

What is the Meaning of Water Baptism?

When we were saved by means of our faith in Jesus as our personal Saviour, God united us into the group of the redeemed (the saved) to form part of the Body of Christ. In biblical terms this process of uniting us is actually our spiritual baptism in the Holy Spirit, which happened the moment we were saved and had saving faith, which is also when we actually received Jesus Christ (**Romans 8:9**). Since that moment on, the Holy Spirit has dwelt within us (in our bodies) and will dwell there forever (**1Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21-22; Jer 31:33**). This is earnest of the Spirit which is a deposit or guarantee against a future transaction (**2Cor 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph 1:14**) that God will complete on judgment day. The spiritual baptism does not have anything to do with speaking in tongues as some teach, but rather we are saturated (baptized) with the Holy Spirit, and we cease sinning freely and begin to truly obey God and be a "saint", holy, pious and just actually before God.

Romans 6:2-10 and **Galatians 3:26-28** define this spiritual baptism as a spiritual union with Christ. This spiritual baptism which is what includes us into the group of the redeemed is testified to by the representation by water baptism as a symbolic act. It is like a baby announcement, after the fact of the pregnancy, and because of it.

Also it is something that God has commanded us to do as an initiation of our service before God, because everything has to be sanctified before God can use it. This "sanctification" is separated from the worldly profaneness and identifies something reserved for the special use of God. This refers to our ministry before God, which is a requirement for every Christian (even though not everybody will leave secular jobs to live of the ministry).

Why should be baptized?

Why? When Jesus commanded his disciples to carry the gospel to all the world, one of his

commandments for them was to baptize those that accept the Lord under their ministry.

Mat 28:19 *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

Then we need to baptize everyone which is truly converted to Christ in order to be obedience to this command. We should understand that no work saves us, but the act of submitting ourselves to the will of God the Father is at the heart of our salvation and is what saves us (**1 John 2:17**). For the unsaved, the will of God is to believe in Jesus as the Christ (**John 6:30**), and for Jesus it was to save those who believe in Him.

John 6:40 *And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

Baptism is our public testimony (**1 Peter 3:21**) of our hope of salvation in Christ, and **it represents our public declaration that we reject our previous sinful life and believe in Christ**. In order to be saved, one must understand that we cannot be ashamed and hide our faith in Christ (**Romans 10:11**), but we must publicly and openly confess it.

Matthew 10:32-33 *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

Baptism is not a work that saves us because there is no good work that will save (**Titus 3:5; Eph 2:8-9**), but it is an announcement that shows sincerity on our part, and a salvation already retained.

Romans 10:9-10 *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

Also in the New Testament water baptism is a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ which marks the entrance of the person into the local church (**Acts 2:41**). Because of this, baptism should only be performed by the local church the person is joining or in other words within the structure of the local church and by an official representative of the local church after they have established the salvation testimony of that baptismal candidate.

When should you be baptized?

When: Baptism should be done as soon as possible AFTER one accepts the Lord. The Bible pictures baptism as always after salvation, as a testimony to what already has happened, as soon as possible after salvation like in the example of the jailer (Acts 16) which says "immediately" even though it was night, or in the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8) which was the same day as he accepted the Lord. In other words, it was as soon as possible. We should also mention the case of Cornelius in which Paul was baptized several days after salvation (apparently awaiting necessary arrangements which God imposed before being baptized).

We also should understand that it is of grand importance and priority to obey Christ with the baptism step as soon as possible, but also always remember that we are not saved by this act, so even if somebody is not baptized, and they happen to die, they are still saved by faith.

Who should be baptized? And what are the requirements?

Requirements: Baptism should come after repentance and salvation (Acts 8:37), and so the only people that should be baptized are believers. The people who do the baptizing should only be those who are acting under the official capacity of the local church where the person will become a member after his baptism. Always the biblical order is preaching of the gospel, saving faith, salvation and conversion, and then water baptism

immediately afterwards (**Acts 2:41; 8:12, 36-38; 18:8; 16:14-15**).

Who: The commandment to be baptized is for everybody that believes unto salvation, Thus as the multitudes went looking for John the Baptist (**Luke 3:7**), we should understand that there **should be desire** on the side of the individual to be baptized in obedience to God's will. It is your responsibility to ask and seek it from your pastor. **Baptism of infants** is not found in the Bible, but the baptism of any child that truly understands the gospel with saving faith may be baptized. (**Mark 10:14**)

What is the Method of Baptizing?

METHOD or MODE: Baptism is always by immersion. The word in Greek was used of a boat that sunk which clearly means being totally saturated with water, because it went under water. This represents our being totally saturated with God's Spirit of Holiness, and the only method that identifies correctly with this is immersion. The symbol of baptism according to **Romans 6:4** and **Colossians 2:12** is to be buried (which is to say that you are complete under dirt, surrounded on all sides by dirt and rock). The idea of burying the dead, is because after death, and as a consequence of death, there begins an internal process of putrefaction. A dead body is something unclean that can cause disease. Burying has the idea of sealing it off by means of totally surrounding it with earth.

The only biblical mode then is total immersion, which corresponds to the symbolism of burial. John chose a river to baptize (**John 10:40**) and frequented places where "*there was much water there*" (**John 3:23**). In **Acts 8:38-39** Philip baptized the Eunuch by **going down into the water** and **coming up out of the water**. The common sense understanding of these things is that their baptisms were by immersion. In every verse dealing with baptism, we always find that the person is put into the baptizing medium (water) and never do we find language that would

indicate that the medium is put on the person (as in sprinkling or pouring).

Those who wish to make baptism a covenant relationship of the parents with God, effectively saving their newborns to later lose their salvation and need to renew their salvation somehow, always want to open baptism to other modes because total submersion doesn't work well with newborns. This heretical doctrine of infant baptism is the driving force behind multiple modes of baptism.

What is the formula used?

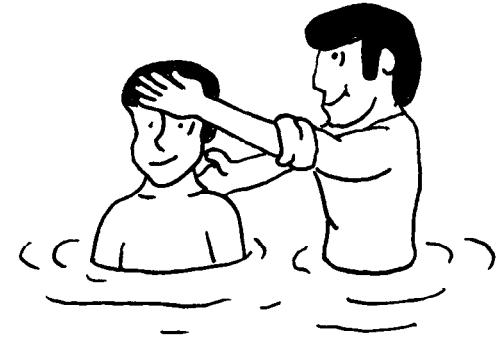
Formula: If baptism is a confession of the individual's faith in Jesus Christ (never is it the confession of their parents faith), in other words it represents a union with someone (**Acts 19:3-5**), then the formula used to baptize is important. Baptism according to **Mat 28:19** (the command) should be in the name of the Triune God, "*in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.*" This formula takes precedence because it is in the command. As God raised Jesus from the dead giving him life, also the Triune God gives us life. **Zech 12:10; John 2:19,21; 1 Peter 3:18; Rom 8:11; Acts 3:26**. One also sees the Trinity in the example of Christ's personal baptism (**Luke 3:21-22**).

But contrast this with these examples of people baptized in the name of the Lord – **Acts 22:16; 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 1Cor 1:13, 16**. Even though there are three persons of the Trinity who bring salvation, the key person in salvation is only Jesus. Without confessing Jesus, there is no salvation (**Mat 10:32-33**). The underlying symbolism is that the death of Jesus is the only way we can be saved, but the formula can also be in the three persons of God. This is because God the Father and God the Spirit did not die on the cross for us, only Jesus, and because of this we see this synonym in the baptismal formulas.

The Major Points in Water Baptism

By David Cox

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A Study on Water Baptism
for New Converts

Sections:

- Why should we be baptized?
- Who should baptize?
- What are the requirements for baptism?
- When should you be baptized?
- How or what is the method used?
- What is the formula used?