

Baptism

What does the Bible say about Baptism?

This passage from John's Gospel describes a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, a Pharisee (teacher of Jewish law).

Rabbi is a Jewish word for a teacher.

To do...

 Highlight what Jesus says would be needed to 'see the kingdom of God'.

There was a Jewish leader named Nicodemus, who belonged to the party of the Pharisees. One night he went to Jesus and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher sent by God. No one could perform the miracles you are doing unless God were with him."

*Jesus answered, "I am telling you the truth: no one can see the Kingdom of God without being **born again**."*

"How can a grown man be born again?" Nicodemus asked. "He certainly cannot enter his mother's womb and be born a second time!"

"I am telling you the truth," replied Jesus. "No one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. A person is born physically of human parents, but is born spiritually of the Spirit."

John chapter 3 verses 1-6

Another translation for 'born again' is 'born from above'.

To do...

 What do you think is meant by 'above'?

To understand Jesus' reference to being born of water and the Spirit, we need to go back to the start of his ministry, when he was baptised by John the Baptist. John the Baptist had been telling people to turn away from their sins, and he baptised them by immersing them in the river Jordan. The people's baptism symbolised their having a new start, leaving their previous sinful lives behind. Jesus was baptised by John. Christians believe that his baptism was unique because Jesus was without sin.

Galilee is the area of northern Israel where Jesus had grown up.

The Baptism of Jesus

At that time Jesus arrived from Galilee and came to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. But John tried to make him change his mind. "I ought to be baptized by you," John said, "and yet you have come to me!"

But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so for now. For in this way we shall do all that God requires." So John agreed.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water. Then heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and alighting on him. Then a voice said from heaven, "This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased."

Matthew chapter 3 verses 13-17

To do...

 Why do you think that John says he ought to be baptised by Jesus, not the other way around?

To do...

Baptism is carried out by Christian churches to welcome new members into the church. It represents their repentance of sin and a new beginning.

-  Which lines from the passages on the opposite page would lead Christians to conclude that they should be baptised?

Many denominations, including the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and the Church of England, carry out infant baptism. The priest makes the sign of a cross on the baby's forehead with water which he or she has blessed. Adults can be baptised in these denominations as well as children.

Baptist churches only baptise people when they are old enough to have made a decision to commit to Christianity for themselves. This is known as 'believer's baptism'. The adult or teenagers is fully immersed in water, supported by the pastor. This is often carried out in a baptismal pool in church, but sometimes it will be done outdoors in a lake, river or sea.

Some Christians, especially evangelical Christians, might refer to themselves as 'born again' Christians. This refers to their having had a powerful experience of a spiritual transformation of the type which Jesus explained to Nicodemus.

To do...

The stories of Jesus' baptism include some miraculous events.

-  Circle the parts of the story which Christians see as evidence of God's presence at Jesus' baptism:

a dove a voice 'my Son' 'I am pleased' heaven opened

-  Circle the parts of the story which Christians see as evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence:

a dove a voice 'my Son' 'I am pleased' heaven opened

-  Circle the parts of the story which Christians see as evidence of Jesus' connection with God:

a dove a voice 'my Son' 'I am pleased' heaven opened

Baptism is a sacrament. Sacraments are outward actions which are done to represent an inner religious belief.

The Catholic Church recognises seven sacraments including baptism, marriage and mass. The Church of England and most Protestant churches recognise only two: communion and baptism.