

Is Baptism Required?

- I. There is a difference between salvation and local church membership.
 - A. Baptism is not required for salvation. (Luke 23:40-43)
 - B. However, baptism not being required for salvation does not preclude its requirement for church membership. (1 John 4:1; 1 Timothy 5:22)
 - C. "Turning over a new leaf" is not necessary to prepare oneself for salvation. (Romans 5:8)
 - D. Yet membership hinges on living in obedience to the Word. (Matthew 18:15; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; Titus 1:11, 13; 2 John 1:10-11)
 - E. One must differentiate carefully between two meanings of "church," two meanings of "baptism," and two meanings of "membership."
 1. Membership in the universal church can only be granted by God. Salvation and membership in the universal church can never be renounced through church discipline. (1 Corinthians 5:5)
 - a. However most who are expelled are false converts. (1 John 2:19)
 2. Local church membership must be granted by other Christians. (Matthew 18:18-20)
 3. Local church membership is not automatically bestowed on the new believer by the Holy Spirit at conversion. It can even be refused by a local congregation when they are not convinced that genuine conversion has occurred. (Acts 9:26-27; Acts 8:13-23)
 4. Unlike membership in the universal church, local church membership *can* be renounced through the authoritative disciplinary action of the same local church that granted it. (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:11)
- II. Believer's baptism is required to be considered obedient.
 - A. Baptism is explicitly said to be a requirement for every Christian. (Acts 2:38)
 - B. Baptism is the principle way we confess our faith in Christ publicly. (Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 12:8-9)
 - C. Christ's disciples are commanded to baptize every new disciple. (Matthew 28:18-19)
 - D. Baptism was the very first instruction given to new disciples, and the very first step of obedience taken by new disciples following conversion. (Acts 2:41)
 1. The Samaritans (Acts 8:12)
 2. The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:36-38)
 3. Cornelius and others (Acts 10:47-48)
 4. Lydia (Acts 16:14-15)
 5. The Philippian jailer (Acts 16:31, 33b)
 - E. After Pentecost, every believer in the New Testament was a baptized believer. (Acts 2:37-38, 44)
 - F. Ignorance is not an adequate excuse. (Proverbs 24:12; Matthew 7:22-23; 25:42-46; 1 Kings 13:1-24)
 - G. This matter is not shikul ha da'at (unclear and up to our conscience) but devar mishnah (clear, settled law)
 - H. Error indulged leads to error entrenched. (Romans 12:9; 1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 6)
 1. Immersion will become optional and irrelevant.
 2. Leaders are chosen from among the people. Therefore such a church will end up making unbaptized elders.
 3. Unbaptized elders will reinforce the belief that baptism is optional.
 4. At some point, churches who accept unbaptized Christians as members will likely begin compromising in other areas of Christian doctrine and practice.
 - I. Partial obedience is not obedience but convenience. (1 Samuel 15:13-23)

Conclusion