

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT BAPTISM

A Position Paper of Northshore Bible Church

What did the Greek word for *baptize* mean in Biblical times?

Literally, it described cloth being *placed into* a vat of dye in the fuller's trade.

Figuratively, the cloth was so *identified with* the dye that it was forever the same color. So the verb "*baptizo*" meant to be *placed into* resulting in *permanent identification with*.

What *method* of baptism was practiced in Biblical times?

- ⇒ In connection with baptisms, prepositions such as "down into the water" (Acts 8:38) and "up out of the water" (Mark 1:10) clearly indicate immersion in water of some depth.
- ⇒ Jewish proselytes (Gentiles) submitted to being baptized by immersion in a waist-deep baptismal pool found in the center of synagogues which have been uncovered by modern archaeologists.
- ⇒ The early church practiced baptism only by immersion until the third century when exceptions were granted to pour water onto someone too sick to be immersed.
- ⇒ The Greek word means to submerge. Other words specifically mean pouring or sprinkling.

Is baptism *necessary for salvation*?

The New Testament says over 200 times that salvation is only by faith in Christ as one's personal Savior apart from any works on our part. "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done, but according to His mercy" (Titus 3:5). There is no saving grace in baptism nor any other ritual! A proof text is the thief on the cross next to Jesus who died with no chance to be baptized but was none the less assured of salvation.

Is baptism *necessary to join the church*?

Nowhere in the Bible do you find anyone joining the church. Instead, we are told that "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (I Cor. 12:13). The Holy Spirit baptizes (places) us into the church, the body of Christ, at the moment of salvation.

Then *why* should Christians submit to water baptism?

Our Lord Jesus commanded only two ordinances: the Lord's supper and believer's baptism. To 'make disciples' is the principle verb in the Great Commission of Matt. 28:19-20.

>by going

>by baptizing

>by teaching

These three *definitive present participles* explain the steps in Christ's formula for making disciples. Baptism, therefore, is a step in Christ's formula for making believers into disciples of His.

When should Christians be baptized?

Ten times in the book of Acts we read such as 8:12, “when they believed, they were baptized”. The Bible teaches that believer’s baptism is to take place after trusting in Christ. In Acts 19, some who had been baptized by John the Baptist but had never even heard of Christ were again baptized after believing in Him as their personal Savior.

What about *infant baptism* or *christening*?

If believing in Christ as one’s personal Savior is a pre-requisite to baptism, then no infant could possibly qualify. This is why you never one read of infant baptism in the Bible, but rather of babies being dedicated to the Lord. To *christen* means *to make one a Christian*. It comes from the heretical Roman doctrine of baptismal regeneration, that the rite of baptism actually makes one a Christian even in infancy.

Why should every believer be baptized?

- ⇒ In obedience to the command of Christ, to be well pleasing to Him, honoring His word.
- ⇒ As a step in Christ’s formula for making disciples, a step toward spiritual maturity.
- ⇒ To identify with Christ as a public testimony of an inward change already taken place.