

**harvest**  
**BAPTISM**  
**WHY?**

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# BAPTISM

Each of you must repent of your sins, turn to God, and **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ to show that you have received forgiveness for your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **Acts 2:38 (NLT)**

## WHAT IS BAPTISM?

### 1. WITNESS - AN OUTWARD SIGN OF AN INWARD CHANGE.

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a **new person**. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! **2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)**

When we make a commitment of our lives to Jesus Christ there is a transformation that takes place. It might not be seen immediately, but it happens. It's a heart deal. Your heart changes, you really are a new creation. When you are baptized, as you go beneath the water, it pictures your old life being gone, and when you're raised out of the water, it pictures that your new life has come.

## 2. AN ACT OF OBEDIENCE.

Therefore go and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing them** into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

**Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)**

Baptism is a tremendous act of obedience. It's something you do because Jesus said that we are to do it. We're showing God and others, right from the beginning, that we are going to do our best to obey what Jesus says. He is not only our Saviour, but also our Lord and Master, the One we obey. And it has such a powerful meaning to you!

In **Matthew 28**, the Great Commission, Jesus instructed His followers to baptize into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Here's why: When one is baptized into the name of the Trinity, he professes to acknowledge and appropriate God in all that He is and in all that He does for man. He recognizes and depends upon God the Father as his Creator and Preserver; receives Jesus Christ as his only Mediator and Redeemer, His Prophet, Priest and King, and his pattern of life; and confesses the Holy Spirit as his Sanctifier, Comforter, and Guide.

### 3. IDENTIFICATION – A PICTURE OF THE DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

...Christ **died** for our sins...was **buried**...and He was **raised** from the dead.... **1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NLT)**

For we died and were buried with Christ by **baptism**. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live **new lives**. **Romans 6:4 (NLT)**

When you are baptized, and you are standing in the water, that will be a picture of Jesus before He died. When you go down under the water, that will be a picture of what? That's right...His burial. And, when you are brought back up out of the water, that is a picture of what? That's right...His resurrection.

Now in baptism the believer is ceremonially identifying himself with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the water – death; beneath the water – burial; out of the water - resurrection. You are in effect saying I am dead to the old life and now free to live a new life, pursuing godliness and righteousness. Thus baptism means to **identify**, to associate yourself with Christ and in particular with His death, burial and resurrection. Please understand, it is not the act that saves us. But it is the act that symbolizes how we are saved! So... you need to be really thankful that Jesus rose from the dead. Otherwise, we'd just have to hold you under the water.

# WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL PATTERN OF BAPTISM?

We want, in our practices as a church, to be as close as possible to the patterns we find in the Bible. That includes how we baptize. When we talk about the biblical pattern of baptism there are two crucial elements.

## 1. IT ALWAYS FOLLOWS BELIEF IN JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOUR AND LORD

We know that from studying how the first church did its baptisms. When we look at the early church, there was a clear pattern that developed.

**The early church pattern:**

- taught
- believed
- baptized

Those who **believed** what **Peter said** were **baptized...**  
**Acts 2:41 (NLT)**

This was one of the greatest accounts of a group conversion to ever take place. The total was about 3000 people.

But now the people **believed Philip's message** of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a **result**, many men and women were **baptized. Acts 8:12 (NLT)**

As she **listened** to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she **accepted** what Paul was saying. She was **baptized...** **Acts 16:14b-15 (NLT)**

“She” here is a lady named Lydia. She lived in a city called Thyatira. Paul had gone down by the riverside, the place of prayer. He met Lydia. She was taught, she believed, and she was baptized. Do you see this pattern?

Later in Acts 16, Paul and Silas are in prison. They are praying and singing songs of praise. An earthquake comes, the prison doors are opened and the chains fall off them. The jailer, thinking Paul and Silas have escaped, pulls his sword to take his life. Paul cries out to him to stop. The jailer falls before Paul and Silas and asks “What must I do to be saved?” Look at what they did...

Then they **shared the word of the Lord** with him and all who lived in his household. That same hour the jailer washed their wounds, and he and everyone in his household were immediately **baptized**.

**Acts 16:32-33 (NLT)**

Do you see the pattern? People were taught, they believed, then they were baptized. It is consistent in every one of those passages of Scripture. If you ever want to show that to someone, here’s how you can remember off the top of your head where these examples are found. Baptism is an **act** of obedience, so you go to the book of Acts. And the chapters are 2, 8, and 16.  $2 \times 8 = 16$ .

## 2. IT ALWAYS IS BY IMMERSION.

...they went **down into the water**, and Philip **baptized** him. When they **came up out of the water**...

**Acts 8:38-39 (NLT)**

Here's what was happening in this verse. Philip was walking down a road where God had told him to go and he met an Ethiopian eunuch. Philip explained the scriptures and Jesus to the eunuch and the eunuch asked to be baptized.

When you read they went down into the water and came up out of the water, what's the mental picture you get of what they did, just that part of the description? Sure, they walked down in, and they walked out. Why do you think they would bother to go into the water and get soaked if Philip could have just poured or sprinkled some water on the Ethiopian's head?

### **Baptize literally means to:**

• immerse • dip • submerge • saturate • plunge

Baptizo – to immerse, dip, submerge, saturate or plunge. This word was used in an ancient Greek recipe for making Pickles. The vegetables had to be immersed, dipped into the vinegar. They would subsequently take on the character of the vinegar. Baptizo - "to dip," was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another, etc. Plutarchus uses it of the drawing of wine by dipping the cup into the bowl.

Does anyone know what significant event happened in 1611? The King James Version of the Bible was translated. Prior to that time, the English word "baptize" did not exist. Here's a loose paraphrase of what happened. The scholars were translating all the Greek words into English. They translated "Theos" into "God" because that's what it meant. They translated "agape" into "love" because that's what it meant. However, when they came to the Greek word "baptizo" if they had translated it into what it meant, they would have used a word like "dip," or "immerse," or "plunge," or "submerge."

Here was the problem. The Church of England didn't immerse, they sprinkled. So if they had translated the word "baptizo," the Church of England would have had to have changed it's practice. So, instead of translating "baptizo," they transliterated it. That means they took the Greek "b" and wrote an English "b". They took the Greek "a" and wrote an English "a" and so on until they developed the word "baptize." By doing this, they were able to continue to sprinkle and didn't have to begin immersing, following the biblical meaning of the word for "baptizo."



# WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

## 1. AS A DEMONSTRATION THAT I WILL FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS.

One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and **he was baptized** by John in the Jordan River.

**Mark 1:9 (NLT)**

So much of what Jesus did in His life, He didn't do because He needed to do that, but in order for there to be a model for us to follow. That's true with baptism. Jesus didn't need to be baptized...He was sinless, perfect. But, He was baptized in order to give us an example to follow. And when He was baptized there was a voice, the voice of God that came out of heaven and said, "This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased." In other words, when Jesus was baptized, that thrilled the heart of the Father. Well, we need to demonstrate that we are willing to follow the example of Jesus, and the first place we need to follow His example is in baptism.

## 2. AS A DISPLAY OF MY NEW LIFE IN CHRIST.

For you were **buried with Christ** when you were baptized. And with Him you were **raised to a new life** because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins. He cancelled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross.

**Colossians 2:12-14 (NLT)**

It's like the little boy whose brother was about to be baptized who leaned over to his mother and loudly whispered, "Is Johnny about to be advertised?" That's what baptism is...a chance for us to advertise, to display, our faith in Jesus.

## 3. IT'S THE RIGHT STEP AFTER BELIEVING.

As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. **Why shouldn't I be baptized?**" **Acts 8:36 (NIV)**

Isn't that a great question: "Why shouldn't I be baptized?" That's really the right question. "Why should I be baptized?" is a defensive question. When we say,

“Why shouldn’t I be baptized?,” we’re saying there’s really no reason in the world for me not to be. Or, give me a reason why I shouldn’t. The assumption then becomes that I should, and that’s the right assumption. Baptism is just the right, logical, next step to take once you believe.

### **Does baptism itself have the power to save people?**

The answer to this is a resounding “No!” Scripture is abundantly clear that only Jesus saves. The work of salvation is a finished work by Christ on the cross. Baptism has no redemptive powers of its own. There is nothing special about the water. Nothing holy about the river or pond or baptistery. Tragically, some people believe they are going to heaven when they die just because a few drops of water were sprinkled over their heads a few weeks after their birth. They have no personal faith, have never made a personal decision, and are banking on a ceremony to save them. How absurd.

If baptism were a redemptive work, why did Jesus die on the cross? If we could be saved by being sprinkled or dunked, do you think Jesus would have died for our sins? If your faith is in the sacrament and not the Saviour, you are trusting a powerless ritual.

# WHAT IF A PERSON IS NOT BAPTIZED? **CAN HE BE SAVED?**

This question is best answered with a question. Why isn't the person baptized? There are three possible answers:

## **1. "I NEVER UNDERSTOOD BAPTISM."**

Perhaps you were never instructed to be baptized. Maybe you've never been challenged to consider the issue. That's entirely possible. If this is the case, we urge you to give thought to what God says about baptism. This doesn't negate your faith up to this point. Part of maturity is an openness to understand new areas of the Christian walk.

## **2. "I DON'T WANT TO."**

Let's analyze this response for a moment. God humbles himself by leaving heaven and being born in a feed-trough. The God of the universe eats human food, feels human feelings, and dies a sinner's death. He is spat upon, beaten and stripped naked, and nailed to a cross. He takes our eternal condemnation on himself in our place. He then offers salvation as a free gift and asks that we say yes to Him and obey His command to be baptized. Then someone responds, "I don't want to." Such logic does not add up. Such resistance spells

trouble of the soul. It reveals a problem of the heart. Such a person does not need a study of the sacrament. He needs a long, hard examination of the soul. The incongruity puzzled even Jesus.

**“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things I ask?” Luke 6.46**

True believers not only offer their sins, they yield their wills to Christ. Baptism is the initial test of a believing heart. If one won't obey Christ in baptism, what will he do when Christ calls him to obey him in prayer? Or evangelism? Or service? The highest motive for doing anything is because God asks you to do it. The heart of the saved says, “If you want me to be baptized in a pile of leaves, I'll do it. I may not understand every reason, but neither do I understand how you could save a sinner like me.” If one is resistant on the first command, one might wonder if there has been a true conversion experience.

**3. BUT THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARE NOT BAPTIZED FOR A THIRD REASON. WHAT OF THE ONES WHO DIE BEFORE THEY HAVE A CHANCE? WHAT IF I ENTRUST MY SOUL TO CHRIST AND BEFORE I CAN TELL ANYONE OR ARRANGE TO BE BAPTIZED, A SWARM OF KILLER BEES ATTACKS ME AND I DIE?**

The answer to this question is found in the character of God. Would a God of love reject an honest heart? No way. Would a God of mercy and kindness condemn any seeking soul? Absolutely not. Having called you and died for you, would he cast you away because of a curious sequence of events? Inconceivable.

Is it possible for an unbaptized believer to be saved? Yes, definitely. Should every believer be baptized? Yes, definitely.

**Conclusion Don't allow baptism to be something it is not.** Apart from the cross it has no significance. If you are trusting a dunk in the water to save you, you have missed the message of grace. Beware of dogmatism. No one this side of heaven can fully understand the majesty of baptism. Watch out for the one who claims to have a corner on the issue, especially if that person is in your mirror.

**Don't prevent baptism from being what God intended.** This is no optional command. This is no trivial issue. It is a willing plunge into the power and promise of Christ. Baptism is the first step of a believer. If it was important enough for Jesus to command, isn't it important enough for you to obey? And if it is important enough for Jesus to do, isn't it important enough for you to follow?