

WHAT ARE YOUR REQUIREMENTS FOR BAPTISM?

An Honest Question

We received this question some time ago via our web-site. Someone in the community wanted to know, "What are your requirements for baptism?" It occurred to me that there might be others who are wondering about this, but who might fail to ask. Here is the reply we gave to the person who asked, and which we would desire to share with others as well.

Dear Jim,

Thanks for your question.

"We" do not have any requirements for baptism, we just stick with the things God requires -- neither adding to them nor taking away from them. "What does God require for a valid baptism?"

He requires faith. "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). Since God has said this, we do not baptize anyone who is mentally incapable of believing in the existence of God and grasping the concept of God rewarding those who seek him. There would be no point. No act of worship is of any value if it is not done in faith. That is the clear teaching of this passage. So we do not baptize infants, or others who are incapable of truly believing in God.

God also requires repentance. The first recorded examples of baptism involved repentance. John the Baptist told the people who came for his baptism, "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance"

(Matthew 3:8). It would do them no good to be baptized if they intended to go on living in sin. The same connection of repentance with baptism is seen in the first Christian sermon. When Peter preached to the people on the first Pentecost after the death and resurrection of Christ, he commanded them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). So, since God requires repentance, we do also. If someone requested baptism, but made it clear that they were not sorry for their sins and that they intended to go on living in sin, I would not baptize them. There would be no point. Getting wet would change nothing. Apart from repentance and faith, baptism is pointless.

God also wants us to understand that, in baptism, we are being placed in the body of Christ. A person cannot be baptized and then just go on living for themselves, isolated from and unanswerable to their fellow Christians. When we are baptized, we are baptized into the body ("For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body," 1 Cor 12:13). This body is otherwise known as the church ("And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all," Eph. 1:22-23). So we try to help people understand that when they are baptized they are making a commitment to be active members of the church. If someone were to say, "I want to be baptized but I do not intend to be active in the church in any way." I would not baptize that person. God has said that baptism makes us a part of the body of Christ, which is the church. A person seeking baptism should seek it with the intention of really taking part in the life of the church.

Faith, repentance, and an intention of being a part of the church; these are not my requirements, nor our requirements, they are

God's requirements. I hope that this helps with your question. If you need any clarification, let me know.

God bless,

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