

9 - Water Baptism

Sooner or later, as a new Christian, you will hear about water baptism. Baptism is the next important step after putting faith in Jesus. So, we want you to know what it's about and help you understand the importance of it. Sometimes there are unspoken questions in the minds of people when they hear about baptism in water, such as:

- ◆ Do I really have to be baptised?
- ◆ My parents had me christened, so I've covered that, haven't I?
- ◆ I was water baptized before I repented, so I don't need to do it again, or do I?
- ◆ I'm following the Lord OK just as I am, so what's the big deal?
- ◆ What difference does it make anyway?
- ◆ Just as I thought, rules and regulations. Can't I just live the Christian life the way I want?
- ◆ I don't know if I really want to, it's so old-fashioned, isn't there something more relevant?
- ◆ I don't feel anything special about it, so why bother?
- ◆ I'm simply not ready. Can't you give me more time?
- ◆ I'm too young, or I'm too old.
- ◆ I don't know enough about the Bible. Can't it wait until I'm more knowledgeable?
- ◆ Do I have to wear funny clothes?
- ◆ It will be so embarrassing etc. etc. etc.

What is Baptism?

Water baptism is when a believer in Jesus Christ is completely immersed under water by another believer, then raised again. It is simply a physical act expressing a spiritual reality.

The original Greek word used in the New Testament of the Bible is "*Baptizo*," from which we get the English term "to baptise", which means to dip, or to immerse. Therefore, baptism, by definition, and by usage in the Bible, means to immerse a Christian under water.

- Baptism is not sprinkling, christening, dedication, or confirmation.
- Baptism uses ordinary water with no additives.
- Baptism water has had no incantations or special blessings prayed over it.

Water Baptism Practised in the New Testament

Water baptism was a common practise in New Testament times. John baptised many people, and it was always for repentance of sin. John was reluctant to baptise Jesus because He had no sin to repent of. Jesus requested John to do so in order to fulfil all righteousness by identifying fully with mank

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Below are examples of water baptism from the books of Acts:

Acts 2:41	3000 gladly received Peter's gospel words and were baptised.
Acts 8:12	They believed the good news and were baptised.
Acts 8:35-38	The Ethiopian believed and was baptised.
Acts 9:18	Saul, 3 days after his conversion was baptised.
Acts 10:43-48	Gentiles believed the message of forgiveness and were baptised.
Acts 16:14-15	Lydia, whose heart the Lord had opened was baptised.
Acts 16:30-34	The Philippian Jailor and his household believed and were baptised.
Acts 18:8	Crispus, the Synagogue Ruler, believed and was baptised.

Water baptism was, and is today, for people old enough to understand and believe in the Gospel that they have heard and are willing to repent of their sin. The individual person had to do this for themselves, making it impossible for a baby. This also excludes sprinkling of babies with water.

Does Baptism Save Me?

The answer is **NO!**

The Bible says that *"He (God) saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit..."* (Titus 3:5).

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Salvation is received as a gift from God in response to our faith in Jesus Christ shedding His blood, giving His life in our place, for our sin penalty, on the cross of Calvary. All the various components of salvation are lavished on us by God without any effort on our part other than belief. Water baptism does not qualify us for salvation, nor is it able to save us from our sin.

Why Should A Person Be Water Baptised?

a. It's Commanded by Jesus Christ

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you... (Matthew 28:19-20).

b. It's the pledge of a good conscience towards God

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ... (1 Peter 3:21).

c. Because Jesus himself was baptised

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:9-11).

d. It was a foundational teaching of the early church

"And those who believed Peter were baptised - about 3,000 in all" (Acts 2:41).

"... then immediately he and all his family were baptised." (Acts 16:33).

The pattern found in the New Testament, was that Baptism took place soon after a person received Christ as Saviour and Lord. In many instances, Baptism was entered into immediately after profession of faith.

e. Water Baptism pictures the Holy Spirit's Baptism

It expresses our identification with Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord (Romans 6:1-11).

Water baptism forms a picture through the act of immersion the wonderful spiritual truths of salvation in Christ by symbolising that when we were saved, we were "buried" with Christ in his death, and that we "rose" to newness of life just as Christ rose from the dead. This new, resurrected life is where the believer is liberated from the enslavement to sin.

The act of water baptism is our public declaration that at a past time we experienced Holy Spirit baptism that saved us.

Therefore, water baptism is our outward expression of that event.

The apostle Paul explains in Romans 6:3-4, *"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."*

Colossians 2:12-14 *"having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And*

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you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

Paul tells of the spiritual transaction that takes place in our lives when we become Christians. Water Baptism is a public demonstration, forming a picture in onlooker's minds of what we have experienced spiritually as shown in Romans 6:1-11.

Very simply, baptism is an outward testimony of the inward change in a believer's life.

g. Water Baptism pictures your entrance into God's universal Church

When we were saved, we were spiritually “baptized” by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ, which is the church. As the apostle Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, *“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many.”*

Is Water Baptism Necessary?

Yes! It certainly is, if we want to obey the Lord.

Christian water baptism is one of two ordinances (Authoritative rules) that Jesus instituted for the church.

As we've already seen, Jesus commanded the disciples (which we believers are) to baptise in Matthew 28:19. The Apostle Peter, commanded people to repent and be baptised (Acts 2:38). Jesus Himself set the example in order to fulfil all righteousness by being baptised in water (Matthew 3:16). However, we should want to be baptised because it pleases our Lord to see us obeying out of love for Him, which is the only correct motive (John 14:15).

While Baptism does not make us a Christian, it does mark us out as a Christian. Publicly identifying with Jesus Christ as Lord is inherently the reason for being baptised. This shows everyone watching, that we have repented of our sin, believed in and received Christ as Lord of our lives, and that we intend to follow Him for the rest of our lives. We are stating that we are finished with our old lifestyle (died to self and sin), and with God's help, we intend to live a life pleasing to Him.

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How Does A Person Qualify For Water Baptism?

First, we must have repented of our sins and received forgiveness in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 3:19	Repent and turn to God
Acts 16:31	Believe in the Lord Jesus to be saved
Acts 10:47-48	Receive the Holy Spirit

It is interesting to note in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that all believers have been baptised by the Spirit into one body. In fact, Romans 8:9 makes it clear that *anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him*. Therefore, to belong to Christ we must have received the Holy Spirit.

In other words, a person needs to believe in the Lord Jesus to be baptised by the Holy Spirit, which in turn qualifies that person to be baptised in water. To receive Christ is exactly the same as believing in Him (John 1:12).

In the New Testament, the words "*believe in*", means to put our wholehearted trust in dependant surrender. It is an action that takes place. We decide to put our trust in the one we have believed about. In that moment of time we are transferred from being a child of Satan to a child of God. We are given eternal life and can never perish (John 10:28). We are immediately sealed with the Spirit of God as a guarantee of ownership (Ephesians 1:13).

The Method Of Baptism

Water baptism in the New Testament is always in accordance with the Greek meaning of the word "Baptizo", meaning to dip, to plunge, or to immerse in water. It is noticeable that there was always much water needed for a person to be baptised.

John	3:23	<i>...much water...</i>
Acts	8:38	<i>...went down into the water...</i>
Acts	8:39	<i>...came up out of the water...</i>
Matthew	3:16	<i>Jesus came up out of the water.</i>

In the New Testament, at least two people were always involved, the candidate for baptism and the baptiser. The candidate was always put beneath the water by someone qualified to do so.

- John baptised Jesus in the river Jordan (Matthew 3:13)
- *...and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him* (Acts 8:38)

Do you qualify according to the Scriptures? If so, you are a new person in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17). So, be baptised publicly in water. Christ will be glorified, others will experience your testimony of Christ, and your life will be blessed.

Memorise

Matthew 28:19-20 *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

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