

# BAPTISM

## INTRODUCTION

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- Baptism is an important issue when it comes to the doctrine of the church as it is 1 of only 2 ordinances for the church (the Lord's Supper being the other)
- Although it is not necessary for salvation, it is a necessary step of obedience in sanctification
- Baptism is critically important and must be properly understood because it is really the defining mark of Christian identity
- Nothing associates us and identifies us with Christ more than the ordinance of baptism
- In fact, the early believers were actually called "the baptized ones" because generally those who were genuinely saved were also baptized
- Baptism and salvation are inseparably linked in Scripture which is why Ephesians 4:5 says there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism"
- That's Paul's way of saying that there is one Lord, one faith, one salvation!
- Baptism and salvation are so closely linked in Scripture that it is assumed that if someone has been saved, they will also be baptized
- But there are 2 issues related to baptism that demonstrate some confusion surrounding it:
  1. The number of professing Christians who have not been baptized by believer's baptism
  2. The number of people who have been baptized but are not truly regenerate
- That confusion has resulted in the paradox that the church worldwide is full of both baptized non-Christians and non-baptized Christians
- That is a very strange irony – the church has people in it who have been baptized but don't truly know Christ AND it has people in it who are truly saved but have never been baptized
- So it is imperative that we understand baptism correctly

## THE HISTORY OF BAPTISM

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### The Baptism of John the Baptist

- Before the time of Christ, there would be some Gentile seekers who wanted to serve the One True God
- Therefore, some Gentiles would want to identify with Jews religiously...this is where baptism first appears
- A Gentile who wanted to be associated with the Jews had to go through 3 steps:
  - #1 Circumcision - This was to demonstrate that they knew they were sinful and that their innate depravity needed cleansing. In doing this, they were admitting the very root of their sinfulness.
  - #2 They were to be completely immersed into water - Why? → To identify a Gentile as dying to the Gentile world, being buried, and then rising in a new relationship with God.
  - #3 Then they would sacrifice an animal - The blood was actually sprinkled on the Gentile, symbolizing that he needed daily cleansing for his sins.

- This was the baptism John the Baptist performed when he urged Jews to be baptized
- His call was to make the people ready for the coming of Christ
- How did he do that? → He preached repentance, then he baptized the repentant person in an outward sign of an inward turning
- He baptized them in order to show outwardly that they were repentant inwardly

**Matthew 3:1-2, 6** ~ Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”...and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins

**Mark 1:4** ~ John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins

- John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance and a Jew who was baptized by John took an incredible step
- In being baptized by John, a Jew was admitting that they had been disobedient, sinful, and apostate in terms of their relationship to God
- All Jews were prepared to accept the view that Gentiles were defiled and needed cleansing...but for a Jew to admit this was almost unthinkable because they assumed they were God’s people already
- So Jews who submitted to the baptism of John the Baptist essentially had to acknowledge that they were no better than a Gentile
- They were admitting they needed a purging, a dying, and a rising to a new life
- They were admitting that they needed to turn from the old life to a new life in God
- They were confessing their sin and acknowledging that they needed a new life and a burial of the old
- It was a sign of what was really going on in their hearts
- John’s baptism of repentance marked a turning point to those Jews to get ready for their Messiah
- So the baptism of John the Baptist was a baptism of repentance which is different from believer’s baptism practiced in the church

## **Believer’s Baptism**

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- Believer’s baptism was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Great Commission as a symbol of those who had received Him as Lord and Savior and were identified with Him

**Matthew 28:19** ~ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit

- Believer’s baptism was carried out on the very first day the church came into existence

**Acts 2:41** ~ So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

- Thus, believer’s baptism differs from the baptism of John the Baptist in that his baptism was a baptism of repentance; whereas, believer’s baptism symbolizes the work of salvation done in the life of a believer and their union with Christ

## **THE RECIPIENTS OF BAPTISM**

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### **All Believers**

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- This is an issue of obedience...God commands believers to be baptized

**Matthew 28:19-20** ~ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

**Acts 2:38** ~ Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- As F.F. Bruce writes, "The idea of an unbaptized Christian is simply not entertained in the New Testament. It is not a personal choice but a divine command."
- Spurgeon said, "Nothing is more plainly taught in the New Testament than that it is the duty of every believer in Christ to be baptized."
- Therefore, every person who has faith in Christ should be baptized

**Acts 8:12** ~ But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

**Acts 8:13** ~ Simon himself believed and was baptized

**Acts 10:47-48** ~ Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

**Acts 16:14-15** ~ A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

**Acts 16:32-33** ~ And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.

## Only Believers

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- Baptism is only for believers because only for those who have been spiritually united with Christ does the symbol of baptism work
- It is only for those who have submitted to Christ have been crucified with Christ and raised up with Him to a new life

## THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

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### It Illustrates Christ's Death and Resurrection

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**1 Corinthians 15:3-4** ~ Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

- Baptism is a picture of what occurred when Christ died and was raised from the dead

### It Illustrates Our Union with Christ's Death and Resurrection

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**Romans 6:3-4** ~ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the death through the glory of the Father so we too might walk in newness of life

**Galatians 3:27** ~ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ," he is saying that Christians are immersed into Christ, not water.

**Colossians 2:12** ~ Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead

- Some have assumed that Paul is referring to water baptism in these verses...to believer's baptism
- But that's not the case here...Paul does not have in mind water baptism in these texts

- We know that because salvation does not come by water baptism...the Scriptures do not teach baptismal regeneration...the idea that someone is saved by their baptism
- Now, it's true that water baptism illustrates and symbolizes what takes place in the life of someone who is truly saved...Believer's baptism is an outward picture of an inward reality
- Water baptism illustrates our identification with Christ...it signifies the fact that the old order of life in sin has come to an end, and it is replaced by the new order of life in Christ
- But the baptism Paul refers to in these texts is not water baptism...not literal immersion into water
- It is spiritual baptism...Paul is using the word "baptized" in a metaphorical sense
- The word "baptized" (*baptizo*) literally means "to immerse"
- And here it means to be "closely identify with"
- We often refer to those who are "immersed in their work" – the idea is that they are almost one with it
- That's the idea here...Paul is saying that, as believers, we have been immersed into Christ Jesus
- This refers to our union with Christ...our identification with Him...our participation in all the privileges of Christ
- By placing saving faith in Christ, we are spiritually immersed into Christ Himself... we are united with and identified with Him
- This understanding of "baptism" is supported in 1 Cor 10:1-2 ~ For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea
- That obviously cannot refer to water baptism because the only people who were immersed in water were the Egyptian soldiers...they were drowned in it
- The Israelites didn't even get their feet wet
- So what does it mean that the Israelites were "baptized into Moses?" → It means that they were joined to Moses for the rest of their desert wanderings...they were permanently identified with Moses as a result of the Red Sea crossing
- Thus, our water baptism simply illustrates our spiritual baptism into Christ

### **It Illustrates the Washing Away of Sin and New Life in Christ**

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**John 3:5** ~ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

**Ezekiel 36:25-27** ~ Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

**Acts 22:16** ~ Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name

**Titus 3:5** ~ 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 and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

- It is not physical water that washes away our sin; but the water symbolizes the washing away of sin that has taken place in Christ
- What about 1 Peter 3:21? Does it indicate that water does wash away sin?

**1 Peter 3:21** ~ Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

## THE MODE OF BAPTISM

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- Only 1 mode of baptism is given in the New Testament: immersion
- The person being baptized was immersed or put completely under the water and then brought up again
- How we know this is the biblical mode:

### The Meaning of the Word

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- The Greek word for baptism means “to immerse under water, dip, plunge”
- There are two verbs that describe this act.
  - 1-Bapto, which is used 4 times, meaning “to dip, dip into die/to immerse”
  - 2-Baptizo, which is used many times, and always means “to dip completely, to drown”
- Baptism became a technical term to mean immersion
- That is why it is not translated (given its meaning) but it is transliterated (take the pronunciation of a word in one language and put it into another without giving its meaning)
- "Baptize" is a transliteration that means “to immerse”
- It should be translated every time it appears as "immerse" or "immersion"
- Its meaning is so obvious, that John Calvin said, "To baptize means to immerse. That was certainly the practice of the early church"
- Luther said, "The term Baptism is a Greek term. It may be rendered dipping, when we dip something in water, that it may be entirely covered with water."

### The Examples in the New Testament

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**Matthew 3:16** ~ After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove *and* lighting on Him

**Mark 1:5** ~ And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins

**John 3:23** ~ John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and *people* were coming and were being baptized

**Acts 8:38-39** ~ And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. <sup>39</sup> When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing

- Every baptism in the Bible is by immersion; no such thing as a non-immersion baptism
- Immersion is consistent with what the meaning of baptism is
- Only immersion fits the reality of which baptism is the picture
- A believer at salvation is united with Christ both in His death and resurrection
- Immersion symbolizes death-burial (going in the water) and resurrection (coming out of the water)
- Only immersion symbolizes the reality of what baptism signifies
- That's why we don't sprinkle with water...it is not the same symbol or imagery
- For these reasons we know that sprinkling is not considered a biblical mode of baptism

## WHAT ABOUT INFANT “BAPTISM”?

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- This is known as *paedobaptism* – the practice of baptizing infants
- Many Protestant groups practice this (Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Reformed)
- They argue for infant baptism based on the following arguments:

### 1. Infants were circumcised in the Old Testament – circumcision was the outward sign of entrance into the covenant community

Response:

- This is true, but circumcision enabled someone to enter into the covenant community even if their hearts had not been truly circumcised (i.e. they were saved)
- Although all Jewish males were circumcised not all Jewish males were genuinely saved

**Romans 2:29** ~ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

**Romans 9:6** ~ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;

### 2. Baptism is parallel to circumcision – In the New Testament, the outward sign for entrance into the “covenant community” is baptism; therefore, baptism is the NT counterpart to circumcision. Thus, baptism should be administered to all infant children of believing parents.

- The primary argument for this is that there is a continuity between how God deals with his people in the OT and in the NT
- At the heart of their argument is the belief that in the same way God gave the sign of circumcision to Israel in the OT, He has also given the sign of baptism to His people in the NT
- The belief is that these are both ways to mark the members of God’s covenant people
- The biblical support given for this argument is Colossians 2:11-12

**Colossians 2:11-12** ~ and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Response:

- Colossians 2:11-12 are not linking circumcision and infant baptism
- Those verses are simply describing the work of Christ in a person’s life...they are talking about a “circumcision made without hands” which is a reference to the work of Christ in someone’s heart and their union with him in Christ’s death and resurrection
- Furthermore, the NT does not speak about a “covenant community” made up of believers and their unbelieving children
- The only “covenant community” mentioned in the NT is that of those who have been truly saved by Christ
- One enters this community when they are born again, having exercised saving faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross and repented of their sins
- This is the biblical example: Everyone who is baptized in the NT is shown to have expressed faith in Christ

### 3. Household baptisms – passages that describe whole households being baptized must mean that some infants in those households were also baptized

- According to this argument, when the head of the household believed in Christ, not only was he baptized but his entire household was baptized as well
- And the assumption is that this included their infant children as well
- Dad or mom got baptized and so on the basis of their faith, their infant children were baptized as well
- The idea here is that the father serves as a surrogate for the faith of the children and so the father is baptized and then the mother and then the children are baptized under the umbrella of the faith of the father...a kind of baptism via solidarity

Response:

- This is an argument from silence since no passage specifically mention infants being baptized
- Also, in most cases clear evidence for saving faith being exercised is given prior to the baptism

**Acts 16:14-15** ~ A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us

**Acts 16:32-34** ~ And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

**1 Corinthians 1:16** ~ Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other

**1 Corinthians 16:15** ~ Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints),

**John 4:53** ~ So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives"; and he himself believed and his whole household.

**Acts 18:8** ~ 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.

## WHAT AGE IS APPROPRIATE FOR A CHILD TO BE BAPTIZED?

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- There is no biblical age required for a child to be baptized, but they must be old enough to understand the Gospel, give a clear testimony of their own conversion, and understand what baptism is
- At MBC, we wait until our children are old enough to believe, understand the true meaning of baptism and salvation, and have demonstrated this belief independently before we baptize them...usually at age 12 and above.