

# Why Baptism?

## A Welcome Invitation to Consider Being Baptized.

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Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20a).

Here are some biblical answers to some of the most often asked questions about baptism.

### A. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WATER BAPTISM?

Paul explains, "*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*" (Romans 6:3-5). Baptism is into Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (Cf. Galatians 3:27).

Baptism, the act of immersing in water, is a symbolic burial and resurrection by which a believer publicly identifies with the crucified, resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom he has placed personal faith for salvation. In other words, baptism is the outward testimony to the inward reality of faith in Christ's saving grace.

### B. WHO MAY BE BAPTIZED?

Those who have placed personal faith in Jesus Christ for salvation may and should be baptized in His name. Baptism is not the means of salvation. It rightly follows saving faith. Therefore, New Testament baptism has no relevance for infants and non-believers. Some evidence follows.

1. "*Those who accepted his (Peter's) message were baptized*" (Acts 2:41a).
2. Peter asked the Jewish Christians who witnessed the salvation of Cornelius and his kinsmen and friends, "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have" (Acts 10:47). Clearly they were already saved.
3. There is no biblical instance of the practice of baptizing infants. Believer's baptism is the biblical norm. You must be old enough to understand and choose personally to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior before baptism can have meaning for you.

### C. HOW SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BE BAPTIZED?

The biblical mode of baptism was total immersion in water. Here is some of the evidence supporting the practice of baptism by immersion.

1. The new Testament term baptizo means "to immerse, to dip in water." If the translators of our English version had translated this term rather than transliterating it, our text would have read, ". . . immersing (dipping) them in the name of the Father . . ." (Matthew 28:19).

2. Christ and the early Christians were immersed in water.
  - a. "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water" (Matthew 3:16). Note that John was using the Jordan River for baptism.
  - b. "Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water . . ." (John 3:23).
  - c. "Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized Him, When they came up out of the water, . . ." (Acts 8:38-39).
3. Paul referred to the commonly used method of immersion as a physical illustration of our spiritual identification with Christ in His death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). Total immersion in water pictures burial with Christ, while coming up out of the water suggests our resurrection to newness of life. Other modes (sprinkling, trine-immersion, effusion) do not picture burial and resurrection as obviously as immersion.

## D. WHEN SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BE BAPTIZED?

Baptism should follow closely one's conversion. Note the following biblical evidences:

1. Acts 2:41 . . . . . "They were baptized the same day."
2. Acts 8:37 . . . . . The Ethiopian was baptized immediately.
3. Acts 10:47 . . . . . Cornelius and friends were baptized the same day.
4. Acts 16:33 . . . . . The Philippian jailer was immediately baptized.
5. Matthew 28:19 . . . . . Baptism follows conversion and precedes teaching.

## E. WHY SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BE BAPTIZED?

1. For **OBEDIENCE** (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38). Christ commanded us to baptize our converts, and Peter is seen urging this very thing. Submitting to baptism gives us an early opportunity to demonstrate obedience to the Savior and Lord to Whom we have given our hearts and lives by faith.
2. For **SUBMISSION** (Matthew 28:19; Acts 10:47). By humbly submitting to water baptism, a Christian is submitting to the authority of Christ. In addition to this, he is submitting to the authority of Christ's body, the church (1 Peter 5:1-4; Philippians 2:1-4; Hebrews 13:17).
3. For **LEARNING** (Romans 6:1-23). Paul uses the object lesson of water baptism to teach a deep spiritual truth which is applicable to our daily walk with Christ. Cf. Col. 3:1-4; Galatians 2:20.
4. For **TESTIMONY** (Romans 10:9-10). You as a Christian need to take a stand publicly, declaring your faith in Christ. Just as the Jews were "baptized unto Moses," and therefore were identified with him (1 Cor. 10:2), so also Christians are baptized into Jesus Christ, and therefore are identified with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. There should be no secret Christians.
5. For **UNITY** (Ephesians 4:1-6). Because Christians share the common experience of water baptism, it is a visible symbol of their unity in the church. The sacrament of baptism is as unifying as the sacrament of communion.

**If you have further questions, or would like to be baptized, call us at our office at 223-5770**