



People are saved by believing that Jesus is the Christ, repenting of their sins and putting their faith in Him. Baptism does not save. However, salvation (being saved) and baptism are always tied together.

When someone decides to “get right with God,” part of the “outward sign” of accepting Jesus as their savior is being baptized. It is an exciting time, but there are many questions regarding baptism that should be clarified, since so many conflicting ideas regarding this topic developed over the centuries.

I. WHAT IS BAPTISM?

What is the purpose of baptism, since salvation is "by grace through faith" (Ephesians 2:8, 9)?

Water baptism is a FIGURE or TYPE of something which already took place in the heart of the believer the moment he/she was saved (1 Pet. 3:21). Water baptism is the ordinance representing the identification of the Christian with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

You are "crucified" (standing upright in water), you are "buried" (immersed into the water), and you are "resurrected into life" (raised out of the water). Water baptism then, is a picture of spiritual baptism as defined in Rom. 6:3-5 and 1 Corinthians 12:13. It is the outward testimony of the believer's inward faith. A sinner is saved the moment he places his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is a visible testimony to that faith.

This is the SCRIPTURAL basis for water baptism. It PICTURES and PROCLAIMS four important things:

1. Scriptural baptism PICTURES and PROCLAIMS the believer's death, burial, and resurrection with Christ. "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead."
Colossians 2:12
2. Scriptural baptism PICTURES and PROCLAIMS the death of our old life to sin, and our resurrection to walk in newness of life. "As Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Romans 6:4
3. Scriptural baptism PICTURES and PROCLAIMS our faith in the Trinity of the Godhead. "Baptizing them in the NAME of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."
Matthew 28:19

4. Scriptural baptism PICTURES and PROCLAIMS our "putting on" of Christ. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Galatians 3:26,27

So then, water baptism is a picture of what transpired when you placed your faith and trust in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to save you from your sins (Romans 6:3-5). It does not atone for sin. Only the blood of Christ cleanses us from sin (I John 1:7; Colossians 1:14).

Baptism is a portrait of the gospel!



Death

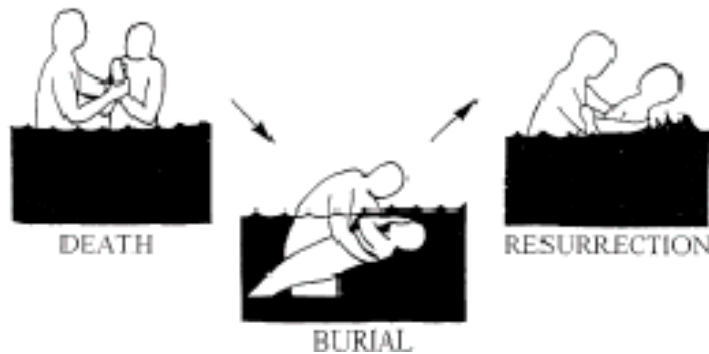


Burial



Resurrection

**The work of the cross is *God's offer* of life...
Baptism is symbolic of *our acceptance*.**



II. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

The Bible makes it clear that scriptural baptism is BELIEVER'S baptism.

- In Acts 2:41 we observe that they received the word, THEN they were baptized.
- In Acts 8:12, 36, 37 we find that they believed, THEN they were baptized.
- In Acts 10:43, 44, 47, it is plain to see that those who believed received the Holy Ghost, and THEN they were baptized. (Lost people do not receive the Holy Ghost).

When the Philippian jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." (Acts 16:30-34). Paul did not tell him to be baptized to be saved. His baptism came AFTER his believing, which sets the scriptural standard.

Who then should be baptized? According to the Bible pattern, only those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior should be baptized.

Water baptism then, is NOT salvation, but obedience to a command by God concerning discipleship.

III. WHEN AND WHERE SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

WHEN is the believer to be baptized? The Bible teaches that water baptism follows shortly after spiritual baptism (the new birth).

Notice the example of Paul (Acts 9:18), Cornelius (Acts 10:43-48), and the Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:33).

You were placed into the body of Christ by spiritual baptism at the moment you were saved (Galatians 3:26-27). Now you follow the miracle of spiritual baptism with physical immersion into water, according to Acts 8:38; 10:47; 16:33.

Let's look at this question from two directions.

Does a person's age make a difference?

A natural question would be, "does your age make a difference?" More specifically, should infants or young children should be baptized. It may help if you understand where the idea and practice of baptizing infants came from. Around 400 AD, Augustine came up with the idea of "original sin." This basically said that everyone inherits the sin of Adam at birth and is therefore separated from God from the beginning of their life. Of course, this caused parents to become concerned over the fate of their children, should they die before "getting right with God." Since only baptism could be done by (or to) an infant, they decided to baptize them to "take care of the original sin." Since it is risky to immerse an infant, these people decided to sprinkle them with water instead. Thus, both baptizing infants and baptizing by sprinkling came from human ideas. They did not come from the Bible.

It is also interesting that God never tells us what to do to keep a child safe. Did He just forget this important point, letting many children go to Hell and suffer eternally? No. A child is safe in the arms of God until they can understand how to be saved by accepting Jesus as their savior. (See 2 Samuel chapter 12, verses 22 and 23 along with Matthew chapter 18, verse 10.) Thus, only adults and children (who can understand separation from God because of sin and so forth) are at the age when acceptance of Christ is possible.

When in the process of accepting Christ does baptism come in?

A second question would be, "When should I get baptized: immediately, as a part of accepting Christ; or later as a follower of Christ?"

Churches have differing philosophies:

- “Baptism is just an outward sign of an inward grace, so it can be done later.”
- “You need to ‘grow in Christ’ (become good enough) before you are ready to be baptized.”
- “To join our church, you have to be baptized into our church.”

The problem with these ideas (and any similar ones) is that **they are in conflict with the Bible**. One thing is clear, the Bible always places believing in Christ for salvation and baptism together. They are not separated. Consider these references:

Acts 2:41 - 3,000 people were baptized after believing on the first day of the Christian church. Verses 38 and 39 make it clear that this is the way that it will always be done. That is, all people who accept Christ as their savior will come to Him in this way.

Acts 8:26-39 - We know where this road from Jerusalem to Gaza is. Verse 26 terms it a “desert.” The only water there was oasis water. This means that the eunuch and Philip climbed down into the people’s *drinking water* to do this. Apparently, Philip and the eunuch did not think it could wait until later! (You will also notice they did not take a handful of water and “sprinkle” the eunuch to keep things sanitary, either.) The Bible states that all Philip did was “preach Jesus to him” (verse 35) and then the eunuch said that he wanted to be baptized (verse 36). This seems to indicate that the preaching of Jesus includes preaching the need to be baptized.

Acts 9:18 - after this encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road, Saul (later renamed Paul) decided to accept Jesus—and was baptized.

Acts 10:47, 48 - Cornelius and those with him were commanded to be baptized, becoming the first non-Jewish converts to Christianity.

Acts 16:13-15 - Lydia and her household “believed” and were baptized.

Acts 16:16-34 - The Philippian jailer “believed” with his household and they were baptized—and this was in the middle of the night!

Also consider the following passages:

Galatians 3:26, 27 - “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

Ephesians 4:4-6 - “*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*”

On top of all these references, when Jesus left the earth (see the end of the book of Matthew) He told his followers to make disciples (followers), baptize them, and teach them. Jesus apparently felt it was pretty important to make this a priority for His followers.

The Bible is clear—belief and baptism were always together. Thus, “when we believe” is the right time to be baptized. If you “believed” some time back and were not baptized, then this should become a priority for you to fulfill what God asks you do in the Bible.

As to WHERE a believer is to be baptized, the obvious answer is in the presence of other believers, the local New Testament church. The Lord Jesus Christ gave the local church the ordinance of water baptism (Matthew 28:18-20). An ordinance is a ceremony appointed by Christ to be administered by the church as a visible type of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

IV. HOW SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

HOW is a believer to be baptized? Immersion in water is the scriptural method of baptism.

- In Matthew 3:13-16 and in Mark 1:9-10 we find that John the Baptist needed "much water" for baptism.
- In Acts 8:38-39 we are taught baptism by immersion.
- In Romans 6:3-6 we see that baptism must fulfill three types: death, burial and resurrection. It is also referred to as being "planted", and being raised. It is not difficult to see that the only mode of baptism which fulfills all these pictures is the immersion of the believer in water. Furthermore, scriptural expressions such as "much water" (John 3:23), and "down both into the water" (Acts 8:38) are very conclusive evidence that water baptism is by immersion.

The process of baptism is very simple. You begin by standing, sitting, or kneeling in some water. Another Christian then lowers you under the water and then brings you back up out of the water. You could also literally call this "immersion."

Because some faiths sprinkle water on people instead of immersing them, the obvious question is whether this is OK. Since the only consistent answer around the world comes from the Bible, use it to find your answers. It is interesting that nowhere in the Bible does anything but "immersion" take place. That is, baptism is always by immersion.

This makes sense if you realize that "baptize" is a transliteration of the original Greek word βαπτίζω (*baptizo*). In turn, baptizo comes from the root word βαπτω (*bapto*), a term used in the first century for immersing a garment first into bleach and then into dye, both cleansing and changing the color of the cloth. (Note its similarity to baptism's cleansing of sin and becoming a new person through Christ.) Stated another way, when you process cloth to change its color, you are said to "baptize" it. If sprinkling of any kind was to be practiced, a different Greek word would have been used, but it was not.

V. WHY SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

Spiritual baptism is the Christian's identification with Christ (Colossians 2:12). This is WHY we should submit to water baptism.

Romans 6:3-5 teaches us that it is literally a picture of your death, burial and resurrection with Christ. It is your first act of obedience to God after salvation. WHY be baptized? Consider the following:

1. Scriptural baptism pleases the Lord. When Jesus was baptized, God the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). When we follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ we certainly please the Father.

2. Scriptural baptism is a testimony to the world. Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32). Our baptism is a public testimony of our faith in the Lord Jesus: Christ, and the way in which we identify ourselves with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.
3. Baptism accompanies repentance, resulting in the forgiveness of your sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38
4. The mode of baptism (immersion) pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. In the same way that He went through these things, our old nature is to "die" and we are to be "buried with Him through baptism into death" and raised to "walk in newness of life" (live like Jesus). So we do not just try to be a better person, we bury the "old person" in the water and become a "new person" through our acceptance of Christ. It is like a new birth and a new beginning for us. Romans 6:1-7
5. We "put on Christ" when we are baptized. Galatians 3:27
6. Baptism is not an outward cleaning, but a pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It asks God to take away the guilt of our past sin (that Christ paid for, wiping our "inner slate" clean). 1 Peter 3:21

CONCLUSION

We understand and believe that baptism is not a "sacrament" that imparts saving grace, but an ORDINANCE. We are not saved by baptism, but by faith in Jesus Christ and His blood... "cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Baptism is the outward symbol of what has already transpired in the heart of the one who has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for full salvation.

When Jesus died on the cross, He, who had no sin, paid the death penalty for **our** sins. Through baptism we identify, or join with Christ in His payment of the death penalty for sin. We are baptized into His death, into the death penalty for sin. We, who are unable to return from death because we have sin, are joined to Christ—and since Christ is sinless and was victorious over death, we, now being united with Him through baptism, are made victorious being united with Christ in His resurrection.

Have you taken this first step in your walk with the Lord? Have you been obedient to the word of God concerning this matter of believer's baptism? In Acts 2:41 we read, "Then they that GLADLY received his word were baptized..." What is your response?