

Let every one of you be baptized!

Peter according to Acts 2:38

Dear Andrew, *

Today, we want to think about baptism. What is its significance? We want to get an overall view. We find the answer in God's Word.

Jesus' Example

Jesus is our example. He calls us to: *"Follow me!"* (Matthew 4:19 GNT) What is reported about Jesus' baptism? Matthew 3:13-17 NKJV:

"At that time Jesus arrived from Galilee and came to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. But John tried to make him change his mind. 'I ought to be baptized by you,' John said, 'and yet you have come to me.'"

But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so for now. For in this way we shall do all that God requires.' So John agreed.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water. Then heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and lighting on him. Then a voice said from heaven, 'This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased.'"

Therefore:

- › Jesus wanted to do (according to a modern translation: GNT) ***"all that God requires"***. According to the NKJV He said: *"it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."*
- › **He came up out of the water.** He was baptized by submersion in the Jordan river. The Bible shows us that submersion is supposed to be a symbol for a burial. In Romans 6:3-4 (NKJV) we read:

*"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? **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."*

My old life is thus symbolically buried. I am raised to a new life. This should testify that I have given up my self-sufficient life. Instead, I choose Jesus Christ as my Lord and Redeemer and a new life with Him (John 1:12-13).

* Andrew after the biblical Andrew in John 1:41-42.

➤ Jesus received the Holy Spirit on this occasion. Luke reports about it in chapter 3:21-22 (NKJV): “... **while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him ...**” Whoever surrenders to God, receives through prayer the Holy Spirit.

God is well pleased with whomever does this. We, small, insignificant people, can actually bring pleasure to the great and marvelous God – our dear Father in heaven!

Jesus’ discussion about baptism and the necessity of a new life.

Jesus conversed with Nicodemus, an influential and highly educated scribe, about baptism and being born again: “... *unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*” (John 3:5 NKJV)

This is clear and unequivocal! And Jesus means exactly what He said. Not always do we immediately understand God’s ways, which He has ordained for us in His great love. But we can know that Jesus Christ is also speaking to us here. What He said is vital! And He always has our best interest in mind!

John 3:5 NKJV: “*Jesus answered, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*”

What does this “new birth” of water and the Spirit mean? It describes a fulfilled new life in close contact with Jesus, who we have given complete control.

This is symbolized through submersion in water. It shows the burial of my egocentric life. Jesus said: “*For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.*” (Luke 9:24 NKJV)

“*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*” (John 10:10 NKJV)

“*These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*” (John 15:11 NKJV)

Being born of the Spirit means that my old self-centered nature no longer rules, but rather that I am inwardly changed by the Holy Spirit. And that Jesus now shares through the Holy Spirit my life. Why is this compared to a birth? A newborn is a complete person, but he needs care and has to grow.

Titus 3:5 NKJV: “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, **through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.***”

We always find these two factors – surrender to Jesus and living in close contact to Jesus through the Holy Spirit. We have been saved by God’s grace and when we remain connected to Him, then we will have a fulfilled life.

2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV: “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*”

When we are very closely connected to Christ, then He changes us through the Holy Spirit and makes us into loving people. Our ability to love and appreciate God and our fellow men grows bit by bit.

What did Jesus say at His farewell about baptism?

Jesus gave the disciples a great commission at His farewell. It is the command that has accomplished the most on this earth. And it is still being carried out globally.

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:18-20 NKJV)

Jesus’ last commission commands us to preach the good news of salvation to all people, to teach them His words and to baptize them. This commission is in effect through all the centuries until the end of human history. A short word in Jesus’ commission shows us through repetition how comprehensive it is supposed to be. The little word “all” or “always”.

*“**All** authority has been given to Me.”*

*“Make disciples of **all** the nations, baptizing them.”*

*“Teaching them to observe **all** things that I have commanded you.”*

*“I am with you **always**, even to the end of the age.”*

We recognize in Jesus’ commission:

- › Whoever becomes a disciple or follower of Jesus, should help other people to become a “disciple”. (*“Make disciples.”*)
- › Whoever has decided to have a personal friendship with Jesus and follows Him, has thus become a “disciple” and should be baptized. (*“Make disciples and baptize them.”*)
- › Whoever initially gets to know only the basic teachings of the Bible in order to enter a personal relationship with Jesus, should continue to learn, grow and mature. (*“Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.”*)
- › Everyone, who obeys this commission, is given a priceless promise by Jesus. (*“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*) Jesus wants to share in our life and fill us with His perfect love. He wants to lead, bless and protect us.

We can see here that Jesus’ commission concerns all of us – every person, all over the world, in every age, irrevocably. Jesus spoke here with His divine authority: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”

What requirements are expected before being baptized?

Jesus stated a prerequisite for baptism: being a disciple, meaning **fostering a personal love relationship with God, living with Him and following Him.**

For me, it is an important thought that the Bible compares a relationship with Jesus to a marriage, i.e. with a love and trust relationship. For example, in Ephesians 5:31-32 NKJV: *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”*

How does a relationship between a man and woman usually develop? They see each other for the first time, either right away or sometime later there is mutual interest, a fondness. It grows into friendship, then being enamored, then to love and the decision to spend their lives together. The engagement period is intriguing and exciting: we get to know each other better and the families also get to know each other. And then the wedding takes place!

The first fundamental surrender to Jesus, which takes place in a prayer of surrender to Jesus, can be compared to an engagement. A prayer of surrender can be as follows:

Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, I thank You that You died for me and rose again. I am a sinner, please forgive me. Come into my life now. I cannot save myself. I cannot earn eternal life. That is why I trust You. Free me from the power of evil. Give me strength to follow You. With everything I am and have, I give to You now. I accept eternal life. I haven't earned it; but I thank You for this gift. Amen.

This is explained in detail in Letter to Andrew Number 13: “Seize Life – Through a personal relationship with God”. I wish every person that intends to be baptized to start with this “engagement period”. It helps us to subsequently have a firmer inner conviction and to enter an intimate relationship with Jesus for our whole life with heartfelt conviction and great joy. It can safeguard us against shortcomings in preparation for baptism, which God would for this reason probably not recognize.

The apostle Paul said: *“...For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”* (2 Corinthians 11:2 NKJV)

We can compare the wedding with baptism. Through baptism we make a covenant with Jesus, which should guide us with Him through our whole life. We “marry” Jesus. He loves us so much that He gave His life for us. No greater love exists. We want to go together with Him and our fellow believers in Jesus – His church – to the Kingdom of God. (“... *And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*” (Acts 2:47 NKJV)) Baptism is our confession of faith before God and men that we now belong to Jesus.

Jesus says to those, who have accepted Jesus in their life: “*Abide in Me, and I in you... He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit ...*” (John 15:4-5 NKJV)

Much fruit, abundant fruit comes through divine/human collaboration. This shows us: Jesus accompanies us on our life’s journey. He wants to produce much fruit through our lives. How can I abide in Jesus?

“*Abide in Me, and I in you.*” This means:

- › A constant receiving of His Spirit,
- › A life of unreserved surrender to His service. (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 676.2) This precise explanation opened my eyes and gave me clarity for my journey with God in my life.

Jesus said: “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved ...*” (Mark 16:16 NKJV) According to Jesus, baptism is an important and crucial procedure. Jesus attached great importance to baptism. Each person is called, according to Jesus’ instruction, to be baptized.

And in what external form? Just as Jesus instituted the holy act in the church through submersion.

We ask: How did the apostles, who were personally taught by Jesus, practice this commission? The disciples knew of and acknowledged only one baptism.

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

We want to search in God’s Word again for this one baptism. Because only this was instituted by Jesus Christ and is thus valid.

Examples from the time of the apostles

Pentecost: Baptism of approximately 3000 people

At the end of Peter’s Pentecost sermon, he was addressed by his listeners. We can read about this in Acts 2:37-39 NKJV:

“*Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.’”*

Peter knew only one answer to this important question: “*What shall we do?*” He said: “*Repent.*”

Return to God. Baptism is completely meaningless, when someone doesn't regret his past life and turn away from his sins.

Yes, repentance is an essential prerequisite for baptism. 1 John 1:9 (NKJV) assures us: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* It is important to get our lives in order with God's help before we enter a valuable relationship with Jesus through baptism.

Baptism of the Ethiopian official

Let's take a look at another biblical baptism in Acts 8:35-39 (NKJV): *"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. 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?' Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And 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, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing."*

What an inspiring report! *"If you believe with all your heart, you may."* That is the way it is: believe in Christ and accept Him with your whole heart, then baptism is according to the Holy Scriptures.

Questions

Now a question emerges from all of the above: How can infants and small children learn and understand all of this? It is impossible for a child's mind to comprehend all these truths and take the required steps. Now we understand Jesus, when he established a chronological order: First instruction, then baptism! Evidently, small children shouldn't be baptized, which also didn't take place in the early church. We can find no instance of this in the Holy Scriptures.

How did infant baptism come about? It emerged at a later date. Even though many people find infant baptism appealing, we have to declare: this form of baptism is in contradiction with the Bible, because Jesus expects the individuals to be instructed first. He should believe, repent and obey, so that baptism doesn't become an empty, meaningless ritual.

An older woman was asked: "Why do you belong to this of all churches?" She responded: "Because when I was born my mother had me baptized into this church." The pastor asked further: "So, if your mother had had you baptized as a Buddhist, then you would be a Buddhist today?" "Yes, that is quite possible", agreed the woman a bit pensively.

Conclusion

Baptism should be an expression of a deliberate decision and a heartfelt personal desire of a person to commit themselves to Christ forever.

Please note, what Jesus said before His baptism to John the Baptist (Matthew 3:15 NKJV): “... *Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness...*” or to express it in modern English: “***Let it be so for now. For in this way we shall do all that God requires.***” (GNT)

Jesus, the sinless one, considered baptism something absolutely essential for His own life. This shows us that this is also the right way for us. We want to follow Jesus. In any case, Jesus and the Father are pleased with anyone that does it.

In addition, we also want to consider: “*As soon as Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water.*” He experienced a complete baptism of water – for Him a symbol of His future death, burial and resurrection.

Baptism is also a symbol for a burial. Can the water redeem people? No. But no one can be redeemed without water, when he has seen and realized the truth about the biblical baptism. Most definitely not.

John 3:5 says: “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*” (NKJV)

Baptism in water is a significant step in our saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

In baptism we take part in Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. If we die thus with Him, then we will also live with Him. The cross is the symbol for salvation for a lost world. Baptism is a symbol that we want to eternally connect ourselves with Jesus, the Savior, in His suffering, death and resurrection. We can see what great importance baptism has in the lives of Christians in Galatians 3:27-29 (NKJV):

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ... And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

And then the wonderful promise: “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...*” (Romans 8:1 NKJV)

Baptism cleanses us from our past sins and thus a person receives the righteousness of Christ, meaning, he stands before God as if he had never sinned. We read more about the effectiveness and meaning of such a cleansing: “... *But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*” (1 Corinthians 6:11 NKJV)

Sanctification, justification and purification are cited together as essential links in the chain of salvation.

We know: a chain missing a link is completely worthless. We don't want to jeopardize our belonging to God's kingdom by leaving out the most important link of baptism.

Let's read further what Paul wrote in Titus 3:4-5: *"But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."* (NKJV)

Here we learn how important the washing of regeneration is – the cleansing that God performs for us, through which He receives us into the fellowship of His presence.

When someone wants to start over, he has to realize that he has lived wrong up until now. Also, the intention to break off with their old life is part of this. And then the cleansing bath of baptism is needed.

Let's read this previous text again: *"One Lord, one faith, one baptism."* (Ephesians 4:5 NKJV)

When the God of heaven only recognizes one baptism and this baptism is crucial for salvation, is there then any reason why anyone would refrain from being baptized?

The apostle Paul compares baptism with burial in the book of Romans. At a burial no one sprinkles a little dirt on the head of the deceased. Thus, no one is really baptized when a little water is sprinkled on his head.

This custom cannot be found in the Bible; it was introduced later on. Don't forget that Satan has a substitute, a counterfeit for every command given by God. And he claims that the counterfeit is just as good as the original. But counterfeits won't withstand the detailed examination on the day of judgement.

Tourists asked a Greek shoemaker the meaning of the word "baptism" in his language. He let the shoe fall that he was working on and said: Baptism? Baptidzo – to immerse, to submerge, like when you are dying a dress."

This illustration is so fitting! It's inconceivable that anyone would just sprinkle dye over the dress. The dress has to be completely immersed, it has to be completely permeated with the dye. In the same way, we need to be immersed and symbolically be cleaned by the blood and death of Jesus – buried with Him. One Lord, one faith and one baptism, which is authorized by God.

Do you want this baptism or have you already received it? Baptism belongs to Jesus' last commission, as accounted in Mark 16:15-16 NKJV:

"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'"

Note that *"who believes and is baptized will be saved."* Should we recklessly disregard Jesus' clear command to be baptized and recklessly jeopardize our salvation?

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for the great gift of Your love, which was revealed to us through Jesus.

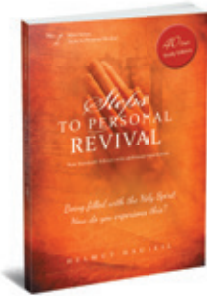
That He was willing to come to this earth and to live here so that He could show us the way and we could walk in His footsteps and follow His example.

Dear Lord, I earnestly ask You to have mercy on all the readers and listeners to make the right choice in their life and to completely submit themselves to You in baptism, as You said in Your word, before it is too late. May Your Holy Spirit fill their hearts and lead them to a decision, which You expect in Your great love. I ask this in Jesus name.”

Jesus desires a constant and warm relationship with you. He said: *“Abide in Me, and I in you.”* (John 15:4 NKJV)

With warm greetings and good wishes,

Helmut



BOOK 1: STEPS TO PERSONAL REVIVAL

Being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Our lord himself has given the command:¹ Let yourselves be consistently and repeatedly filled anew with the spirit!²

1 Ellen G. White, *Mount of Blessing*, MB 20.3 (egwwritings.org)

2 Johannes Mager, *Auf den Spuren des Heiligen Geistes* (Lüneburg, 1999), p. 101

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FOREWORD FOR LEADERS AND FUTURE LEADERS MULTIPLYING THE RESULTS

CHAPTER 1: JESUS' MOST PRECIOUS GIFT

What did Jesus teach about the Holy Spirit?

Are you acquainted with Jesus' most powerful message?

CHAPTER 2: WHAT IS THE CENTER OF OUR PROBLEMS?

Is there a spiritual cause to our problems? Is the cause a lack of the Holy Spirit?

What is the main problem with being a carnal Christian?

CHAPTER 3: OUR PROBLEMS ARE SOLVABLE

What is God's solution for our problems? How can we grow to be happy and strong Christians? What is the relationship between baptism and the Holy Spirit?

CHAPTER 4: WHAT DIFFERENCES CAN WE EXPECT?

What advantage do we have with a life filled with the Holy Spirit

What do we lose when we don't pray for the Holy Spirit?

CHAPTER 5: THE KEY TO PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

How can I implement and experience God's solution for me?

How should I pray so that I am sure of being filled with the Holy Spirit?

CHAPTER 6: WHAT EXPERIENCES LIE AHEAD OF US?

Personal experiences, as well as experiences from churches, a conference and a union

CHAPTER 7: INTEREST AND SHARING

The Joy that we give returns to our own hearts. (German Proverb)

How can I help others to experience "Life in Abundance"?

How do we pass on the message? Which ways are there?



BOOK 2: STEPS TO PERSONAL REVIVAL

ABIDE IN JESUS – HOW DO YOU DO THAT?

“Abide in Me, and I in you.” Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving of His Spirit, a life of unreserved surrender to His service.

Ellen G. White (*Desire of Ages, DA, p.676.2*)

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Abiding in Him is not a work that we have to do as a condition in order to enjoy His salvation. Rather it is our consent to let Him do everything for us, in us, and through us. It is a work He does for us – the result and the power of His redeeming love. Our part is simply to yield, to trust, and to wait for Him to accomplish what He has promised. (Andrew Murray)

CHAPTER 1: JESUS' MOST PRECIOUS GIFT

Are you acquainted with Jesus' most powerful message?

What functions does the Holy Spirit have?

How can our character be changed?

Jesus on the Holy Spirit in the Parable. About the Leaven

CHAPTER 2: SURRENDER TO JESUS

Do I lose my own will? Or will I become stronger? What can prevent us from surrendering?

Does surrender to God mean that we have to give up our own will?

CHAPTER 3: JESUS ABIDING IN YOU

What effects does “Christ in me” have on my life?

The ultimate achievement: being imbued with the fullness of God.

The Effects of “Christ in you”. How do we get deliverance from the power of sin?

Will we become “carnal” again by sinning?

CHAPTER 4: OBEDIENCE THROUGH JESUS?

How can I live in joyful obedience? What is joy? How does obedience through “Jesus in me” work?

God has designed: Collaboration between God and Man.

CHAPTER 5: ATTRACTIVE FAITH THROUGH JESUS

How can oneness be achieved among believers?

What makes our faith appealing to our family and the world?

What changes in us make us witnesses? How does revival generate mission?

