

## Water Baptism

Making a decision to be baptised is an important decision that you have to make from your own conscience and faith. This document will explain the nature of baptism in four sections (What, Why, How, and When)

### 1. What is water baptism?

Baptism has been an integral part of Christianity from the first. Jesus himself was baptised even though he has no sins. It was Jesus' expression of his dedication to God's will and to ministry; and also an expression of his wholehearted identification with his people before God. After his baptism the *Spirit* came upon Jesus (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10; Lk. 3:21). Jesus started His ministry AFTER He got baptised.

The earliest converts were baptized (Acts 2:38, 41). Paul, converted within 2 or 3 years of the resurrection, takes it for granted that baptism marks the beginning of the Christian life. And we know that ALL Christians in the New Testament had been baptized, either by John or in the name of Jesus.

Christian baptism was an expression of *repentance and faith* (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12.; 16:14.; 33.; 18:8; 19:2.; Heb. 6:1). The Baptism itself originates from the Jewish practice (that Muslims and Jews still do until today) of cleansing of sins before entering the Holy Temple (or Mosque). The Jews and Muslims do this as part of their rituals (in temple and mosque), but in Christianity – the baptism is a one-in-a-lifetime moment which symbolizes an act of repentance and faith to the sacrifice of Jesus. A Christian does not have to be baptised every day to be forgiven. One baptism, in the name of Jesus, is more than enough to cleanse the sins of the believer.

It is clear then that, from the early Christianity, baptism in the name of Jesus functioned as the *rite of entry* or initiation into the new group of believers (Christians) who called upon the name of Jesus (Acts 2:21, 41; 22:16.; Rom. 10:10-14; 1 Cor. 1:2).

### 2. Why do I have to be baptised?

**Luke 3:3** Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people **should be baptized** to show that they had turned from their sins and turned to God to be forgiven.

**Romans 6:3** Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. **5** If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. **6** For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin

A believer makes a decision to be baptised so that he/she can experience what Christ experienced. Baptism in act of faith of what Jesus has done for us. Baptism DOES NOT save us. We are saved by grace through faith (Romans 3:23-24). We make a decision to be baptised because we HAVE BEEN saved through our faith to His sacrifice in the cross.

## **Illustration:**

When someone has finished all the subject requirements for a bachelor degree, he will get the testamur (Ijazah) in the graduation ceremony. However, the testamur does not give us all the knowledge we need as a university graduate, we HAVE GAINED the knowledge through studying 24-36 subjects at the university. We make a decision to attend the graduation ceremony and receive the testamur because WE HAVE GAINED/FULFILLED the essential requirements for the degree. Likewise Baptism DOES NOT give you salvation. You are baptised because YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED through your faith in Jesus.

According to Romans 6:3-6, Baptism signifies three things:

1. We confess and experience that we have died with Christ (Romans 6:6) – When you decide to be baptised.
2. We confess and experience that we have been buried with Christ (Romans 6:4) – All our old character and self have been buried with Christ when you get into the water
3. We confess and experience that we have been raised up with Christ (Romans 6:4-5): When you rose up from the water – you are a NEW creation.

## **3. How do I get baptised?**

Jesus and the believers in early churches were baptised through IMMERSION (in which the whole body is immersed in the water). This signifies the fact that all of our old life has been immersed in the water, and we will come out as a new creation.

The baptism must be done in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

**Matthew 28:19** 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

## **4. When should I be baptised?**

**Acts 22:16** And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'

As mentioned earlier, baptism is the first step of Christianity. It is the decision that every believer must make from their faith and conscience. It will be a very special moment in your life as you make a decision to experience Christ's death and resurrection.