



## WATER BAPTISM

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## WHAT DOES THE WORD "BAPTISM" MEAN?

The Greek word baptizo means to immerse, dip, plunge, or submerge. In early Greek culture, the word baptizo was the word used in the textile industry when dyeing a piece of fabric. The fabric would be immersed or plunged into the liquid dye.

## HOW DID THE JEWS PRACTICE BAPTISM? WHY?

Jewish culture was already accustomed to baptism. Gentiles who wanted to convert to Judaism had to follow certain prescribed rituals to become "Jewish," one of which was to take a ritual bath (in Greek baptizo, which means immerse). This ritual was done by the person himself, not by someone else, and it symbolized dying to the old Gentile life and being raised to a new life as a Jew.

## WHAT DID JOHN'S BAPTISM REPRESENT?

John's baptism called the Jewish people to repentance of sin and to be in preparation for the coming Messiah. The kingdom was near because the Messiah was near. By being baptized, they identified with the message of repentance.

**MATTHEW 3:1-2,6:** In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near," confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

**ACTS 19:4:** Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the One coming after him, that is, in Jesus."

## WHY DID JESUS GET BAPTIZED?

Jesus did not need to repent of anything, as He was God and was a perfect man. He got baptized because He wanted to identify and affirm that John's message was true

**MATTHEW 3:13-15:** Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

## HOW IS CHRISTIAN WATER BAPTISM PERFORMED?

Every time water baptism is spoken of in the New Testament, it is always by the person going "into" or "out of" the water. The Greek word for baptism, as mentioned earlier, suggests immersion. This was also the mode of baptism that the Jews had in their rituals to have a Gentile become a Jewish believer. Baptism, therefore, is a symbolic picture of the believer dying to their old self and becoming a new creature in Christ

(see Romans 6:3-4). This is something that has already taken place internally in the believer, and water immersion beautifully symbolizes this change in the believer's life. The verses below confirm the way baptism was performed in the New Testament.

**MARK 1:9-10:** At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove.

**ACTS 8:38-39:** ...then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water...

## WHAT IS THE MEANING OF WATER BAPTISM AS OPPOSED TO BAPTISM BY THE HOLY SPIRIT?

When a person gets baptized, he/she does so as an act of obedience to Jesus Christ, and is publicly declaring their faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of their Lord and Savior. Baptism symbolizes their dying to their old self and their rising to a new life in Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is something that happens invisibly only once at the moment of salvation, and is non-experiential. The connection between water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit is that water baptism pictures outwardly what the spirit already accomplished inwardly in the heart.

**ROMANS 6:3-4** Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

**EPHESIANS 4:5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism.  
**1 CORINTHIANS 12:13** For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

## WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

In the Bible we find that once someone became a believer, he/she got baptized. A person should be baptized as soon as he/she has repented of their sins and have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior of their life. Believing would always precede baptism. This is commonly known by the term, "believer's baptism."

**ACTS 2:41:** Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

**ACTS 8:35-38:** Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they

came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

**ACTS 18:8:** Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

**ACTS 19:4-5:** Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

## WHY BE BAPTIZED?

**MATTHEW 28:19:** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus told His followers to make disciples and to baptize them. This wasn't a suggestion, it was a command. Notice also, that those being baptized are to be disciples. Infants aren't capable of making a decision to follow Christ. If someone gets baptized prior to believing in Jesus and repenting of sin, the baptism is contrary to God's word and has no meaning.

## IS WATER BAPTISM REQUIRED FOR SALVATION?

Baptism is not required for salvation. Faith in Christ alone for salvation is what saves. A good example of this is the thief on the cross. The thief simply believed in Christ. There wasn't time or opportunity for him to be baptized to publicly declare his faith.

**LUKE 23:42-43:** Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

**EPHESIANS 2:8-9:** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.

**I JOHN 5:13:** I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

## SUMMARY:

Water baptism is the first act of obedience a person makes once he/she becomes a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Scripture shows us that only believers are baptized, and this is done by water immersion. The internal baptism by the Holy Spirit takes place invisibly at the moment of conversion.