

Baptism

What is Baptism?

Four things are important to note regarding what baptism is;

First, Baptism is a Christian ordinance. The word ordinance means Christ commanded or gave it as a divine instruction (the other Christian ordinance is communion which is a topic for another day). As Mt 28:19 states, *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. Baptism is something Christ commissioned and wants us to do.

Second, the ordinance involves the ceremonial use of water to symbolize our identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Third, Baptism is an outward symbol of an inward transformation and a public declaration of one's commitment to follow Christ. Therefore, it marks the beginning of a new life in faith and signifies the washing away of sin through God's grace. (Bible analysis.org)

Fourth, Baptism does not provide for salvation (only faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins does that) nor does it provide for a dispensation of grace (in other words, God does not impart some special gift to you for doing it).

What does the word, Baptize, mean?

The word "baptism" comes from the Greek word "baptizo," which means "to immerse, submerge," "to dip," or "to wash." In classical Greek it carried the idea of fully immersing an object into liquid (to get fully wet). This is also the Biblical meaning. The words for sprinkling or pouring are different Greek words and are not used in the context of Biblical baptism.

What was John's Baptism?

John's baptism was one of repentance in anticipation of the Messiah. We know this from Mt 3:11, *"I baptize you with^[b] water for repentance"* (see also Mk 1:4) and from the testimony of Paul in Acts 19:4, *Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus."* In other words being baptized by John demonstrated a recognition of one's sin, a desire for spiritual cleansing, and a commitment to follow God's law in anticipation of the Messiah's arrival (from got questions.org).

Why was Jesus Baptized?

Mt 3:13-17 details the Baptism of Christ, *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. ¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

There are many reasons as to why Jesus chose to be baptized.

1. It was important that Jesus be recognized and identified by his forerunner, John the Baptist (see Mt 3:1-3 and Jn 1:29-31).
2. It showed that Jesus identified with sinners. John was preaching so as to bring into being a people who primarily identified themselves with a need for repentance and forgiveness (see Mt 3:11) rather than a people who primarily identified with their ancestral tradition and Jewishness (see Mt 3:9).
3. Jesus was baptized to *fulfill all righteousness*, vs 15. What does this mean? Jesus had no sins to repent of, so the righteousness he is to fulfill is not righteousness for himself, but the righteousness that is required from all of us. He is to live a perfect righteous life so he can be our righteousness. Is 53:11, *When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.* This new people whom John was gathering would need a righteousness not their own but God's. As Phil 3:8-9 states, *what is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in^[a] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.*
4. The Baptism of Jesus was a public Divine confirmation of Christ's ministry (see Mt 3:16-17).

Why should we be Baptized?

1. Jesus commanded it, Mt 28:19, *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*
2. Jesus modeled it, Mt 3:13, *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.*
3. It is a public confession of faith, Acts 8:12, *But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women* (see also 8:36-38).

Why are we Baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Mt 28:19-20 provides an understanding of why we are to be Baptized in the name of our triune God. The verse reads, *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.* Some translations have *into the name*. This is probably a better translation. Note the word *name* is in the singular, but then we see this singular name has three persons. As we noted earlier, the Greek word, baptizo, means to be immersed in. So to be baptized in the name, literally means we are immersed in the name of God and each of his persons. It is an act that identifies and expresses our union with each person of the Godhead and notes each of their roles in our salvation; God the Father who planned salvation (Eph 1:4-5); Jesus the Son who executed the plan and accomplished our redemption (Rom 3:21-26); and God the Holy Spirit who drew us unto God, convicted us of our sin, allowed us to believe, and now resides in each of us (Jn 16:8-11, I Cor 6:19-20).

What are the Mechanics and the Theological meaning of Baptism?

1. Prior to immersion: this symbolically represents your old life which has been animated by your old sin nature (OSN). Through the conviction of the Spirit (Jn 16:8) God has now brought you to repentance and the forgiveness of your sins through faith. As Acts 2:38 says, *Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.* Col 2:13-14, *You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins.* ¹⁴ *He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.*
2. Immersion: this act represents your joining to Christ in death, Rm 6:4, *For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism* (literally, we are immersed in Him). Rm 6:5 phrases it as, *Since we have been united with Him in His death.* Symbolically, your old life is put to death, your sins are completely and forever forgiven and the power of sin over your life loses its power, Rm 6:6-7, *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with,* ^[a] *that we should no longer be slaves to sin—* ⁷ *because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.*
3. Rising from immersion: Coming out of the water symbolically signifies your resurrection with Christ, Rm 6:4, *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.* Rm 6:8-10, *Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.* ⁹ *For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.* ¹⁰ *The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.* You are now a new creature with new spiritual life! 2 Cor 5:17, *This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!* (NLT).

What are its results?

It signifies a new name; you are a child of God, Gal 3:26-29, *For you are all children^[m] of God through faith in Christ Jesus.* ²⁷ *And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.* ^[a] ²⁸ *There is no longer Jew or Gentile, ^[a] slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.* ²⁹ *And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children^[a] of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you* (NLT).

It signifies a new identity, I am in Christ, Gal 2:20, *My old self has been crucified with Christ.* ^[a] *It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me* (NLT).

It signifies a new life, one animated by the Holy Spirit, 2 Cor 5:17, *This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!* (NLT). Rm 6:11-14, *So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.* ¹² *Do not let sin control the way you live; ^[a] do not give in to sinful desires.* ¹³ *Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were*

dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. ¹⁴ Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace (NLT). Gal 5:17, So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves (NLT).

It signifies a new unity, we are all members of Christ's body, Eph 4:4-6, For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. ⁵ There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all. 1 Cor 12:12-13, The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. ¹³ Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, ^[e] some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

When should I get Baptized?

The answer to this questions varies. Biblically we have the example of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch who was baptized immediately after coming to faith (Acts 8:26-40). On the other hand, I think most of us would be hesitant to baptize a four year old within our family who professed faith. Joe Rigney from Desiring God .org gives an effective way to think about this issue. He distinguishes the difference between credible faith and mature faith and holds that baptism should be reserved for a profession of mature faith.

1. Credible profession of faith: a credible profession means a believable profession. A young child may profess faith, and we believe them, yet they still require guidance, training, correction, discipline, and supervision. In other words they are mentally, socially, morally, and spiritually immature (there are some adults who also fit this description). They are and remain under a parents authority and jurisdiction. Parents rightly should shepherd, nourish, and encourage faith in our children until such time they are mature enough to understand the implications and significance of their confession.
2. Mature profession of faith, a mature profession means you are aware of the meaning of your confession. Though you may be spiritually young when baptized, you have the mental and social capacity to fully comprehend your decision.

What are the various Theological views of Baptism?

1. Roman Catholic (RC). The RC view holds Baptism to be a sacrament (a means of dispensing grace from God), that washes away sin and joins one to the church. It therefore is a means of salvation. Indeed, one cannot be saved in RC without Baptism for it is the process through which your sins are absolved and cleansed.
2. Orthodox Church (OC). The OC view closely aligns with the RC view. The OC holds that new converts and infants be baptized within 40 days of conversion or birth. They believe that Baptism cleanses sin, provides salvation, joins one to the church, and provides for the gift of the Holy Spirit.
3. Lutheran (L) (also the Anglican). This view also holds that the recipient of baptism should be new converts and infants. The mode is typically sprinkling, although pouring or immersion are

acceptable. Luther believed that baptism precedes faith and is the mechanism through which faith is imparted. In other words, when an infant is baptized, God imparts faith to that infant, forgiving their sins, and making them a member of the church. This idea is also called baptismal regeneration, because through baptism God regenerates and gives the gift of faith.

4. Reformed (the Presbyterian or Calvinistic view). The Reformed view is similar to the L view in that recipients should be new converts and infants. Again the mode is not important. The R view, like the L view, holds that Baptism is a means of dispensing grace, but not regeneration. It holds that the promise of the New Covenant extends not only to the believer but also to their children, thus baptizing a child includes them and joins them to the church. As circumcision expressed the inclusion of one to the Abrahamic Covenant, so baptism expresses the inclusion of one into the new Covenant of Grace.
5. Restoration (or Stone Campbell Movement). This view holds that only professing believers should be baptized, but that baptism, along with faith, is necessary for salvation.
6. Baptist. Holds that only professing believers should be baptized and that baptism is an outward sign of an inward faith. Baptism is not necessary for salvation nor is it a means of dispensing grace.