

**Believer’s Baptism**



**There are two ordinances in the Christian Church - baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both are instituted in the Gospels, celebrated in the Acts, and explained in the Epistles. Since they are instituted in the Gospels (by our Lord Himself), we may conclude that they are a part of the message to us. Since they are celebrated in the Acts, we conclude that they belong to the practice of Christ's Church. Since they are explained in the Epistles, we conclude that they are designed to be continued until Christ comes.**

1. ***WHY BAPTIZE?***
2. THE LORD'S COMMAND... *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"* ([Matthew 28:19](http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?Matthew+28:19)).
3. THE PRACTICE OF THE EARLY CHURCH... The scripture clearly states that it was the practice of the early church to baptize new believers (converts) immediately upon their proffesion of faith in Christ. At Pentecost, Peter outlined the pattern: *"repent and be baptized"; following that instruction, "those who accepted His message were baptized" (*[*Acts 2:37-38,41-42*](http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?Acts+2:37-42)*).*
4. ***WHAT DOES 'BAPTIZE' MEAN?***
5. DEFINITION... Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and rised Saviour. It also symbolizes the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection from the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is a prerequisite to the privilege of church membership.
6. GREEK WORD... Greek is the original language of the New Testament. To accurately interpret scripture we must accept the Greek meaning of a word as primary.

 The Greek word for "baptize" is *baptidzo*. It means to immerse, submerge, dip. It was used in classical Greek for the dipping of animals, the dipping into dye so as to dye fabric, or of the sinking of a ship.

 Scholars are universally agreed that the primary meaning of *baptidzo* is the **complete submersion** of an object in water.

 C. DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS... Through the centuries, a major point of division between Christian denominations has been the meaing of the word *baptize*. How did this difference evolve?

 Our English word *baptize* is not a **translation** of the word *baptidzo*, but a **transliteration**, This means the word was brought over from the Greek into the English language with no spelling change. By doing this, the priests could supply their own definition (sprinkling, pouring) to the anglicized word.

 The reason for this transliteration was that during the 2nd or 3rd century and the 14th century, the Roman Catholic Church changed the **mode of baptism**. Therefore, when the Bible was translated into English (King James version, 1611), if the translators had literally translated the word *baptidzo* with the word "immerse" (which is the proper translation), the Roman Catholic Church would have been shown to be wrong in the mode of baptism they practiced. By bringing in a completely foreign word - the transliteration *baptize* - the priests could supply their own definition. This is part of the reason why different churches today sprinkle or pour instead of practising immersion which is the correct biblical mode of baptism.

 **D.** SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE... When Jesus was baptized ([Matthew 3:16](http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?Matthew+3:16)), *"He went up out of the water."* The Greek means **"from the midst of"** the water=immersion. Mark presents the same picture of Jesus' baptism - *"as Jesus was coming up out of the water"* ([Matthew 1:10](http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?Mark+1:10)). The same imagery of immersion is used for the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch - *"the eunuch went* ***down into*** *the water"... "when they came up* ***out of*** *the water"* ([Acts 8:38,39](http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?Acts+8:38-39)). Immersion is the only interpretation of *baptidzo* that adequately symbolizes the meaning of the event as explain by Paul ([Romans 6:3-15, Colossians 2:12](http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?Romans+6:3-15,Colossians+2:12)).

**E.** SCHOLARLY TESTIMONY... "Lexicographers universally agree that the primary meaning of *baptidzo* is 'to dip' or 'to immerse", and there is a similar consensus of scholarly opinion that both the baptism of John and of the apostles was by immersion" (John Murray, *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol.1, p.466).

 "Few serious students of the New Testament would contest the claim that *baptizien* means 'to immerse'" (Bridge and Phypers, *The Water That Divides*, p.29).

 "Baptism was normally by immersion either in the river or in the bath-house of a large house" (*Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity*, p.10).

***3. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE EVENT?***

The act of believer's baptism is not a magical, mystical ceremony. It does not convey any special grace on the participant. It does not "save" a person or wash away their sins. Salvation and forgiveness occur *prior* to baptism when a person, by repentance and faith, commits their life to Christ.

Baptism is a **symbolic act**. It is a *public expression* of a person's faith. It is a *visible testimony* of an inner commitment.

A. Baptism is a declaration of the believer's identification with and faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. ([Romans 6:4-5, Colossians 2:12, Galatians 2:20](http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?Romans+6:4-5,Colossians+2:12,Galatians+2:20)).

**B.** Baptism is a symbol of our spiritual death (to sin), burial (of our old life), and resurrection (by the power of the Holy Spirit) to walk in a new way of life ([Romans 6:4-6, Colossians 2:12, 3:1-3](http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?Romans+6:4-6,Colossians+2:12,3:1-3)).

**C.** Baptism is a profession of the believer's faith in the coming resurrection of the dead ([Romans 6:6, I Corinthians 15:1-58](http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?Romans+6:6,I+Corinthians+15:1-58)).

**SYMBOLISM OF BAPTISM**
The believer's identification is symbolized by:

 **DEATH going down into the water**

 **BURIAL down under or submerged in the water**

 **RESURRECTION coming up out of the water**



***4. QUESTIONS CONCERNING BAPTISM***

**A. *Is baptism necessary for salvation?***

Salvation comes by repentance and faith. The waters of baptism have no saving power. Some groups teach that baptism is necessary for salvation. This teaching has no scriptural basis. The New Testament abounds with instances of and statements about salvation with no reference to baptism ([Luke 23:42-43, John 3:16, John 5:24, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9-10](http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?Luke+23:42-43,John+3:16,5:24,Acts+16:31,Romans+10:9-10)).

**B. *Are sprinkling and pouring accepted in this church?***
 We practice baptism by immersion in this church because it is the clear meaning of the word *baptidzo* in the New Testament. It was the mode used by Christ and the early church. Though many Christian traditions use alternate means, we do feel that they best express the biblical model. We respect the traditions of our Christian brothers and value the meaning of these practises for tem; however, we feel baptism by immersion is a more complete and biblical model to follow.

**C. *Is infant baptism valid?***
 Many traditions practice infant baptism as the dedication of a child to Christ or the initiatin of a child into a covenant relationship with Christ and the church. Again, we do not feel that this meets the biblical requirements for believer's baptism. (See the notes above for a clear definition of believer's baptism.) Infant baptism does not satisfy the requirements of believer's baptism in at least three ways:

* + An infant cannot express the repentance, faith and commitment necessary for salvation.
	+ It is not immersion.
	+ An infant does not have the intellectual understanding to understand what he/she is doing.

 Dedication of a child is to be commended. However, it must be clearly understood that his action in no way takes the place of believer's baptism after the child has become a Christian.

**D. *When is re-baptism necessary?***

 ***1.*** If the first baptism preceded a true salvation experience. Any ceremony experienced in an unconverted state is lifeless and meaningless. The Biblical pattern is clear - repent and be baptized. Valid New Testament baptism can only *follow* a true Christian commitment.

 2. If the baptism was performed on the basis of an improper theological interpretation (e.g. baptism as a means of salvation).

 3. If the original baptism was entered into from the wrong motive (e.g., to please one's parents or because other friends are being baptized). This is often an issue when someone was baptized as a child and did not receive careful guidance and counselling.

**E. *Is a waiting period necessary?***
 One does not have to wait until he is "good enough" to be baptized. Baptism is usually administered very soon after a person publicly professes their faith in Jesus Christ. Indeed, baptism was one of the ways in the New Testament that a person publicly professed their faith. There are many examples of baptism taking place immediately following a commitment of faith ([Acts 2:41, 8:35-39, 16:31-33](http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?Acts+2:41,8:35-39,16:31-33)).

 The primary issues are ones of maturity and understanding. With young children, it is sometimes advisable to have a time of waiting if there is a lack of understanding, immaturity, or a feeling on the part of the parents that they are not yet ready.