

What about Children Being Baptized?

Salvation comes by grace through faith in Christ. It is a choice by one who has clearly heard the call of the Spirit of God to come to Christ for salvation. A person has a clear understanding of the Gospel. A child may make that choice, but he or she does so with a clear understanding.



An adult makes the same choice also with a clear understanding **and** a child-like faith. A child may come, but he or she comes with understanding. An adult may come, but he or she comes with a child-like heart and faith. Then, either child or adult is ready to testify of his or her faith and the change Christ has brought. In the waters of baptism one can give that testimony.

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM *A FINAL WORD*

Baptism is not a doctrine over which to argue, but a declaration over which to rejoice because a lost sheep has been found, an unrighteous sinner has been given the gift of the righteousness of Christ. It symbolizes the reality that a person who once was spiritually dead has passed from eternal death to eternal life. An unholy man or woman, boy or girl has been birthed into the holy family of God and has a forever home in the holy presence of God our Father. What a Savior! What a privilege and honor to testify about what Jesus has done for the one who has repented of sin and placed personal faith in Him as Lord and Savior. The point of baptism is a time of testimony, presenting a physical picture of one's spiritual membership in the Body of Christ, and it is a place of praise and thanksgiving for the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ!

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Right Beside You.

BAPTISM MATTERS!

The
Meaning
and
Importance
of
Baptism



- What is Baptism and How is One Baptized?
- Who Should be Baptized?
- Why Should a Person be Baptized?
- When Should a Person be Baptized?
- Where Should a Person be Baptized?

KNOWING JESUS CHRIST FIRST

This booklet is written to help you understand where baptism fits in your walk with God. Before we look at baptism, let's look at your relationship with God. **To know for sure** that you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, accept these four truths.

God created you to walk with Him, listening to His Word, obeying, honoring, and enjoying Him—*“Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed and were created”* (Revelation 4:11)

We have sinned. We have not listened, obeyed, or honored God. Because of this, all of us are in danger of death and the judgment of God—*“the wages of sin is death”* (Romans 3:23).

The Father sent His Son Jesus to seek and to save the lost. To honor His Father and to reveal His love, Jesus went to the Cross to die and pay the penalty for our sin. His resurrection proved that His death fully paid for those sins. You can now be justified because He was crucified. He is Alive and now offers His righteousness and eternal life. Jesus said, *“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies”* (John 11:25).

Each must personally come to Christ to receive His forgiveness and the eternal life He offers. You must first repent of sin, turning away from all wrongs and from any kind of self-righteousness. You must turn to Christ placing faith in Him, asking Him to forgive you. Yield your life into His hand to live under His Lordship. *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life”* (John 3:16)

If you have never asked Christ to forgive your sin and come into your life or are not sure about your relationship with Him, here is a prayer that can help you express your heart.

“Lord Jesus, I admit my need of You and my need of Your forgiveness. I acknowledge my sin and turn from it. I believe You died on the Cross to pay for my sin and rose from the dead to give me new life. I now receive You into my life as Lord and Savior. I give you my life. Make me what You want me to be. Thank you for saving me and giving me Your eternal life. Amen”

To more fully understand how and where baptism fits into your life read through this booklet and follow the Lord and His Word.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What about Sprinkling or Pouring Instead of Immersion as the Form of Baptism?

There is no evidence in the Scriptures that any method was used other than immersion. The meaning of the word *baptisma* and *bapto* point to that. **Jesus** was baptized by immersion (Matthew 3:16). John 3:23 speaks of **John the Baptist** baptizing noting, *“And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there,”* implying that he needed enough water to immerse those being baptized [emphasis added]. The **early church** appears to have used the *mikvahs* (baptismal pools) at the Temple (Acts 2:41). The Jews used those pools for ceremonial cleansing before going up to the Temple. Since those pools were about four feet deep, one could easily have been immersed in them.

Church leaders throughout the centuries have acknowledged this truth. **Martin Luther** stated, “I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the word imports and the mystery signifies.” **John Calvin** noted, “The word ‘baptize’ signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church.” **John Wesley** said, “Buried with Him, alludes to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church.”

What about Infant Baptism?

There is no record of infant baptism in the Scriptures. Throughout the book of Acts every person baptized first believed, a personal act by one who clearly understood the message of salvation and of faith in Jesus Christ.

In the second century AD, far from baptizing infants, the churches had prolonged instruction and examination of each person's life if he desired to be baptized. In some cases this examination lasted for up to three years before baptizing a believer.



A SUMMARY

What is Baptism and How is One Baptized?

Baptism is a public testimony of one's faith in Christ. After giving a testimony of personal faith in Christ, a person enters the place of baptism where he or she is put under the water and immediately raised up out of the water, symbolizing his or her death, burial, resurrection, and new walk in Christ.

Who Should Be Baptized?

Anyone who has personally repented and believed the message of salvation in Jesus alone, placing faith in Christ for salvation.

Why Should a Person Be Baptized?

One is baptized in **obedience** to Christ's command, in recognition of the cleansed and changed heart given by Christ. It is a **testimony** of a new **identity** in Christ. It is part of being an obedient disciple of Jesus Christ and is commanded in the Scripture (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38).

When Should a Person Be Baptized?

After one has placed faith in Jesus Christ, **then** he or she is to be baptized.

Where Should a Person Be Baptized?

Over the years people have been baptized in pools, rivers, creeks, lakes, oceans, or in a church baptistery—Anywhere there is enough water to be immersed and a leader who can lead one into the waters of baptism.



Baptism
A testimony of a
new identity in
Christ.

BAPTISM MATTERS! HOW SO?

Baptism matters to God. It is part of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. He commands every believer to be baptized “*in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*” (Matthew 28:19).

Baptism matters to the believer. Baptism is a step of obedience in which a believer gives testimony of a personal relationship with Christ. **Baptism matters to the Body of Christ.** Believers share in common a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. Each symbolizes that relationship in the waters of baptism and all rejoice in that testimony. **Baptism matters to the world.** It is a testimony of what Christ has done in one life and what He can do in anyone who calls on Him for salvation. Let's seek to understand these truths by answering several questions about baptism.

What is Baptism?

The word “*baptism*” is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptisma* from the root word *bapto*. The word *bapto* paints a picture for us. In the days of the Old and New Testaments the act of “baptism” was seen in everyday life. How? The word *bapto* means “to dip in or under.” The word that grew out of that, *baptizo*, means “to immerse” and in Greek literature referred to “sinking” a ship or “to sink” in mud, or “to go under.” It also referred to pieces of cloth or clothing being immersed in water **for cleansing** or in dye **for changing** (they took on a **new identity**, the cloth identified with the new dye). Thinking of these pictures, consider the meaning of baptism. Baptism does not cleanse or change a person, but symbolizes what Christ has done in a believer's life.

In coming to Christ, we are immersed by the Spirit into Christ for cleansing and for changing. Just as a piece of clothing would be cleansed or changed into a new color, so when we are **immersed into Christ by faith**, we are cleansed and changed on the inside—we have a **new identity**, a **new life** in Christ. Just as a cloth was cleansed and changed for a **new use**, so we are cleansed and changed for a **new use**, a **new walk with and in Christ**. Baptism symbolizes this changed life.



What Baptism Is NOT...

It is important to know what *baptism is not*...

Baptism is **not a way to wash away sins**. The waters of baptism cannot cleanse a person of their sins. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse us of sin (Ephesians 1:7-8; Titus 2:14; 1 John 1:7).

Baptism is **not a means of salvation**. The act of baptism has no power to save. Only the Living Lord Jesus can redeem and save a person (Acts 4:10-12; 10:43).

Baptism is **not necessary for salvation**. The call to salvation is a call to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. That means a **turning** of the heart **from** trusting ourselves and our “best” efforts to **trusting** and obeying Jesus alone as Savior and Lord. It is **turning from** our sin and all that goes with it and **turning to** Him and to a walk of obedience, to do what He says is right (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). When we turn to Him, He gives and we receive His love, forgiveness, and righteousness (Mark 1:15; 2 Corinthians 5:15). The thief on the cross did not have to be baptized. He was, in fact, never baptized, but on the day of his death he fellowshiped with Jesus in paradise (Luke 23:39-43). Paul made a distinction between preaching the Gospel and the separate act of baptizing in 1 Corinthians 1:14-17. One focuses on the **substance**—**believing** the Gospel. One focuses on the **symbol**—**baptism**.

Who Should Be Baptized?

The Scriptures command all who have come to faith in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior to be baptized by immersion as a testimony of this new relationship to Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38, 41; 9:18; 10:47-48; 22:16)



Ways to Make Baptism More Meaningful

Baptism is not only a declaration of your relationship to Jesus Christ, it is a celebration of knowing Him, a celebration of forgiveness, cleansing and peace. How can baptism be a more meaningful celebration for the one being baptized and for the body of believers who join together for this celebration? Here are some ways to celebrate as a local church.

Depending on the location and the facilities a church has, a small church may baptize in a swimming pool or a local lake or river. Some have a grand celebration at the beach and baptize in the ocean. The kind of celebration you have can be as varied as your God-guided creativity can make it. The important thing is to celebrate the miracle that has happened to **one more heart, one more life**.

As part of the celebration, **invite** your family, friends, coworkers, or fellow students—anyone who can rejoice and celebrate with you and anyone who needs to hear and receive the good news of what Jesus Christ can do. Some churches send out invitations to family and friends to come join in the celebration.

At the baptism celebration, allow each new believer to give testimony of how Christ came into his or her life and the changes He has made. When a person is baptized, some churches ask family and friends to stand in his or her honor, which is a wonderful way of affirming the work God is doing in that life.

In whatever way you choose to celebrate, do so with a whole heart. Think of all Christ has done in your life and all He can do in the lives of those who will join in the celebration—those who are already believers can join in rejoicing at what Christ has done in their lives, those who do not yet know Him can pause to consider the call of God to their hearts, the call to repent and believe in Jesus to know the eternal life He can give.

In the Scriptures When Were People Baptized?

At the birth of the church on the Day of Pentecost, 3,000 people repented and placed their faith in Christ **and then** were immediately baptized “*that day*” (Acts 2:37-41). Verse 41 makes it very clear, “*So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*” [emphasis added] That was in Jerusalem. The same was true in Samaria when Philip proclaimed the message about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. **Immediately after** they believed, they were baptized (Acts 8:12). Later, on the road to Gaza, Philip told the Ethiopian official the message of salvation in Jesus. **After** hearing the message, the official asked about being baptized. They stopped the chariot, went down into the water and Philip baptized him (Acts 8:26-39).



Saul (Paul) was baptized **after** He met and believed in Jesus (Acts 9:3-19). In fact, when Ananias spoke to Paul, he exhorted him, “*Why do you delay? Arise and be baptized*” (Acts 22:16). In Caesarea, those in the house of Cornelius heard the message of Peter who said, “*through His [Jesus’] name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.*” Then, as the Spirit moved, they believed, receiving forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. **Then**, they were baptized (Acts 10:43-48). The same was true of Lydia and her family and the Roman jailer and his family in Philippi (Acts 16:12-15; 27-34). Acts 16 31-34 speaks of the jailer and his household **first** believing in the Lord Jesus and **then immediately** being baptized, “*having believed in God with his whole household*” (16:34). In Corinth, Paul testified about the Lord Jesus. Acts 18:8 gives us an example of what happened. “*And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized*” (Acts 18:8).

How is a Person Baptized?

In the act of baptism, a believer in Christ is immersed under the waters of baptism whether in a pool, a creek, a river, the ocean, or a baptistery in a church—anywhere there is enough water to immerse a person.



In baptism a person **goes into** the water, then is **placed under** the water and immediately **raised up out of** the water.

What is the Meaning of Baptism? What is Seen in Its Symbolism?

The act of baptism for a Christian is an immersion which **symbolizes** or paints a picture of one’s **relationship with Christ**. The **symbolism of baptism** points to a cleansing and a change within made by the Lord Jesus.

In the Old Testament there were many laws of purification. In these a person practiced certain washings for cleansing physically which were also symbolic of cleansing spiritually. Those waters were symbolic as are the waters of baptism. The waters of baptism do not cleanse us of our sin. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can do that. The waters of baptism simply symbolize that cleansing.

Titus 3:5-7 says, “He saved us, **not** on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the **washing of regeneration** [CLEANSING] and **renewing by the Holy Spirit** [CHANGING], whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being **justified by His grace** we might be made heirs [JOINED AS ONE, IDENTIFIED TOGETHER] according to the hope of eternal life.”

In salvation, we experience the “washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). The Holy Spirit applies the **cleansing** of the blood of the Lord Jesus **and** He **changes us** or “renews” us. We are **made new** and enter into a **new identity**. First Corinthians 12:13 states, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body [the Body of Christ], whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” We were all **identified into** Christ [“baptized into one body”] and Christ by His Spirit **came into** each of us [“we were all made to drink of one Spirit”]. Each one of us is first cleansed by Jesus and each becomes the dwelling place of His Holy Spirit.

What Is the Meaning of Being Baptized “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”?

Baptism is a testimony of identity. Being baptized “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” identifies one with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). This is one of the greatest revelations in Scripture. Being baptized in His name, God shows us at least three things:

- 1) **Who God is,**
- 2) **How we relate to Him,**
- 3) **Who we are in belonging to Him.**

When Should a Person Be Baptized?

Baptism is the symbolic act in which we **picture physically** what has **already happened** to us **spiritually**. When we come to Christ, we come seeking forgiveness and cleansing of sin (our nature) and sins (our actions). We come opening our hearts and lives to Him to enter in and live as Lord and Savior. When His Spirit comes to indwell us He identifies us in Christ. He baptizes us into the Body of Christ. We become one with Him—part of His Body—by the work of His Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).

In the act of water baptism, all these things are **symbolized**. A person has the opportunity to symbolically surrender to a watery grave just as he or she surrendered to Christ as Lord and Savior for cleansing and changing. Baptism gives the believer the opportunity to **testify** to the cleansing and changing that Christ has done in his life because he has put faith and trust in Jesus (calling on His Name). That means that baptism **always** occurs **after** a person has placed his faith in Christ. To be baptized before a person comes to faith in Christ is to symbolize something that has not yet happened. That makes going through the motions of “baptism” in fact a lie in that person’s life. God always wants us to testify the truth about our lives.

Baptism is a symbol much **like a wedding ring**. Wearing a wedding ring does not make one married and not wearing it does not make one unmarried. A person wears it as a public declaration that he or she is married, that he or she has a heart commitment to another. It is a **symbol of a covenant bond** as husband and wife, a **public declaration** of a covenant relationship. **Baptism** is a public declaration of a relationship with Jesus Christ. In its waters, baptism symbolizes that relationship with Christ. Just as a newly married person immediately testifies of that new relationship by wearing a wedding ring, so in Scripture, those who come to Christ are baptized **after** placing faith in Him, testifying of that new relationship.



If a President or King invited you to his royal residence, you would feel greatly honored. You would change your schedule, adjust your calendar, set aside time for such an honor. You have not only been invited into the presence of the King, you have been made a member of **His** royal family. Baptism is indeed a time to testify gladly of your identity with the King and His choice of you, as well as an opportunity to boast about Jesus Christ for His great sacrifice on the Cross and for His mighty resurrection power revealed in the changing of **your** heart!

What If A Person Is Hesitant to Be Baptized?

Understanding these truths is one thing. Obeying them is another. One of the obstacles that a new believer faces is the temptation to shy away from being baptized. For those who are a bit bashful in front of a crowd, remember, the crowd before whom you are being baptized is family forever. Sometimes the devil tempts us, tries to put fear in our hearts, or tries to convince us that it does not really matter about baptism. Still other excuses can come—I am too young, too old, too hesitant... the excuses are many. Do not let a single excuse or a bundle of excuses stop you. Being baptized is a blessing to you, to the Lord, and to every believer, and it is your privilege as a disciple of Jesus.



Understanding the truth
about baptism is one thing...
obeying is another.

Sometimes Satan will tempt
you seeking to put fears or
doubts in your heart.



First, think of **Who God Is**.

When one is baptized, he is making clear his relationship to **the one true God** who has revealed Himself in three persons, what is commonly called the “the Trinity.” As a matter of fact, in the original Greek language, the language in which the New Testament was written, Matthew 28:19 carefully states, “in the **name**” (singular), **not** “in the names” (plural). Why? Because God is not three gods, but One God in three persons. Why is this important? God has revealed Himself as the Father. Jesus came as the Son to reveal the Father and what kind of Son He is. God is also Spirit, not confined to one place nor limited in any way. When Jesus was baptized during His earthly ministry, the Father spoke from Heaven and the Spirit appeared, descending upon Jesus “*in bodily form like a dove*.” All three persons of the Trinity clearly revealed the will and work of God—the approving voice of the Father, the earthly obedience of Jesus the Son, and the comforting, powerful presence of the Spirit (Luke 3:21-22). When you place faith in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are supernaturally linked to the God of the Bible, the only true God.

Secondly, this truth about the Trinity also reveals something of **How We Relate to Him**.

Each believer relates to God **as a child to the Father**, knowing His care and His guidance (Matthew 6:8, 25-34; 10:29-32). We also relate to God **as a loyal subject to our mighty King, the Lord Jesus**. We obey and follow, knowing He knows the way to go and will lead us in His victory (Romans 14:7-12; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 2:14; Revelation 19:11-16). We can also relate to God the Holy Spirit **as an eager disciple to our perfect Teacher, Comforter, and Guide** (John 14:16-17, 26; 16:7-15; Ephesians 2:18, 22).



Third, think about **Who We Are** and what it means to **Belong to Him**.

God is **your Heavenly Father**, the Perfect Father, never forsaking you, never misunderstanding you, and never failing you in any way. When He disciplines you, it is always out of perfect love and for your best. When He directs you in a way that surprises you or even disappoints you, you can trust Him. As someone has said, when you do not understand His Hand, you can always trust His Heart. Jesus is **your Victorious King** (Revelation 19:11-16). He will not lose you, nor the battle that can rage around you. You are secure in His Hand. The Holy Spirit is **your Comforter and Teacher**, your constant companion all life long and throughout eternity (John 14:16-17; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4). He will give you His Wisdom from above (James 3:13-18) and guide you in the paths you should choose (Psalm 32:8). What a wonderful reality to belong to the True God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Who wouldn't want to be identified with Him!

Why Should a Person Be Baptized?

Three words answer why a person should be baptized—**identity, testimony, and obedience**.

- **Identity**

In **baptism we symbolize** our **new identity** and the entrance of His Spirit into our changed hearts. The Greek word *baptisma* does not refer to the outward act of baptism alone [just getting wet]. It always **symbolizes** the full picture of what Christ has done and is doing in redemption.

It pictures the fact of having **been** saved, of now **being** saved, and of the fact that we **will be** saved. How does baptism symbolize these dimensions of salvation? It all has to do with **identity**.

In coming to Christ for salvation, we identify with Christ. We admit we need the cleansing from sin that only He can give

and we admit we need His Life within us. We willingly receive His death for us on the Cross and identify with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. In baptism we picture our death in His death. Romans 6:3 states, *“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?”* In Him we are also buried and raised to *“walk in newness of life”* now and one day in the perfection of resurrection forever (Romans 6:4-5). Water baptism symbolizes this.

- **Testimony**

Baptism also involves a **Testimony** of the faith one has placed in Christ for salvation and the change that has occurred. It is a testimony of what has happened. One **goes into** the waters symbolizing **death in Christ**. One **goes under** the waters symbolizing **burial in Christ**. One **comes up out of** the waters symbolizing **resurrection in Christ** and a new cleansed walk in Him (Romans 6:4-5). This is a **testimony** of being forgiven and cleansed of sin, enabled now by the presence and power of His Spirit to walk a new walk, a new lifestyle with a new attitude of daily surrender to Him.

- **Obedience**

Baptism is in obedience to the command of Christ. He commanded His disciples to go into all the world and *“make disciples.”* Part of that is *“baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”* In baptism, one follows the Lord as an obedient disciple. That is what **baptism is** and why a person should be baptized.

The Honor of Baptism

Baptism is not only a matter of obedience, identity, and testimony; it is also a matter of highest honor and privilege. You are identifying yourself with the Almighty King, the one who confidently claims ownership of *“all authority ... in heaven and on earth,”* the Sovereign Lord of all Creation. Baptism is a public announcement, a declaration that you are now *“born-again”* **and** fully adopted into **His** family (John 3:3-16; 1 Peter 1:3; Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:5-6). In baptism, you are declaring the honor of becoming a member of His royal family, a royal heir with a royal destiny. You are testifying that Jesus chose **you**. You are declaring, *“Of all people, He touched and saved **me!**”*