

Why do we baptize?

Jesus commanded us to baptize (Matthew 28:19-20), and we are following His example when we do it (Mark 1:9). It is a symbol of how we were spiritually buried with Him and raised for new life when we accepted His salvation. It is the first step of obedience and of the life of discipleship.

Is baptism needed to gain salvation?

No. Baptism is to salvation as a wedding ceremony is to a marriage. A wedding does not legally make anyone married—that only happens by the signing of a marriage license as witnessed by a licensed church leader or city official. Similarly, baptism is a public display of our love for Jesus, and it represents what God has done to seal our salvation.

Remember, we are saved by God's grace, through faith in Jesus, not by any religious works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Jesus gave salvation to people without baptism (Luke 23:39-43), and Paul was sent to preach the gospel for salvation—not to baptize for salvation (1 Corinthians 1:13-17). Paul always preached that salvation came by believing on Jesus Christ alone (Acts 16:30-31, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11).

Some may point out isolated passages that seem to indicate baptism as part of salvation. However, these passages, like Acts 2, 22 and 1 Peter 3, are simply statements of the entire process of accepting Christ and beginning a new life in Him. They show that our sins are washed away by faith in Jesus and that we evidence this decision to believe in Him through baptism. To return to the marriage illustration above: when we ask a young man if he's going to "put a ring on her finger" or we talk to an engaged couple about walking down the aisle, what do we mean? We are clearly using symbolic language to

talk about the act of getting married. The same is true about baptism and salvation.

Why is baptism done publicly?

All the biblical examples of baptism show people being baptized in public, whether in front of small groups of people (like Paul with the Ethiopian official or Philippian jailer – Acts 8, 9, 16), or large crowds (like John the Baptist's converts or the converts on the Day of Pentecost – John 1, Acts 2). We need not be ashamed of Jesus when we have become Christians. In fact, we should want to share our joyous decision with family, friends, and our church. You could even think of baptism as a signaling event that calls your new church family to come around and support you.

Why do we baptize by immersion?

All throughout the New Testament, we see people being taken down into water and brought back up (Matthew 3:16, Acts 8:38-39). John the Baptist's baptism was a picture of the Old Testament repentance by purification, which involved the full washing of a person ceremonially (Leviticus 18, Numbers 19, Deuteronomy 23). The Greek word for baptize—*baptizo*—means to immerse. It is this immersion that is a picture of being buried and raised to new life in salvation (Romans 6:4). This is not a major doctrinal issue since we are more concerned with the heart's condition with Jesus, but we want to practice Scripture as closely as we understand it.

What if I was not immersed for my baptism?

Although the method of baptism is not a major doctrinal issue, we do desire to practice the pattern found in the New Testament (see why we baptize by immersion). That is why we would invite you to be baptized by immersion if God so leads you and you are ready.

How soon should I be baptized?

In the New Testament, people were baptized immediately after salvation as a first and public step of obedience to Jesus (Acts 2:41, 8:38-39, 9:18, 10:47-48, 16:15, 33, 18:8, 19:5). You should be baptized as close as possible to the time of your decision to accept Jesus as Savior. There is no scriptural reason for waiting, but all the reason for stepping out and obeying today!

Are there sins which could prevent me from being baptized?

Scripture does not talk about any prerequisite holiness before being baptized. And again, people in the New Testament who accepted Christ were immediately baptized in water. Since baptism shows our decision of repentance and our desire to make Christ our master, there should be a spirit of repentance in the person being baptized. The trouble would come if a person accepted Christ and, while preparing to be baptized, proclaimed, "I am not giving up my immorality. I will do what I want!" Do you think they are ready to follow Jesus in baptism? In this case, it would be wise for godly pastors or counselors to stop this person and help bring understanding of the purpose of baptism before proceeding.

What if I was baptized before getting saved?

The first question to be considered is, "why were you baptized at that time?" Was it from confusion about preaching that you heard, or was it your heart-felt desire to follow God? Either way, we should obey Jesus when He commands us to be baptized as the public statement after salvation (Matthew 28:19-20). We would invite you to be baptized again as a new Christian.

How often can I be baptized?

In the New Testament, baptism is a first step and a one-

time ceremony; there are no examples of people being baptized more than once. Since it is not a magical action that brings salvation or makes you closer to God, we encourage you to not confuse yourself or others by being baptized more than once after salvation.

Can infants or children be baptized?

Although Scripture shows Jesus welcoming and blessing children, it does not show Him baptizing infants, nor are there any passages that show or command this practice. In the New Testament, those who were baptized were the new converts to Christianity. Since baptism is a step of obedience after salvation, and since infants cannot make that spiritual choice (due to natural mental development), we do not baptize them. We do, however, dedicate infants to the Lord (1 Samuel 1:27-28). How young can a child be to accept Christ? It is different from child to child, dependent on the child's development. But if a child has understood and accepted salvation, then there is no reason that they should not be baptized as well.