

# *Christian Baptism*

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Last Revised February 19, 2022 by Pastor Matt Postiff

Water baptism is a command of Jesus for Christian believers. It expresses union with Him by immersion in water. It is done in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

## **1. Who should be baptized? All True Christians and Only True Christians.**

1. Who can be baptized? All who have true saving faith in Jesus Christ, and only those who have such faith. Is baptism optional for a Christian? No! It is commanded. The following verses show the order: first repentant faith, then baptism.
  - a. Acts 2:41 Then those who gladly **received his word** were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.
  - b. Acts 8:12 But when they **believed** Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.
  - c. Acts 8:35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. 36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" ... 38 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he [Philip] baptized him [the Ethiopian]." → The Ethiopian believed what Philip was telling him and then was baptized.
  - d. Acts 9:6, 18 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "**Lord**, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.
  - e. Acts 10:47 "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who **have received the Holy Spirit** just as we have?" → They received the Spirit because they believed Peter's preaching!
  - f. Acts 18:8 Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, **believed** on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, **believed** and were baptized.
  - g. Acts 19:4-5 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should **believe** on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
  - h. Acts 16:14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord **opened her heart**

**to heed** the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” So she persuaded us.

- i. Acts 16:31-33 So they said, “**Believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.
2. Conclusion – All who were baptized first heard the message and believed in Christ. Therefore, the New Testament teaches baptism is for those who first believe in Jesus.
3. How can I believe in Jesus to be saved?
  - a. **Admit** you are a sinner. You have not lived like God tells you to. You must turn away from sin in your heart instead of loving your sin.
  - b. **Believe** that Jesus Christ is the Lord, the Son of God, and that He came to earth and died on the cross. Believe that He rose again from the dead. Believe that He died because of and to pay for your sins (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).
  - c. **Call** on the Lord to save you. You can do this by praying. Tell Jesus you admit you are a sinner and you believe in Him, and that without Him there is nothing you can do to be saved.
  - d. When you are saved, you become a new person. Your sins are forgiven and you begin a new life with God. Becoming a Christian is not just about going to heaven. It is about living with God *right now* and about being delivered from sin in the present.
4. Can you know for sure that you are saved? Answer: If I have believed and fruit is evident in your life, God’s Word says “Yes.” See 1 John 5:11-13 and the entire book of 1 John.

## **2. Why should I be baptized? The Purpose of Water Baptism.**

1. To obey Jesus – Matthew 28:18–20
2. To give a public testimony of my faith – that you identify yourself with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and that you are a part of His family, the church.
3. There are some wrong reasons that people get baptized.
  - a. The purpose of water baptism is NOT to get saved. You do not become a Christian by water baptism. 1 Peter 3:21 teaches that water cannot remove sin; rather baptism is the outward expression of the conscience being renewed through Christ’s work of redemption and resurrection.
  - b. No work is required to be saved from sin because Christ has done all the work necessary (Ephesians 2:8–9, Titus 3:5–7). “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works...” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

### 3. **When should I be baptized? The Timing of Water Baptism.**

1. You should be baptized soon after you become a Christian but only when you understand what baptism means. There is no fixed or specific time.
2. Are you a child or young person? We wait to make sure that you truly understand the gospel. Sound Christian parents are best able to gauge their child's readiness and understanding of salvation and baptism.
3. Very young children are generally not candidates for baptism because they are not as self-aware of what they are doing in baptism.
4. Are you an adult? Adults who come to faith generally require less time between faith and baptism. They should be more "self-aware" and understand what is at stake.

### 4. **How should I be baptized?**

This section is about what is called the *mode* of baptism. The Bible teaches immersion.<sup>1</sup>

1. The New Testament uses two words in relation to baptism: *bapto* and *baptizo*. These words mean to immerse, dip, dunk, or sink (John 13:26, Revelation 19:13). This is why John the Baptist baptized people in the Jordan River, where there was a lot of water (Matthew 3:6, John 3:23).
2. The New Testament does use words for *sprinkle* and *pour* but never in connection with baptism.
3. The context of Bible passages shows that full immersion was the method used. For example, baptism happened in rivers; the Ethiopian Eunuch and Philip came "up out of the water" (Acts 8:39).
4. This method is the best way to symbolize the believer's death with Christ and resurrection to new life.

### 5. **What happens when I am baptized? Practical Steps of Water Baptism.**

You get wet!

1. What to bring when you are going to be baptized.
  - a. Your written testimony, unless you are going to share from memory.
  - b. Change of clothing – the clothing in which you will be baptized should be washable and need not be good clothes. Any clean washable outfit will do. Both men and women candidates should be careful to dress modestly and remember that the clothing will be soaked. A couple of layers will be necessary. We may have a robe or large towel to cover you when you come out of the water.
  - c. A woman in the church will help and give instructions to the ladies/girls. Pastor or one of the deacons or other men in the church will help the men/boys.

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<sup>1</sup> Baptists, most Bible churches, Pentecostal churches, and Christian Missionary Alliance churches believe the same way. Some Presbyterian churches baptize by immersion (for adults who come to Jesus) *and* by sprinkling (babies).

- d. A towel to dry yourself.
  - e. Optional: comb, socks, and washcloth to cover your nose and mouth.
  - f. You will be baptized in your stocking feet—don't forget a dry pair for afterwards.
2. What to do during the actual ceremony.
- a. When pastor calls you to come forward, come up. Usually, we have the baptism candidate stand at the podium and share his/her testimony through the microphone so everyone can hear. Then you enter the water.
  - b. When you share your salvation testimony, you can do so either from memory or by reading it from a paper or card.
  - c. Pastor will say a few words and then ask you, “(Your name), have you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?” You can then answer “Yes, I have.”
  - d. Then the Pastor will say, “In obedience to the command of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I therefore baptize you (your name) in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”
  - e. Hold Pastor's left wrist with both hands. He will lower you backwards into the water. You may cover your nose with the handkerchief or washcloth if you want. It is helpful to bend your knees slightly to make sure your feet do not go up out of the water.
  - f. Often Pastor has an assistant helping him. Both will lift you immediately back out of the water. You will then be free to return to the dressing room and get changed. The church will be happy to see you baptized!

## 6. Where should I be baptized?

- 5. The physical location could be a lake, river, church baptismal tank, a swimming pool, or even a horse trough!
- 6. The physical location is not as important as this: baptism should normally be done where a church family is gathered to observe and rejoice. Like the Lord's Table, baptism is a command of the Lord Jesus for the church to participate in. The church should be one that has true Biblical teaching.

## 7. The Theology or Meaning of Baptism

- 1. **John's Baptism** – A baptism in water connected with repentance for sin (Matthew 3:11, Acts 19:3). It was done by/to those who were concerned about their relationship with God, whether Jews or Gentiles (Luke 3:7-14; the soldiers were probably Gentiles). John's baptism is not done today, simply because John the Baptist is not alive.

Jesus was baptized by John, but his baptism was said to “fulfill all righteousness.” It was not connected with repentance for sin in that special case, because Jesus had no sin. See

Matthew 3:13-17. When someone asks you, then, whether you should follow Jesus' example and be baptized, you should stop to think. "Did Jesus have sin? Did he need to identify with his own death, burial, and resurrection like I do?" Since you would answer "no" to those questions, you would respond to your questioner this way: "No, I don't exactly follow His example. Rather, I follow His Great Commission command to be baptized."

2. **Spirit Baptism** – The Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Acts 1:5; Romans 6:3, 4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:4, 5). This is when the Spirit of God connects you to Jesus Christ and His church.

The moment one receives Jesus Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit places him into the spiritual body of Christ, the Church, and identifies him/her with the death, burial, and the resurrection of Christ. This is not something which we experience or "feel" but it is nevertheless a true spiritual baptism.

Furthermore, at the time of salvation, we receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and thus become *spiritual*. Of course, we can speak about being more or less spiritual in terms of our maturity level, but we receive the gift of the indwelling Spirit in a complete way when we are saved. Water baptism does not make us more or less spiritual in that sense. When we are saved, we get the whole Spirit, not some of Him.

3. **Water Baptism** – That is, getting dunked into water.

Analogy of the Lord's Table or Communion: Christ is the true bread and the ritual of taking of the bread at the Communion is a symbol. In the same way, water baptism is an outward and visible picture of an inward and spiritual truth, that we have been baptized by the Spirit. It is also a public testimony to the world that you now identify yourself with the death, the burial, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Just as He was put to death, buried, and raised again, so you now testify that in Christ you have died to the old life of sin, you have been buried with Christ, you now are raised again to walk a new life in, with, and for Jesus Christ.

4. Conclusion – The ordinance of water baptism is a symbol of a spiritual reality.

The reality for the Christian is that he has been united to Jesus Christ by faith. He is also connected to the church, the "body" of Christ. The Holy Spirit made that happen. Water baptism is a visible symbol of those things happening to the Christian.

## 8. Wrong Beliefs about Water Baptism

1. Most wrong belief about baptism happens because of a misunderstanding about baptism is a symbol of salvation. Baptism is *not* salvation.
  - a. Roman Catholics teach *baptismal regeneration* (baptism as a means of new birth and washing away sin). The example of the thief on the cross shows that baptism is not necessary to be saved (Luke 23:43). Furthermore, no OT believer was baptized, yet they were saved. The clear teaching of Scripture is that salvation is not at all obtained by works (Ephesians 2:8–10).
  - b. Lutherans teach that baptism is a means of obtaining grace.
  - c. Mormons believe that baptism is effective for the salvation of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:29).
  - d. Disciples of Christ believe baptism is necessary for salvation. They call their view *baptismal remission*.
  - e. Believers in *closed baptism* accept water baptism only by their preachers in their churches.
  - f. Some Salvation Army followers ignore both baptism and the Lord's Supper.
  - g. Ultra-dispensationalists claim that baptism is not for this age.
2. Wrong candidates (to whom it is done). These beliefs do not understand that salvation is required *prior to* baptism. Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, and Presbyterian – infants are baptized. But infants have not exercised saving faith. The reason they baptize babies is because of how they believe the Old Testament is connected to the New Testament.
3. Wrong modes of water baptism (how it is done). These beliefs demonstrate a misunderstanding of the symbolism of baptism.
  1. Sprinkling – Roman Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, etc.
  2. Pouring – Some Methodist and Presbyterian
  3. Trine Immersion – Grace Brethren practice baptism three times forward

## 9. What do I do now? After you are baptized.

1. A little survey I did indicates that half of Christians have no time of Bible reading and prayer with the Lord on a daily basis. A third may have some Bible or devotional reading, and only 1/6 have a regular daily habit of reading the Bible and praying.
2. Believers must have a regular intake of God's Word. I encourage you to begin now, if you have not already begun, to have a time every day set aside to read the Bible, even just a single chapter, think about it, and pray to the Lord. In the early morning or at night is often best when it is quiet, and you can think.
3. Believers must serve the Lord. Think about what you can do in the ministry of your local church and in your day-to-day living that will be of service to God.

## *Review of Christian Baptism*

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1. Who should be baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why should you be baptized?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

3. When should you be baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. How should you be baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What should you bring to your baptism service?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Where should you be baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Which comes first in the life of a Christian: Spirit baptism or water baptism? \_\_\_\_\_

8. If someone says that they were baptized so they could be saved (so they could go to heaven), would they be right or wrong? Why?

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9. Complete this sentence (from section 7 of the notes): The ordinance of water baptism is a

\_\_\_\_\_ of a spiritual \_\_\_\_\_.

10. What does the word *baptize* mean (section 4)? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Are you sure that you are a saved person, that is, a true Christian? \_\_\_\_\_

When did you first believe in Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you know for sure you are saved? \_\_\_\_\_

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12. Please give a Bible verse or two on which you base your salvation. \_\_\_\_\_

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13. Do you want to be baptized? \_\_\_\_\_