

EVALUATION OF WATER BAPTISM AS A CRITERION FOR CHURCH  
MEMBERSHIP IN ORISUN – AYO BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

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## ABSTRACT

Water baptism by immersion is a Christian rite of admission and adoption into Christian church generally and into a particular church. It is clearly a figure or type of something which has already taken place in the heart of the believer the moment he / she receives and confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. It is an ordinance representing the identification of Christian with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It is a ceremony performed with water upon a process after salvation to make ones entrance into the Christian faith. John preached it, Jesus commanded it, and the early church practised it. To Baptist as a denomination, baptism by immersion is one of main criteria of becoming church members. Since one precede the other, it is believed that only those that have given their lives to Christ as Lord will partake in baptism, and in turn be enlisted as church member. This was preached and practised by the early fathers. This work has given attention to an analytical evaluation of the relevance of water baptism as a criterion for church membership in Baptist denomination, focusing on Orisun Ayo Baptist Association Of Ibadan Baptist Conference. To ascertain this, the understanding of baptismal candidate about water baptism was examined, considering their ages and levels of understanding at baptism. The work further examines the effect of public presentation of candidate before baptism as well as series of teachings a candidate is subjected to, on his / her lifestyle after baptism, and what this has to do with his / her commitment and contributions to church as member. Besides, this work probes into effect of church pastors attitude, as custodian of Baptist doctrine, to water baptism on the view of church members of baptism and the level of premium they lay on it. Based on the field result gathered through questionnaires, the researcher also presents some recommendations, which are believed, would be helpful to church members and pastors. This will, in turn, equip believers in general of the necessity of water baptism as a criterion for membership in Baptist church.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The church is the gathering of believers, the body of Christ and Baptist as a denomination is very unique in its beliefs and doctrines. One of these is the baptism of believers as criteria for membership. The acceptable mode among the Baptist is by immersion as practised in the Bible among the early church. It is an outward proof of one's declaration of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

To this, every Baptist members should understand the need and purpose for water baptism and the implication of the various teachings that the candidates are being subjected to before the act. This is to prepare them for the commitment that would be required of them as baptized members.

In view of that, it is therefore required that only mature individuals that are conscious of the implications of water baptism should be involved in it, though the teachings may be open to all to prepare them for the future. However, no individual in the church should see himself as above submitting self for the process of water baptism as commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ and adopted by the Baptist as a doctrine.

## 5.3 Recommendations

In view of the results of the research work, the following are the recommendations for all the stake holders in the church, especially the Baptist community to better inform and encourage more commitment to baptism.

1. Pastors and denominational leaders should preach, teach and educate church members the necessity and importance of water baptism by immersion. Meaningful and constructive series of teachings should be arranged for the baptismal candidates before the act and should be handled by seasoned believers, possibly, the church pastor.
2. Children that have given their lives to Christ and have proper understanding of the implication of water baptism should be allowed baptism, if they so indicate.
3. Re-baptism should be allowed, if the candidates concerned are in doubt of their first baptism.
4. Unbaptized church members should not be allowed to hold any leadership position in the church.
5. Church pastors should keep on emphasizing and insisting on water baptism by immersion as a criterion for membership in Baptist churches.
6. No pastor should be allowed to lead Baptist churches unless such an individual has attended Baptist Theological training and has adopted Baptist doctrines and practices.