



WATER BAPTISM
INFORMATION



Water Baptism

What Is Baptism?

The Greek word for baptism means “to cover wholly with a fluid, to dip or to make fully wet.”¹ The term is used in the Bible to mean the act in which a new believer in Jesus is placed completely under the water by another believer as part of his conversion.

Is Baptism Necessary?

Jesus’ final words to his own disciples were: *“As you go, therefore, make disciples of all peoples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. . . . He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved.”*² In these words Jesus made it clear that evangelizing and making disciples included three elements:

- √ Belief in Jesus
- √ Baptism
- √ Instruction in His commandments (that is learning to live the way He wants us to)

If we eliminate any one of these elements we will deny the clear command of Jesus.

The record of the church in the New Testament shows us that the Apostles did as Jesus commanded. On the very first occasion of evangelism, when the listeners began to believe Peter’s message about Jesus and asked, *“What shall we do?”* Peter replied, *“Repent and let each of you be baptized. . . .”*³ The result was that about three thousand people believed and were baptized.⁴

The book of Acts records nine other instances where individuals or groups were evangelized and were saved.⁵ In every single case, as soon as they had believed they were also baptized. In the New Testament record,

wherever a person was converted, he or she was also baptized as a part of that conversion. Moreover, whenever the Apostles speak or write to Christians, they always seem to assume that they were all baptized already.⁶

On the basis of this scriptural evidence we must conclude that baptism is a necessary part of the salvation process.

What About Those Who Can't Be Baptized?

Many people will point to the fact that the thief on the cross beside Jesus was promised he would be in Paradise with Jesus, and yet not baptized. In the first place we must be very careful not to use an exceptional case to invalidate Jesus' clear command. Secondly, it is obvious that salvation is first of all a matter of the attitude of the heart, so if that attitude of belief and repentance is present⁷ and the person is physically prevented from being baptized, we can assume from what we know of God that he would look on the heart⁸ and not require what couldn't be done.

What Is The Purpose Of Baptism?

In the first instance of Christian baptism, Peter said, *"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."*⁹ Water baptism is, primarily, an act of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. There isn't a scripture which says that baptism is to give public witness of our faith or to join the church. It is for forgiveness of sin.

The very purpose of salvation is that Jesus *"will save His people from their sins"*¹⁰ and that *"in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses."*¹¹ When Paul was converted Ananias told him, *"Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins."*¹²

It is obvious that water itself cannot cleanse from sin, and Peter explains this by saying *"baptism now saves you, not the removal of dirt from flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience."*¹³ It is an act of faith, wherein

we have *“our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water”*¹⁴ which brings the cleansing of the blood of Jesus to us.

What Is The Outcome Of Baptism?

Baptism is as a death to sin, the burial of the old nature, and the resurrection of an entirely new creature who now walks *“in newness of life.”*¹⁵ The result of baptism is a new life. The sinful manner of life we had when we *“were dead in trespasses and sins”*¹⁶ has been left behind. The drunkenness, immorality, lying, stealing and all such indulgence of the flesh is to be left in the watery grave. The new person is now no longer a slave to sin, but is free to begin that walk of faith in which he will be *“conformed to the image of His son.”*¹⁷

Does That Mean That One Who Is Baptized Will Not Sin Again?

The Scripture always holds out to us God’s highest ideal. But it also recognizes the possibility of our failing to always attain that ideal. The mark of the new birth is a new person with new desires and attitude which result in new behavior and obedience to God’s will. The new child of God will have a heartfelt desire to please God and will seek to follow His way. One who willfully continues to live a life of sin cannot claim to be a new person in Christ. One who is afraid to be baptized because he is not willing to lay down the old nature and sinful habits has not experienced a true repentance and rebirth and cannot claim to be saved.

However, God recognizes that as “babies” we will not always learn our lessons perfectly and there will be times of failure. To provide for that God disciplines us as children,¹⁸ convicting our hearts of our error, and bringing us to Him quickly for forgiveness and restoration.

If I Have Been Baptized Before Should I Be Baptized Again?

One baptism for repentance and forgiveness of sin is sufficient.

If you were baptized and have since allowed your life and relationship with the Lord to grow cold, you need to renew your “first love” with Jesus, but re-baptism is probably not necessary.

However, if you were baptized without true repentance (such as to join the church or, as an infant, without your knowledge or consent), then it is necessary to complete your repentance now by being baptized.

Should My Children Be Baptized?

There is not room here to discuss the theology that leads some churches to baptize infants. However, the very nature of baptism in Scripture is that it is a voluntary act of one who has believed in Jesus and repented of sin. It is obvious that an infant cannot make such a voluntary decision, cannot believe and cannot repent. Further, there is no evidence in Scripture that such decision can be made by one person on behalf of another.

While there is no verifiable instance in Scripture of infant baptism, there is some indication that children of a very young age are not held guilty of sin and therefore do not require baptism.¹⁹

However, parents should instruct their children in the ways of God, and at the earliest age at which they seem to comprehend the need for salvation and can desire baptism with an understanding of its meaning, they should be allowed to be baptized also.

In What Name Should We Baptize?

Jesus commanded the disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.²⁰ Peter exhorted the people to be baptized “*in the name of Jesus Christ.*”²¹ Several other examples indicate baptism “*in the name of Jesus.*”

We have no clear records of what was actually said during baptism in the first century. It may be that no “formula” as such was pronounced at all, but rather the candidates themselves called out on Jesus to forgive their sins²² or made a confession that “*Jesus is Lord.*”²³

Most Christian tradition favors naming the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and since this is the clear command of Jesus it cannot be ignored. The examples of baptizing “*in the name of Jesus*” may omit the use of these three titles simply because it was not important to what was being recorded.

The important fact is that we have our faith placed in Jesus Christ, and recognize Him as the anointed of the Father, and the dispenser of the Holy Spirit. It is not something that should cause controversy or separate brethren. In order to accommodate both scriptural views, we baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit.”

When Should Baptism Take Place?

In every instance in scripture, baptism took place as soon as a person came to believe in Jesus, truly repented for his sins, and committed his life to living as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Baptism should take place as soon as possible following our spiritual conversion.

How Is Baptism In Water Related To Baptism In The Holy Spirit?

John the Baptist said that he baptized in (or with) water, but that Jesus would baptize in (or with) the Holy Spirit.²⁴

Peter promised that those who were baptized for the forgiveness of sins would receive the gift of Holy Spirit.²⁵ A number of examples in the book of Acts show that those who were baptized in water received the Holy Spirit sometime thereafter, often almost at the same time, and on one occasion before water baptism.²⁶

The one who has believed in Jesus, repented of his sins, and been baptized has met all the qualifications for being baptized in the Holy Spirit. He should therefore, earnestly seek and expect to be filled with God's Holy Spirit without delay.

The subject of Baptism in the Holy Spirit is discussed more fully in a separate booklet.

¹ Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.

² Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:16

³ Acts 2:32-38

⁴ Acts 2:41

⁵ Acts 8:12,13,38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15,33; 18:8; 19:5

⁶ Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 1:13-15; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21

⁷ Acts 16:31

⁸ 1 Samuel 16:7

⁹ Acts 2:28

¹⁰ Matthew 1:21

¹¹ Ephesians 1:7

¹² Acts 22:16

¹³ 1 Peter 3:21

¹⁴ Hebrews 10:22

¹⁵ Romans 6:4

¹⁶ Ephesians 2:1

¹⁷ Romans 8:28

¹⁸ Hebrews 12:5-8

¹⁹ Romans 5:13; Matthew 18:10; Hebrews 1:14; 1 Corinthians 7:14; Luke 18:15-18. Children are blessed but not baptized.

²⁰ Matthew 28:19

²¹ Acts 2:38

²² Acts 22:16

²³ Romans 10:9,10

²⁴ Matthew 3:11

²⁵ Acts 2:38

²⁶ Acts 10:44-48



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