

SIGNS *of the Times*

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOING ON?

A CALL TO ACTION

We've all experienced moments we wish we could go back and do-over. Embarrassing mistakes. Humiliating moments. Times, perhaps, when we hurt someone we love. But like a river, time runs only in one direction. We can't go back; we don't get "do-overs." Or do we? Today, there is a call to action.

THREE INCREDIBLE PROMISES FROM GOD

1. What has God promised to do about your past through Jesus Christ?
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

2. What does God promise to do if you confess your sins? (1 John 1:9)

3. How completely does God promise to deal with your sins?
(Isaiah 1:18)

When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost their beautiful, perfect garden home. Suffering and evil entered the garden and our world. But that isn't how the story ends. The story's happy conclusion occurs at the end of the Bible when God makes all things new. (Revelation 21:5) There will be no more pain, crying or death. (Revelation 21:1-4) Everything lost through sin will be restored by Jesus Christ.

A river of forgiveness runs all the way through the Bible. Jesus makes all things new. He can even make a new you!

BAPTISM: THE SYMBOL OF A NEW LIFE IN JESUS

4. What did Jesus do at the beginning of His public ministry? (Matthew 3:13-17)
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Even though He was without sin, Jesus was baptized as an example “to fulfill all righteousness.” (vs. 15) Since He came to take our place, He was baptized to show us the importance of this symbolic ceremony.

5. When a person is baptized, what does it represent? (Romans 6:3-6)
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Baptism is a portrayal of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. Jesus died for our sins. He was buried, and He rose to life again. So when we are baptized, we are announcing publicly that we have died to sin, that we have been buried with Jesus, and that we have risen to a new life in Him.

6. How complete is the transformation in the life of a person who has accepted Jesus and expressed their faith through baptism? (John 3:5-7)
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Jesus called this being “born again” of water and the Holy Spirit. It’s like being born all over again and starting life anew.

BAPTISM: AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

7. How important is baptism for an individual? (Mark 16:16; John 3:5)
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Baptism is an important symbol to God. It is intimately connected with salvation. Baptism does not save anyone. We are saved only by the blood of Jesus. But baptism is a public declaration that we have accepted Jesus as our Savior from sin and that we have surrendered ourselves to live for Him.

Jesus said, “Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32)

Note: If someone cannot physically be baptized, God understands. The thief on the cross was promised eternal life and it was impossible for him to be baptized as he died from his punishment on the cross. (Luke 23:39-43)

8. How does the Bible describe the baptism of one individual in the early Christian church? (**Acts 8:38, 39**)

It’s clear that Philip baptized the Ethiopian by immersion—by placing him completely under the water and raising him back up. The Bible says they “went down into the water” (vs. 38) and “came up out of the water” (vs. 39). When Jesus was baptized, the record says that He “came up . . . from the water.” (Matthew 3:16)

John the Baptist was baptizing people at a specific place “because there was much water there.” (John 3:23) In fact, the word “baptize” comes from a Greek word meaning “to submerge or dip.” Baptism by immersion is the only method of baptism in the Bible. As one reads through Scripture, you will not find one example of pouring or sprinkling water on someone’s head as a means of baptism.

These methods of baptism came into the church centuries after New Testament times. Immersion is the method that fully symbolizes the meaning of baptism—the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

BAPTISM: MEETING THE NECESSARY PREREQUISITES

Since baptism is such an important symbol in the Christian life, the Bible spells out some prerequisites—some things that need to take place in a person’s life before he or she is baptized.

9. In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, what did the Apostle Peter tell the people to do before being baptized? (**Acts 2:38**)

Since baptism represents dying to sin, a person must repent of his sins before being baptized. Without sincere repentance, there can be no forgiveness, and baptism becomes meaningless.

10. What did Paul share with those who repented of their sins after hearing the message of John the Baptist? (**Acts 19:4**)

In order to be baptized, you must believe in Jesus and know that He has forgiven your sins on the cross.

11. What did Jesus instruct the disciples to do to prepare a person for baptism? (**Matthew 28:19, 20**)

Before being baptized, a person should be taught the teachings found in the Bible so that he or she can live in harmony with God's commands.

12. Is it ever appropriate to be rebaptized? (**Acts 19:1-5**)

According to the Bible, the answer is YES - you can get baptized again. And there are some really good reasons for doing that:

1. If you've never been baptized by immersion - if your first baptism was some other way - then you really need to do it again.
2. If your life in recent years has been a denial of the faith - if you've wandered away from the church, then you need to do it again.
3. If your experience is richer and deeper, and you want to commit to a better understanding of Jesus, then it's completely appropriate.
4. **And of course, if you've never been baptized at all - YOU need to do it, too. Today you can respond to a Call to Action.**

If you have never been baptized by immersion and you long to follow Jesus, now is the time to do it! You can start over. Jesus can make a new you!

MY DECISION

Jesus, I want to be a new creation by Your grace and power. I want to be baptized to publicly announce that I have accepted You as my Savior from sin.

MY PRAYER

Father, take away my sins, I pray, and create a new heart in me. I thank You for Your promise to wash me whiter than snow. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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