

BAPTISM

A term derived from the Greek *baptisma* (antecedent, *baptizo*). The idea of ceremonial washing, or cleansing, appears repeatedly in the Mosaic laws of purification (e.g., Exod 29:4, 17; 30:17-21; 40:12, 30; Lev 1:9, 13; 6:27; 9:14; 11:25; 14:8, 9, 47; 15:5-27; 16:4-28; 17:15-16; 22:6; Num 8:7; 19:7-21; 31:23-24; Deut 21:6; 23:11).

The Septuagint uses the word *baptizo* twice (2 Kings 5:14; Isa 21:4). Later Judaism incorporated this meaning of cleansing and purification into its idea of the new covenant relation and used baptism as a rite of initiation, as reflected in the Qumran sect and the Dead Sea Scroll communities.

John the Baptist transformed baptism from a rite to a positive moral act, a decisive commitment to personal piety. But his baptism was, nevertheless, only transitory--the meaning and efficacy of baptism can be understood only in the light of the redemptive death and resurrection of Christ. Christ referred to his death as a baptism (Luke 12:50; Matt 20:22; Mark 10:38).

To the act of water baptism Jesus added the promise of the baptism with the Spirit, the means by which his redemptive work is applied to human beings (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; Acts 1:4ff.; 11:16). Christ made spiritual baptism (by the Holy Spirit) synonymous with the actual application of the virtues of his death and resurrection to sinners (Matt 3:11). Through Spirit baptism the redeemed sinner is incorporated into the spiritual body of Christ.

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Baptism in Water

Why?

Water baptism accompanied the proclamation of the Gospel from the beginning of the church's mission (Acts 2:38, 41). It was a rite of Christian initiation used in the NT to indicate that a person was committing himself/herself fully to Jesus Christ. By going into the baptismal water in the name of the Trinity (Matt. 28:19) or of Christ (Acts 19:5), believers visibly demonstrated their faith before the Christian community.

1. Water baptism "into Christ" (Gal. 3:27) or in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; Matt. 28:19) signifies that one is now the property of Christ and has a share in His life, His Spirit and His inheritance with God (Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26-4:7).
2. Water baptism is a response to what Christ has done for the believer. To be valid it must be preceded by repentance (Acts 2:38) and a personal faith in Christ (Col. 2:12)
3. Water baptism, when undertaken with a sincere heart of faith and commitment to Jesus as Lord and Saviour, is a means of receiving grace from Christ (1 Pet. 3:21).
4. Water baptism is an outward sign and testimony of our receiving Christ as Lord and Saviour and of the washing away of our sins (Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21).
5. Water baptism portrays the union of the believer with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-11; Col. 2:11-12). This signifies an end (i.e. "death") to a life of sin (Rom. 6:3-4:7, 10, 12; Col. 3:3-14) and the beginning of a new life in Christ (Rom. 6:4-5, 11; Col. 2:12-13). Therefore water baptism involves a commitment to a lifelong practice of turning one's back on the world and all that is evil (Rom. 6:6, 11-13) and living a new life in the Spirit that reflects God's standards of righteousness (Col. 2:1-17).

Infant versus Adult Baptism

- ❑ There is no biblical evidence for the baptism of babies. This practice suggests that babies who die without being baptized go to hell. The Father who loves us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die for us – does not send babies to hell. Sin requires a knowledge and understanding of the difference between right and wrong, and intentionally choosing wrong.
- ❑ Jesus Himself was dedicated to God as a baby and baptized as an adult who could make the choice to be baptized himself.
- ❑ People who were baptized as babies, but who want to comply with the principles behind biblical baptism often want to be baptized as an adult. This is a personal and public declaration of their allegiance to Christ that they were unable to express as a baby.
- ❑ Historically there is much precedent for this. Jewish tradition provided for baptism of proselytes who would then have been baptized again upon converting to Christianity.
- ❑ Acts 19:3-5 gives an account of disciples having been baptized by John the Baptist being told by Paul that they needed to be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, which they obeyed.

Q. Why should I be baptized in water?

A. Jesus commands us to be baptised.

(Matthew 28: 19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.)"

Q. I was christened as a baby. Do I need to be baptised again?

A. (See page 2) Baptism in water is a matter of personal conscience and an expression of obedience to God. Nobody else can make the choice for you.

Q. Why must I be fully submerged while being baptized?

A. Baptism symbolizes a death and burial to the old sinful nature and a resurrection to new life in Jesus. Complete submersion symbolizes complete death and total burial.

Q. How do I prepare?

A. Read this pamphlet thoroughly, while looking up the references to Scripture. Spend time in prayer and ask God to show you the sinful areas of your life; confess them to him (even the small things) and ask him to show you His grace, love and mercy. Ask Him to let all hindrances in your walk with Jesus, die off and replace them with a commitment to serve Jesus wholeheartedly.

Q. The Spirit came on Jesus when He was baptized in water Can I expect the same?

A. Baptism in the Holy Spirit often followed water baptism.

Romans 6: ¹What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ²By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We 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.

ACTS 22:16 AND NOW WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? GET UP, BE BAPTIZED AND WASH YOUR SINS AWAY, CALLING ON HIS NAME.'