

Thinking Biblically

BAPTISM

wellspring
church

What is

BAPTISM?

Baptism is an ancient Christian rite, in which a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is immersed into water. Two verbs in the New Testament support this basic idea. They are the verb *baptō* used four times in the New Testament, meaning “to immerse, or to dip into.” It describes dipping cloth into dye so that it was totally submerged to be fully colored by the dye.

There is also an intensified form of *baptō*, *baptizō* occurring many times in the New Testament, meaning “to dip completely.” In the book of Acts, the noun *baptisma* is always used to refer to a person who is confessing Christ being immersed fully into water.

Whether you’re talking about the verbs or the nouns, all of them refer to a complete immersion in water. Every place *baptō* appears and every place *baptizō* appears, it could be translated “immersed” or “submerged.” In fact, the word “baptism” is so unique, that it became the technical term for such immersion. This led to the translators of English Bibles transliterating the Greek and creating the word “baptized.”

Let’s look at the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:38-39 [NIV]:

*And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip **baptized** him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.*

There are also some figurative uses of the verb baptize in the New Testament. When a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, they are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:13, you are literally “immersed, buried, or submerged into” the body of Christ.

*For we were all **baptized** by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*

Baptism is a treasured symbol given by God to the New Testament church. He’s only left two of them with us in the church: One, baptism and two, His table of communion. Baptism then is a symbol, an object lesson, a visual representation of a spiritual truth that describes and defines a complete submersion and immersion into Christ.

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

When you come to faith in Jesus Christ, you're immersed into Christ, as it says in Romans 6:3–7 [NIV].

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

When you come to Christ, you're literally "immersed" into His death. At that moment, your sins are transferred to Him and His righteousness is transferred to you. Your old life is over, you are born again and your new life begins. In 1 Corinthians 10:2, Paul writes that the children of Israel crossing the wilderness were "baptized into Moses." In other words, they were "immersed into Moses," becoming one with their leader. Likewise, we are "immersed into Christ." When you come in faith to Christ and you are redeemed and saved, you are literally immersed into Christ which means you have been immersed into His death, and raised to new life through His resurrection.

Galatians 2:20 [NIV]:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

BAPTISM FAQ

Should I be baptized?

If you are a believer in the work and person of Jesus Christ, and trust in Him alone to accomplish your salvation then the next thing you do should be baptized.

What if I was baptized as an infant, or because someone else made me?

The New Testament is clear that baptism is for people who have personally believed and professed faith in Christ. If you were baptized before you believed in and professed faith in Jesus Christ, then you should be baptized again.

Is there an age of requirement?

Scripture does not recommend or establish a particular age for children to be baptized. We do not want to discourage a born again child from being baptized, yet it's important to exercise careful discernment to avoid deception and false assurance in a child's life by baptizing him or her before he or she is biblically regenerate and able to understand, articulate, and embrace the Gospel. This is something that parents should discuss with mature Christians, including Elders, and Pastors.

Who can baptize at Wellspring Church?

As we believe baptism is one of two ordinances given by Jesus to the church, to be administered in the church, we believe that pastors and elders who oversee the local church are to administer this ordinance and baptize believers. However, we are glad to allow a friend or family member who played an integral role in the conversion of an individual to participate in the rite of Baptism. We are also pleased to allow a parent to be involved in the baptism of a believing child.

Colossians 2:12 [NIV]

...having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

Salvation places a person in union with Jesus Christ and in some amazing, supernatural way, we participate spiritually in His death and resurrection. This is what Peter calls “the baptism that saves.” Paul calls this the washing of regeneration, or in Acts 22:16, “The washing away of your sins.” It is immersion into Christ. And this salvation is depicted ceremonially, symbolically in baptism.

DOES BAPTISM SAVE YOU?

Baptism is not a saving ceremony. It’s important but it doesn’t save you. Look at 1 Corinthians 1:17:

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Ephesians 4:4-6 shows us that baptism is a symbol of true saving faith, in the one true God.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

It is our faith in Jesus Christ that saves us, not the public symbol of our faith. An open public confession of Jesus Christ is the surest way for one to be assured that the faith they have is a saving faith. Through the confession of our faith, we go on public record as having abandoned our former lives and embraced Christ.

Matthew 10:32-33 [NIV]

“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

Baptism is the first step of an obedient Christian life. It’s not designed to make you more holy, to make you more secure, to save you. It is simply the first public step of true confession of Christ openly. The ordinance of baptism then exists for the purpose of showing in a symbol form the reality of every believer’s identification with His Lord and Savior and his abandonment of the old life and embracing of the new life in Christ.

In scripture, Baptism was an immediate, inseparable, public testimony of a true conversion. Throughout Scripture, we see examples of believers being baptized soon after (if not immediately after) their conversion. If you have trusted in Jesus Christ alone and have not been baptized, we encourage you come and be baptized. Please give us a call at 616.662.8955 or email church@wellspringcc.org for more information.