

QUESTIONS ABOUT BAPTISM (VARIOUS PASSAGES)

Tonight, we'll answer several questions related to baptism. As I answer these questions, I hope to do two things:

- For those of you who *don't* know what the Bible says about baptism, I want to teach you.
- For those who *do* know some of this info, I hope to put it in such a way that you can easily have a conversation with your friends, teammates, family, etc. about baptism.

1. What is the meaning of baptism?

Romans 6:3–5 “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”

First of all, it's important to understand that baptism does not save you. John 1:12 (and many other passages) make it clear that we are saved when we “receive” Christ. And when you receive Christ, you are repenting – changing your mind and turning away – from your old self. You're dying to your old life.

So, when you're baptized, you are telling the world that you've died to your old self, and you've been raised to live an entirely new life in Christ.

Illustration: A Wedding Ring – an outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart. The ring doesn't *make* you married (I can take it off and still be married); it's a symbol showing that I *am* married. It's an outward symbol of the commitment I've made in your heart to Lesley.

In the same way, baptism doesn't *make* you saved – it's a symbol showing that you *are* saved. It's an outward symbol of the commitment you've made in your heart to Christ.

So, your baptism is the moment when you “go public” with your faith in Christ. And that’s why baptism is such a big deal, which is especially true in countries that violently oppose Christianity.

Illustration: Baptism Questionnaire from a church in South Asia:

- Are you willing to leave home and lose the blessing of your father?
- Are you willing to lose your job?
- Are you willing to go to the village of those who persecute you, forgive them, and share the love of Christ with them?
- Are you willing to be beaten rather than deny your faith?
- Are you willing to go to prison?
- Are you willing to die for Jesus?

In many countries, these things are likely to happen when a person goes public with their faith in Christ and is baptized.

2. Who should be baptized?

Only those who have been “born again” should be baptized.

John 3:3–6 “Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

If you look at the entire conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, it’s easy to see that the phrase “born of water” is referring to physical birth (which is why Nicodemus asked, “How can a person re-enter their mother’s womb and be born all over again?”).

Nicodemus was missing the point. Jesus was simply saying that, just as a person must be born *physically* into this world, you also have to be “born again” *spiritually* into the Kingdom of God. This is the difference in being “born” and “born again.” So, baptism is only for those who have been born again – saved because they’ve received Christ.

If baptism symbolizes the fact that you’ve died to your old self and you’ve been raised with Christ to walk an entirely new life, why would you be baptized if you’ve not yet done that?

3. Why should I be baptized?

You see, we don't get baptized *just* because it's a symbol of our salvation. It goes even deeper than that. Let me give you three other reasons for the saved person to be baptized...

- **To follow the example of Christ.**

Matthew 3:13–17 “Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Remember: Jesus wasn't being baptized because He was repenting and being saved. Jesus had nothing to repent of – He was sinless. He didn't need to be saved – He's the *Savior!*

In verse 15 Jesus says He was being baptized “to fulfill all righteousness.” In other words, Jesus is giving an example of obedience – an example for all who would follow Him.

You see, when Jesus was baptized, He was identifying Himself with us (mankind). And when we're baptized, we're identifying ourselves with Him. In fact, the Bible says Christ is not ashamed to be our God (Hebrews 2:11; 11:16), so why would we be ashamed to tell the world that we are His followers? (Luke 9:26)

- **To obey the command of Christ.**

Matthew 28:18–20 “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

So, being baptized is a command, not a consideration. He didn't say we should *consider* baptism, or *pray about* baptism, or *think about* baptism.

It's a command, not a consideration!

- **To unite with the Body of Christ.**

1 Corinthians 12:12–13 “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

Paul is showing us the “oneness” that happens when we’re born again and we become part of the Body of Christ – the Church. Though we are many members (believers all over the world), we become “one body” in Christ. And baptism is a symbol that we’ve united ourselves with the Body of Christ.

BTW: there is no example in the New Testament of an unbaptized believer joining the body of Christ (except the thief on the cross who obviously had no opportunity to be baptized). Also, there’s no example in the NT of a believer who refuses baptism. So, for a Christian to say, “I’m not going to be baptized” is to say, “I’m not going to follow Christ’s example, or obey His command, or unite with His Church – the Body of Christ.”

4. When should I be baptized?

Baptism is our first step of obedience after we enter a saving relationship with Jesus. If we go back to Matthew 28:19-20, notice the order...

- 1) “Go and make disciples” – (Salvation)
- 2) “Baptizing them” – (Your first act of obedience)
- 3) “Teaching them all that I have commanded” – (Lifelong discipleship process)

In fact, throughout the NT, new believers were eager to be baptized *immediately* after they were saved...

- The Ethiopian man (Acts 8:36-37)
- The Apostle Paul (Acts 9:18)
- Lydia (Acts 16:14-15)
- Crispus (Acts 18:8)
- Philippian Jailor (below)

Acts 16:30–33 *“Then [the jailor] brought [Paul and Silas] out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”³¹ And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.”*

5. How should I be baptized?

Believers should be baptized the same way Jesus was baptized – by being immersed under water (Matthew 3:16), which is the same way everyone else is baptized in the NT. In fact, the Greek word for **“baptize”** (*baptizo*) means “to immerse, submerge, or overwhelm” with water.

Again, going *under* the water is a depiction of the death and burial of your old self. Being brought up out of the water is a depiction of you being raised up (resurrected) with Christ to a new life! Only immersion can accurately depict death, burial, and resurrection.

6. Should I be baptized again?

If you were not truly born again when you were baptized then yes, you should be baptized. If you’ve already been baptized by immersion *after* you were saved, there is no biblical reason to be baptized again.

Why do people baptize infants?

We don’t baptize infants, but some do for different reasons...

- Because of devotion to tradition.
- Others as a picture looking forward to their child’s future faith.

For example, in the Old Testament (old covenant), the marker to show that a person was entering the covenant community was circumcision. And circumcision was done with adults and infants (8 days old).

The New Testament marker to show that a person is entering the covenant community is baptism. So, some say, “See, we should baptize infants.”

But look at Colossians 2...

Colossians 2:11–12 “In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.”

Did you catch it? Old Testament (old covenant) circumcision – physical circumcision – was done by the hands of men. New Testament circumcision (circumcision of the heart) is done by Christ when He transforms your heart. This circumcision happens when we’re born again, NOT when we’re infants (unable to understand sin, salvation, etc.).

In other words, the New Testament is inaugurating a new picture. Old covenant circumcision signaled *physical* birth into a *physical* community. But new covenant baptism signals *spiritual* birth into a *spiritual* community. This new covenant is not for the Jewish people only; it’s for Jews *and* Gentiles, all united together.

This is why we refer to baptism as “believer’s baptism” in contrast to the practice of “infant baptism.” Until one is old enough to understand their sinfulness, need of salvation, that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again for that need, and then they surrender to this truth – they are not to be baptized. This is why we practice baby/child *dedication* – NOT infant *baptism*.