



Aim of lesson

To understand what true baptism is and to see how God has revealed his purpose throughout scripture.

Bible background

Acts 8:26-40, Romans 6, Colossians 2:12-15,

Preparation required

You may like to find out a bit about the practices of other denominations in regard to baptism. Christadelphians are not the only people who practice adult baptism, which is sometimes called believer's baptism in other churches.

Outline of lesson

Practice

Ask the class to 'brainstorm' about baptism. They or you could write the ideas on a board or large sheet of paper. They will say things like "you have to have an interview" or "it's complete immersion in water". You may get some wrong answers or misconceptions but write them all down.

Now talk about what they have said in terms of 'is this what the Bible says?' or 'is this what Christadelphians do?' or neither, relating your answers to the baptism of the Ethiopian in Acts 8 and baptisms they may have been to. As you come to conclusions you could highlight the statements in different colours or the students could list them in their books.

'What the Bible says' should include

- It's done by an adult.
- It's complete immersion in water.
- The Bible tells us we should do it.
- It shows you want to follow Jesus.
- Jesus himself was baptised.

'What Christadelphians do' could include:

- You have an interview.
- You have to make a statement about what you believe in front of everyone.
- Many Christadelphian meeting rooms have a bath, and there is a joyful meeting.
- Everyone is very happy.

As you decide on each statement make sure the students understand the reasons behind what you have decided. For instance, from the baptism of the Ethiopian we can see that Philip made sure he understood what he was reading and that he really did believe it. You could talk about people being baptised in the sea, in rivers or baths at home or even a water butt if that is all that is available and how it fits with what God requires. You might get onto what other churches do like sprinkling as in the majority of churches, or mass baptisms as in, for instance, the Jehovah's Witnesses. You don't need to spend too long on what other people do unless your class is particularly interested but you should end up with a clear picture of what is required by God, what is sensible or acceptable practice and what is wrong.

Principles

Now ask the class what the act of baptism means.

Baptism wasn't a new phenomenon in the first century. Generally, the idea was the washing away of sins and starting afresh. John the Baptist was sent by God to people who would understand this. He said he was 'baptizing with water for repentance'. Baptism into Jesus also blots out our sins. Hebrews 10:22, 1 Corinthians 6:11.

Now read Colossians 2:12-14 and bring out that by this act our sins can be not only washed away but blotted out, as though they had never been.

However, baptism into the name of Jesus is about more than forgiveness. After all, even the best of us sins soon after we are baptised, but we do not need to be baptised again. A greater change has occurred. Look at Romans 6:1-4 together and establish that in baptism the believer is associating himself or herself with the death and resurrection of Jesus by being 'buried' with him and 'raised to a new life'. Talk about how the waters of baptism represent this. So when we are baptised we enter

into a new relationship with God and the Lord Jesus. Galatians 3:27-29 tells us that when we are baptised we put on Christ and so become heirs to the promises.

Types and shadows

Now get the students to consider some incidents from the Old Testament, which show us that God always had in mind that men and women would be saved through water. In two of the cases we are told in the New Testament that God meant the incidents to be examples for us.

In each case check that the class know the story and then discuss how the event is like what happens in baptism. The points made about crossing the Jordan may be a bit obscure for your class but you could get them to think about the faith of the priests (v15) when they walked into the water. They must have been really sure that they weren't going to be left standing in water with the ark on their shoulders.

You could mark on the timeline when each event took place to show that another of God's principles was established from the beginning.

Noah - Genesis 6-8; 1 Peter 3:18-22	Those who were saved had to trust that God would do what he said.
Crossing the Red Sea - Exodus 13:17-22; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6	Passing through the water marked the transition from slavery and death to freedom and life. The journey through the wilderness represents our life after baptism - guided by God through the Lord Jesus.
Crossing the Jordan - Joshua 3; Psalm 114.3	The waters of the Jordan normally flowed out of the fresh waters of Galilee through a town called Adam to death (The Dead Sea) It needs the presence of the ark of the covenant (Jesus), and belief on the part of those who cross over to turn back the waters.
Naaman - 2 Kings 5	He really wanted to be saved from his leprosy (like sin). He had to do exactly what God said, not something like it.

Relevance to our lives

God's ways of working do not change throughout scripture and what he expected of his people in the past still applies today. That is, trust in him and obedience.

Extension activities

- You could talk about why Jesus was baptized
- You could extend the analogy of the Red Sea by talking about the fact that it followed the Passover which prefigured the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.
- You may like to discuss the baptisms in the early days of the church in Jerusalem - Acts 2:41, Acts 4:4.

The following lesson

The next lesson is about Paul's epistles. It was very helpful if the young people could have access to Bibles with an introductory section to each of the letters. You may like to check whether their Bibles have such an introduction; if not it may be helpful to borrow one or two copies.