolic act; it carries profound spiritual meaning. To appreciate this meaning, we must briefly return to what we learned in Lesson 4. There, we established that Jesus is the Messiah and that his death served as a ransom for our sins. We also examined the New Covenant and the spiritual blessings it offers to those who enter it. In that lesson, we learned an essential truth: baptism is the appointed means by which a believer enters the New Covenant. Without baptism, a person cannot share in the covenantal blessings secured by the Messiah's sacrifice. Why?

Every covenant in Scripture is sealed with a sacrifice. This is

fundamental to the very nature of a covenant. Under the Old Covenant, clean animals were offered, and the people shared in that covenant through the sprinkling of blood. In the same way, the New Covenant also requires a sacrifice for its promises to take effect. Without such a sacrifice, a covenant would be like an agreement with no binding signature – well intentioned, but not legally established. We might compare it to signing a contract: the terms may be agreed upon, but until the document is formally validated, the agreement has no true force.

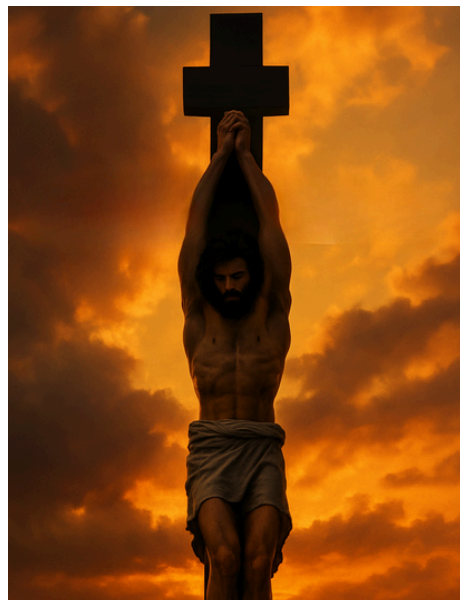
Covenants are sealed with blood because blood represents the price each



party is willing to bear in establishing the agreement. In Scripture, this seal signified that the covenant carried real consequences if broken. On one hand, the sacrifice demonstrated the seriousness of the commitment and the cost required to bring the covenant into force. On the other, it served as a solemn reminder that the one entering the covenant had bound themselves to its terms at great personal cost. Thus, the shedding of blood became the physical expression of the weight, permanence, and sacred nature of the covenant itself.

When Jesus died on the cross, his blood was poured out "for you," establishing the New Covenant (Read: Luke 22:20). His sacrifice opened the way for all mankind to be reconciled to Yahweh. Yet for a person to

enter into this covenantal agreement, they must personally accept and take part in the benefits of that sacrifice. Yahweh, in His mercy, does not require us to shed blood; instead, He allows us to share in the Messiah's sacrificial death through the waters of baptism. By immersion, we identify ourselves with Jesus' offering and formally enter the New Covenant he inaugurated.



Jesus' death on the cross was the seal of the New Covenant



Baptism proves the sincerity of our faith. In this act, we acknowledge the depth of Yahweh's love in providing salvation, and we demonstrate our willingness to take deliberate steps in obedience. Baptism shows Yahweh that we are prepared to do His will, not merely with words or feelings, but with action.

The Apostle James reminds us that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:17). While salvation comes through faith, a faith that remains only an inward conviction carries no weight (Ephesians 2:8-9). True faith calls us to act. When we obey Yahweh's command to be baptized, we perform a work of faith, proving our commitment to His word. In that moment, before witnesses, we publicly declare that our allegiance belongs to Yahweh alone. Baptism is the point at which

our inner faith becomes visible.

As a baptized individual, we are granted a clean slate from Yahweh, a precious gift that allows us to begin anew. This blessing carries deep meaning. Think for a moment of any regrets you may carry from your past. While we may still face the natural consequences of our earlier choices, baptism provides a fresh start in our hearts and minds. It marks the moment Yahweh removes the spiritual burden of our past and invites us into a new way of life.

Consider an example. Suppose a man has committed theft. In time, he may be arrested and face the penalties of the law. While imprisoned, he begins to study the Scriptures and develops genuine regret for his wrongdoing. His baptism

will not erase the legal consequences of his actions, but it will erase the spiritual ones. Through baptism, the guilt of his former life is lifted, and he stands clean before Yahweh. Although he still reaps the natural results of his past behavior, he is no longer bound by his former sins; he now has a renewed heart and a sincere commitment to live in harmony with Yahweh's standards.

Jesus the Messiah taught that in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, one must be "born of water and of spirit" (**Read: John 3:5**). Baptism marks the death of our former life and the beginning of something entirely new. By submitting to this sacred rite, we receive the keys to the great paradise that lies ahead. In the future, Yahweh will transform us physically into a

state of perfection; after baptism, we begin that transformation spiritually. Though we remain imperfect in the flesh, we stand guiltless in spirit because of the Messiah's sacrifice. The figurative blood on our hands is washed away by the very real waters of baptism.

How a baptism is performed matters on a fundamental level. While many will say that baptism into the name of "the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" is acceptable, the historical record tells us otherwise. Besides the formula found at Matthew 28:19, nowhere in the bible is the phrase "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" used in reference to a baptism.

The confusion here lies in the wording of the verse. Notice that the Scripture says to baptize "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the holy

spirit", not "in the names." Father, son, and holy spirit are titles or roles, not personal names. There is only one name under which we are commanded to be baptized, and that name is Jesus.

The name of Jesus fulfills the requirement given in (Matthew 28:19). Jesus was sent by the *Father* and came in His Father's name; he is the living *son* of God; and he was granted the *holy spirit* without measure. This shows that **when we are baptized in Jesus' name, we are symbolically baptized in the name of the Father, the son, and the holy spirit.** For this reason, every example of baptism in the Scriptures is performed strictly in the name of Jesus. Through this baptismal formula, we are brought into the spiritual family of Yahweh and become His adopted

children. The Bible says that, through the Messiah, we are made "one" with Yahweh and with His son (John 17:21-23).

**Discussion:** Why is it necessary to be baptized in Jesus' name, and not any other?

Another purpose of baptism is to publicly identify us as followers of Christ. Through this act, we become spiritual children of God and are welcomed into an international family of believers. Our fellow baptized ones become our spiritual brothers and sisters. In the early congregation, a person officially entered the assembly upon their baptism. Likewise, within NCMA, an individual is formally recognized as a member of the modern assembly when they are baptized.

By forming a close-knit community of like-minded believers, we cultivate a spirit of brotherhood and mutual accountability. When our spiritual brother suffers, we stand ready to offer support and comfort. Likewise, if a spiritual brother begins to stray from the righteous path, we lovingly guide him back to the way of truth.

# A Goal for Bible Students



Have you been considering baptism for your future? If so, then you are undergoing a spiritual transformation that will clear your conscience and make peace between you and God! Yet, as you've seen in this lesson, baptism isn't as straightforward as being dipped in water. There are serious responsibilities for baptized individuals. Before being baptized, you will have to prepare to take such a big step.

Preparing for baptism begins with answering some important questions about who can be baptized. Though anyone of any nationality or race may get baptized, the bible says that one must be ready for baptism. This means that there are some who are

ineligible to be baptized. Let's look at three common requirements for baptism.

## AGE

Most churches today will baptize infants. Many religious leaders will baptize children and teenagers, those who are young. They say that God's salvation is for all, which it is. But they conflate that statement with the idea that baptism is available to everyone no matter their age.

The bible says otherwise. Many scriptures point us to the "age of accountability". This is the point in time in which a person becomes responsible for their own actions. Children, whose brains are not yet fully developed, are incapable of

understanding sin, and therefore cannot repent of theirs. For that reason, Yahweh God counts all children to be innocent, despite the fact that we are all born in sin. Jesus claimed that the Kingdom of Heaven was made for children, and even went so far as to say that those of us who wish to attain salvation must make ourselves like a child (**Read: Luke 18:15-18**).

When reading the bible, we can find numerous examples that point to the age of accountability being **20 years old**. When performing a count of the population of Israel, Yahweh commanded that all children – that is, all people younger than 20 years – be excluded from the count (Exodus 30:12-14). A tax was laid upon a man of adulthood at 20 years. Only men who were 20 years or older were

permitted to go to war. There are other examples in scripture of Yahweh setting a standard: only those 20 years or older would count as adults. For these reasons, at NCMA, we only baptize those who are 20 years or older.

Now you may be wondering, *what if I was baptized as a child? Does that still count?* The answer is **no**. No child baptism counts towards salvation. If a person is baptized as a child, and then comes into the way later in life, they need to be baptized as an adult to enter the New Covenant. It is as if their first baptism never happened.

#### PENANCE

A person searching for baptism must endure a time of penance before they are eligible to be baptized. The word *repent* is a verb meaning 'to think differently'

or “to reconsider”. In a biblical sense, penance is the reflection on one’s sins and a pivot in personality, to turn away from such behavior.



Becoming a baptized Christian means turning away from previous sins

The process of penance will fundamentally change a person’s character. The bible refers to this as “the new self” or “the new personality” (**Read: Colossians 3:10**). This is because our values will change as we reject that which displeases God. We

may recognize that some of our past actions were wrong, but penance is more than that. We must learn to *hate what Yahweh hates* (Romans 12:9).

**Discussion:** What is the most fundamental aspect of penance? How can you recognize your own sins?

Sin is fun. It is pleasurable for our minds and bodies. But what feels good to us is not always what is best. For example, while sugar tastes very sweet, eating it in overabundance can lead to serious health problems. Likewise, even though sinning might feel good in the moment, it is bad for us spiritually. This is why those wishing to be baptized must not only claim penance over their sins, but must also embody a Christian heart through their conduct and lifestyle choices.



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#### DEDICATION

Penance is the beginning of a life dedicated to Yahweh. When the apostle Paul told us to “hate what is bad” he also instructed us to “love what is good” (Psalm 34:14, 1 Timothy 1:5). It is not enough to simply reject sin, but we must also embrace godliness.

Our baptism is the beginning of our new life in Christ, not the end of our spiritual studies. Baptized Christians can show their dedication to Yahweh both in heart and in action. By looking for ways to utilize the fruits of the spirit, we show Yahweh that we take serious our dedication to His way. This is because Yahweh is a God of action,

and the holy spirit is His active force (Genesis 1:2). When we go out of our way to help others, or to show small acts of kindness through genuine love of our neighbors, we bear witness to the loving providence of God.

# Baptism - Only the Beginning



Immediately after his baptism, Jesus was tempted by Satan. He had fasted for forty days and forty nights, and Satan used this vulnerable position to attempt to entice Jesus into committing sin. However, Jesus resisted Satan's influence.

Likewise, immediately after your baptism, you will most likely experience severe temptations. Part of your dedication is the willpower to make it through this period. You must strengthen your spirit like a muscle to guard against sin. Over time, you may find yourself beginning to slip. In this case, it might seem easy to just let go and continue in sin. However, this is not the answer.

Think of your new spiritual self as a garment that you wear. If you tore a precious garment, would you immediately throw it in the trash? No! If the garment really means something to you, you might take it to a seamstress for repairs. In the case of your spiritual garment, if you feel it ripping under pressure, you can take it to a *spiritual guide*, such as a pastor or an elder for help.

What can we do after baptism to continue our spiritual journey? First, we must attend congregation services. During our congregation services, we receive guidance from Yahweh through the spirit-lead direction of the pastors. Every pastor at NCMA must be educated before they are

eligible for giving sermons. They must also be anointed with holy oil, at which time they are ordained a pastor. An ordination is not just a ceremony; it is an induction of the holy spirit into a person, giving them the gifts necessary to lead the assembly.

Our meetings are also the time when spiritually like-minded individuals gather. The encouragement and renewal of our meetings together cannot be overstated. Through the love of the congregation, we reaffirm our spiritual commitment to Yahweh God, and gather the strength necessary to carry us from week to week.

Another thing we can do to maintain our spirituality is to imitate Jesus as a peacemaker. Jesus never returned evil for evil. In that

same vein, we must always be looking for ways to make peace with our brothers and sisters, compromising if possible, to maintain a loving relationship. We need to ask ourselves, "What am I willing to sacrifice to make peace with others? Am I waiting for the other person to come to me, or am I taking the initiative to make peace? Do I hold grudges against those who may have slighted me in the past?"

Jesus encouraged peace amongst the disciples. Likewise, we can encourage one another to maintain peace. This may look like urging a brother or sister to forgive someone else. We may also counsel someone to apologize when they've wronged another. If an argument gets bad enough, we prompt those in disagreement to seek help from the congregation elders

for mediation. When supporting our fellow believers, it is imperative that we avoid taking sides to maintain peace.

One big thing we can do to maintain our spirituality is to justly defend God's holy name. Even though we seek peace, just as Jesus did, we must remember that sometimes we must maintain firm boundaries. Jesus himself said that he came to bring "not peace, but a sword" (**Read: Matthew 10:34-36**).

Does this mean that we incite violence in others?

Absolutely not! What it means is that we hold to the truth even against opposition. The truth itself is controversial, especially as we draw nearer to the end of days. Some will be called to belief, and others will not. Our beliefs will set us apart

from the world (John 15:19). Jesus warned that the world would hate us on account of our beliefs.

This division will come down even to families. If a son believes, but a father does not, there may be division there. Let's look at how, using this example of a father and a son. Say the son studies the bible with and ambassador – as you are – and decides to get baptized. His father does not want him to do this. Perhaps the father thinks the son is betraying his childhood church. What should the son do?

The son should start out by explaining his beliefs to his father. He can ask "Would you be open to hearing me out?" or "Can we talk about it?" If the father is open to a discussion, they may yet save the relationship. But if the father refuses to listen to his

son, then there might be strain between them. Only if the father continually admonishes the son for his beliefs should the man consider limiting or even ending their association, and only after all attempts to reconcile have been made.

**Discussion:** How can the son in our example maintain firm, spiritual boundaries with his father?

During this time, the son must maintain firm boundaries rooted in truth. Although it may hurt that he is in disagreement with his father, his eternal life is at stake, as is his relationship with Yahweh God. It is entirely possible that by setting boundaries he may enlighten his father towards the truth. But even if his father is not convinced to allow the man to worship in truth, the son will need to

maintain boundaries for his own spiritual welfare. If he allows himself to be persuaded by his father into discordance with God's word, the man may find himself at risk of his eternal life!

When you dedicate yourself to Yahweh and submit to baptism, you declare your love for Him and your determination to do His will, no matter what challenges arise. Although maintaining this resolve will bring tests of faith, Yahweh will honor your commitment. He sees the love behind your efforts and understands the trials and tribulations you must face. Yahweh will bless your determination to remain faithful. Trust that, through His holy spirit, He will grant you the strength to continue walking the righteous path long after your baptism!