

A look at baptism and qualification for church membership

Why do we teach baptism?

Jesus was baptised:	Matt.3:13-17
Jesus taught baptism:	Matt.28:18-20
The early church practised baptism:	Acts 2:38

Baptism is symbolic of spiritual realities:

Forgiveness/cleansing	Acts 22:16
Burial of old life and raising to new life	Romans 6:3-4; Col.2:12
Belonging	1 Cor.12:12-13

Baptism is a 'means of grace' or sacrament, whereby individual and church are edified through willing participation

Is baptism necessary for salvation?

No, we are saved by grace through faith alone	Eph.2:8-9
cf. the thief on the cross	Luke 23:39-43

N.T. pattern - *'believe and be baptised,'* e.g.
Acts 8:12 Samaritans; 10:44-48; Cornelius;
16:14-15 Lydia; 16:32-33 Philippian jailer.

- *Did the talk raise any matters you had not considered before, and if so, what are they?*

- *In what way is the matter of qualification for church membership a pastoral one?*

The outcome of the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 resulted in resolution of emerging division between Jewish followers of Christ and Gentile (non-Jewish) followers of Christ.

- *Are there corresponding principles in Acts 15 that apply to today's discussions about qualifications for membership?*
- *In what way (if any) are the issues similar to today's discussions and in what way (if any) are they different?*

There are nine beliefs that create a distinctive Baptist identity; one is Believer's baptism *"because it expresses a truly personal faith"* - another is religious freedom including tolerance of others who hold different theological views, *"because only free faith is true faith and all should have the freedom to come to their own convictions."*

- *How does this affect our approach to discussions on qualification for church membership?*