

The Importance of Water Baptism, Part 2

What is water baptism?

The word baptism comes from the Greek word *baptizo* which means to completely immerse or dip. Earliest traces of the word were used to describe cucumbers becoming pickles. They are immersed!

To baptize something, then, means to completely submerge it in a liquid. In a biblical sense, to baptize a person in water means to put that person completely under the water, then immediately raise him or her up again.

Water baptism is a symbolic act of submersion in water whereby a new Christian identifies with Christ's death, burial and resurrection. It signifies our spiritual new birth in Christ and is a public profession of a person's repentance and faith in Him. It is a way of giving outward testimony to the inward work of God that occurred through faith.

Is Water Baptism Necessary for Salvation?

The short answer is no! But every born-again believer should be water baptized. There is no biblical rule about age, length of time as a believer or knowledge of the Bible.

At the moment of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, a person is "buried with Christ" in spiritual baptism by the Holy Spirit and placed into the body of Christ (see Col. 2:12).

Our faith in Christ and His shed blood for our sin saves us. Water baptism identifies us with Christ's death and resurrection.

Though you are not saved by water baptism, you are commanded

by Scripture to partake of this act.

Then Peter said to them, "Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38).

With a quick read of Acts 2:38, one might assume water baptism is necessary for salvation. However, Peter is expressing the importance of being baptized in a parenthetical statement.

For example, if I told you, "Catch the bus at 11:00 a.m., don't forget to take your backpack, and you will arrive at the bus depot by noon." Do you see this parenthetical nuance? I am directing you to catch the bus in order to get to the bus depot, and as an aside, I'm reminding you to bring your backpack. Peter is doing something similar in Acts 2:38.

Consider what Peter spoke in Acts 3:19: "Therefore repent and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

Notice Peter does not mention the need for water baptism to be saved in this verse? What causes conversion and cleansing? Repentance toward Christ, believing in Him and deciding to follow Him.

Salvation is and always has been about faith in Jesus Christ. You must be "baptized into Christ" in order to be saved (a work of the Spirit); however, this is not the same as being "baptized in water."

Paul in Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly states that we are saved through faith, it is a gift, not something we earn through human effort or work. Water baptism expresses this salvation. It is a spiritual reality before God. It is a sacrament, an outward sign of an inward grace.

To illustrate this point, imagine that you have a friend who

receives Jesus as Savior today but then dies in a car accident tomorrow. Your friend never had a chance to be water baptized, but was he or she saved? The answer is yes. That person was baptized into Christ, by faith.

The same is true for the thief on the cross (see Luke 23:43), who received salvation because he was baptized into Christ by faith.

So we see that it is faith in Jesus Christ that brings about salvation—not water baptism. Although, water baptism represents a spiritual reality of the cleansing that has taken place through our faith in Christ and His shed blood.

Church History Reveals God Encounters Upon Water Baptism

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage in the third century, speaks of Christ's power to heal in the sacraments, and deliverance was a normal aspect of the sacrament of water baptism for believers.

This, finally, in very fact we also experience, that those who are baptized by urgent necessity in sickness, and obtain grace, are free from the unclean spirit wherewith they were previously moved, and live in the Church in praise and honor.

Cyprian's also describes deliverance occurring during water baptism, "when they are adjured by us in the name of the true God, yield forthwith, and confess, and admit they are forced also to leave the bodies they have invaded."

Modern day testimonies of healing, deliverance and infilling of the Holy Spirit occurring through the act of water baptism are prevalent today as well!

Summary of Water Baptism

You must be born again.

You are a Christian with or without water baptism. Salvation

is through faith in Christ and His finished work on the cross.

Being baptized is walking in divine guidance (Matt. 28:19).

Baptism is symbolic of death, burial and resurrection with Jesus.

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist as a sacred confession of faith.

Baptism is a willful act, an act of obedience and submission to God.

Did you know that in some countries of the world it is not the act of profession of faith in Christ that costs them but the act of water baptism?

For example, if a Buddhist should make the profession that "Jesus is Lord," it would not harm anything. However, if he should be water baptized, he would lose his right to his inheritance and education. It would cost him everything.

Water baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace that has occurred upon genuine faith in Jesus. It is symbolic, but it represents a powerful spiritual reality that is ours in Christ!

Is it necessary for you to be water baptized in order for you to be a Christian? No.

What does Ephesians 2:8-9 say about our salvation? We are saved by grace through faith.

If grace was not sufficient for our salvation and water baptism was also needed, what would Ephesians 2:8-9 say additionally? By grace through faith and water baptism.

But though you are not saved by water baptism, you are still commanded by Scripture to partake of this holy act. God promises to do a great work in your life if you are obedient

to His commandments.

1 John 2:3 says, "We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands."

When should you be baptized?

According to Acts 2:38, after repentance and faith in Christ.

According to Mark 16:16, after you believe.

According to Acts 8:12, when you believe.

What are we baptized into? Romans 6:3 explains that you are baptized into His death.

Were we buried with Christ? According to Romans 6:4, yes, we were.

In doing so, are we also raised or resurrected with Him? Yes, according to Romans 6:5.

According to Romans 6:4, what is the purpose for which we are raised from the dead? To walk in newness of life.

"For if we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, so shall we also be united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom. 6:5).

How should we be baptized? Matthew 28:19 demonstrates, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

A Brief Summary of Water Baptism

You must be born again.

You are a Christian with or without water baptism. It isn't something you need to get saved.

Being baptized is walking in divine guidance (Matt. 28:19).

Baptism is symbolic of death, burial and resurrection.

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist as a sacred confession of faith.

Baptism is a willful act, an act of submission to spiritual authority over you. {eo}

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