Baptism is one of the most significant and meaningful acts in the Christian faith. It is not merely a religious ritual or a symbolic tradition passed down through generations; rather, baptism is a powerful act of obedience, faith, and identification with Jesus Christ.

From the teachings of Jesus to the practice of the early Church, Scripture consistently presents baptism as an essential step for those who believe in Christ. While baptism does not save a person by itself, it is a God-ordained response to salvation and a public declaration of new life in Christ.

Baptism as an Act of Obedience to Christ

One of the primary reasons a Christian should be baptised is simple obedience to Jesus. Before ascending into heaven, Jesus gave His disciples what is commonly known as the Great Commission:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19, NIV).

Jesus did not present baptism as optional for His followers. Instead, it was part of the process of making disciples. To be baptised is to submit willingly to the command of Christ, acknowledging His authority as Lord. Obedience is a hallmark of genuine faith, as Jesus Himself said:

"If you love me, keep my commands" (John 14:15).

When a believer chooses baptism, they demonstrate love for Christ through obedience, trusting that His commands are given for their spiritual good.

Baptism as Identification with Christ's Death and Resurrection

Baptism is a vivid picture of what has already taken place spiritually in the life of a believer. The Apostle Paul explains this clearly in his letter to the Romans:

"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:4).

Going under the water symbolises dying to the old life of sin, while rising out of the water represents resurrection into a new life in Christ. Baptism proclaims that the believer is no longer defined by their past but by Christ's victory over sin and death. It is a public testimony that *"the old has gone, the new is here" (2 Corinthians 5:17).*

Baptism as a Public Declaration of Faith

Christian faith is personal, but it is never meant to be private. Baptism is a public declaration that a person belongs to Jesus Christ. In the early Church, baptism often marked a clear break from a person's former way of life and allegiance. Jesus Himself taught:

"Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32).

Through baptism, a believer openly confesses their faith before the church and the world. This public step strengthens personal commitment and invites accountability within the Christian community. It declares, without words, *"I belong to Christ."*

Baptism and Repentance

In the New Testament, baptism is closely connected with repentance and forgiveness of sins. On the day of Pentecost, when the crowd asked Peter what they should do, he replied:

"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).

This does not mean that the water itself washes away sin, but rather that baptism is the outward response to inward repentance and faith. It marks a decisive turning point - turning away from sin and turning toward God.

Baptism as Entry into the Christian Community

Baptism is also the means by which believers are formally welcomed into the body of Christ, the Church. Paul writes:

"For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Through baptism, Christians affirm that they are not meant to walk alone but are part of a spiritual family. It signifies unity with other believers across cultures, generations, and backgrounds, all joined together in Christ.

Following the Example of Jesus

Jesus Himself was baptised, even though He was without sin. When John the Baptist hesitated, Jesus responded:

"Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).

If Jesus, the sinless Son of God, chose baptism as part of His obedience to the Father, how much more should His followers desire to do the same? His baptism sets an example of humility, submission, and obedience.

Baptism as a Step of Faith, Not Perfection

It is important to understand that baptism is not a declaration of spiritual perfection. Rather, it is a declaration of dependence on Christ. Baptism does not mean that a believer will never struggle again, but it does mean that they have chosen to follow Jesus wholeheartedly. As Paul writes:

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Baptism marks the beginning of a life-long journey of faith, growth, and transformation.

Conclusion

In summary, a Christian should be baptised because it is commanded by Jesus, modelled by Jesus, practiced by the early Church, and richly meaningful for the believer.

Baptism is an act of obedience, a public declaration of faith, a symbol of new life, and a powerful testimony to the work of God's grace. While it does not save, it beautifully proclaims salvation already received through faith in Jesus Christ. For every believer, baptism is a step worth taking - joyfully, boldly, and faithfully.

Reflective Questions

• What does baptism mean to you personally, and how does it reflect your relationship with Jesus?

• How does understanding baptism as obedience to Christ change the way you view it?

• Are there fears or hesitations that have held you back from being baptised?

• In what ways does baptism publicly declare your new identity in Christ?

• How can remembering your baptism encourage you in times of spiritual struggle?

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