

BAPTISM BASICS

Key Concepts for Every Believer Preparing for Baptism

1. Jesus Commanded Believers To Be Baptized.

Matthew 28:19, Page 1557. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit." As Jesus concluded His earthly ministry, He spoke to the eleven disciples (Judas Iscariot had already betrayed Christ) and delivered the Great Commission to them. Following the example and command of the Lord Jesus Christ, New Testament believers expressed their faith in Jesus Christ and proclaimed their salvation by receiving baptism. Jesus expected that every believer would be baptized.

2. Only Believers Should Be Baptized.

Acts 2:41, Page 1702. "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls." The New Testament writers taught that only believers in Christ underwent baptism (e.g., Acts 2:38,41, Page 1702; 8:12, Page 1714; 8:36-38, Page 1715; 9:18, Page 1717; 10:47, Page 1721; 16:14-15, Page 1732; 16:33, Page 1733; 18:8, Page 1736; 19:5, Page 1737). The early church invited all believers to be baptized (Acts 2:38, 41, Page 1702) as a public proclamation of their faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior (Romans 5:8-9, Page 1764). Baptism in the church occurred after personal salvation and only because of salvation. In other words, infants were not baptized (because they did not have saving faith), but rather new believers of all ages were baptized after they had been born again by faith (Acts 2:41, Page 1702; Ephesians 2:8-9, Page 1828; John 3:3, Page 1657). Believers are baptized because they have been saved from their sins and desire to identify themselves with Christ. The Ethiopian eunuch listened to Philip preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to him, and then proclaimed his need for baptism (Acts 8:34-39). Immediately after believing, he received baptism. This pattern characterizes the practice of baptism immediately after salvation in the New Testament.

3. Baptism Identifies Believers as Followers of Christ.

Romans 6:4, page 1765. "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." Baptism symbolizes the believer being submerged into the death of Christ and raised

with Christ to walk in newness of life to the glory of God (Romans 6:4, Page 1765). Colossians 2:12 (Page 1843) provides a similar view of baptism: "having been buried with Him in baptism in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." In both of these passages, baptism identifies the believer with Christ in two ways. First, each believer submerges in the water which pictures identification with the death and burial of Christ. Each believer has been crucified with Christ so that the old self with its passions and desires has died (Galatians 2:20, Page 1821; 5:24, Page 1825). Second, every believer rises from baptism into the same standing that Christ had before God the Father (who said, "My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased,") because we have become the sons of God, and joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:14, Page 1769). Believers also called upon the name of Jesus Christ in baptism (Acts 22:16, Page 1745).

4. **Symbol of Cleansing.**

Hebrews 10:22, Page 1881. "Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." While the New Testament never teaches that baptism saves anyone, because only faith in Christ brings salvation (Romans 5:8-9, Page 1764; Ephesians 2:8-9, Page 1828), baptism does symbolize cleansing from sin. In Hebrews 10:22 (Page 1881), the believers draw near to God, "having hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Likewise, 1 Corinthians 6:11 (Page 1788) describes believers as "washed," "sanctified," and "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

5. **Symbol of Union with the Body of Christ, The Church.**

1 Corinthians 12:13, Page 1797. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." In baptism, the new believer identifies himself with Christ and with the Body of Christ, the Church. As individuals become believers in Christ, at the moment of spiritual rebirth, each believer joins the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-14, Page 1796: the body of Christ has many members, but forms one body). Likewise, believers also become united together as one holy temple of the Lord, and "are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22, Page 1829).

6. **Baptism Never Saves Anyone and Baptism Is Not Required for Salvation.**

Luke 23:43, Page 1650. "And He said to him, 'Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.'" Some people wrongly teach that baptism is

essential to salvation and without baptism, you will not go to heaven. Those people even quote verses from the Bible that they claim teach this false doctrine of baptismal regeneration. One example shows the error of baptismal regeneration. Consider the thief on the cross next to Jesus Christ. After that thief made a profession of faith while hanging on the cross, Jesus promised him that he would be with Jesus in paradise the same day. Of course the thief never received baptism, but went to paradise with Jesus (Luke 23:43, Page 1650). Also, consider Acts 10:44-48, pages 1720-1721. In this passage, gentiles believed in the name of Jesus Christ, and they received forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43, page 720). The Holy Spirit then fell upon those believers, and the new believers began speaking in known tongues, exalting God (Acts 10:46, pages 1720-1721). Notice that these believers received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues before they were baptized. Therefore, because the people had received the Holy Spirit and were already speaking in tongues, we know from the text that they were already saved. Only believers have the Holy Spirit poured out upon them. Only believers speak in known tongues, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, exalting God. Notice, they were saved before they were baptized in this passage. Therefore, salvation came before baptism. The people were not baptized until Acts 10:48, page 1721. So, no one can argue that you must be baptized to be saved, because the thief on the cross was saved, but never baptized, and the believers in Acts 10:44-48 were saved and then baptized.

7. **Every Believer Baptized.**

Acts 8:36, Page 1715. "As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?'" Philip met a Ethiopian eunuch on a deserted road, and shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ with that eunuch. Immediately the eunuch believed and exclaimed that they had come upon water and he wanted to be baptized immediately. Only believers receive baptism in the New Testament. Infants lack the capacity to believe the Gospel, and so infant baptism does nothing for the infant. If you have not been baptized after you have been born again in Jesus, then let us know and you can be baptized immediately (Acts 8:35-39, Page 1715).

8. **Baptism Is An Ordinance, Not A Sacrament.**

Ephesians 1:3, Page 1827. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." When a person receives Christ and His forgiveness by faith alone, Christ enters his life as Lord and Savior. At that moment, the believer has been made complete in Christ and blessed with every blessing in Christ

in the heavenly places, even while living on earth (Ephesians 1:3, Page 1827). The believer does not depend upon anything except direct union with God to bring grace into his life. In contrast, some churches wrongly teach that "sacraments" are a means of God's grace. Indeed, some churches mislead believers by holding that in the sacraments, the benefits of the new covenant are sealed and applied to believers (Reformed Church, Roman Catholic Church). Therefore, because the Bible informs us that God's grace comes by faith alone and opposes the misleading term "sacraments," we oppose the term "sacrament."

In contrast, the term "ordinance" conveys the truth that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are symbols of great events in the life of the church, but never communicate God's grace in themselves. For example, the Lord Jesus said that the cup of the Lord's Supper "is the new covenant in My blood." He meant that we drink the cup in remembrance of Him, not as an infusion of grace or the application of the New Covenant.

As believers, we receive the blessings of the New Covenant by faith in Christ alone, so that we are a "letter of Christ," written with the Spirit of the living God (2 Corinthians 3:2-3, Page 1807). Therefore, we serve as ministers of the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6, Page 1807), not because of the Lord's Supper, but because of our faith in Christ. The New Testament knows nothing of "sacraments," and never teaches that "sacraments" are a means of grace, or in any way seal or apply the New Covenant to believers. Furthermore, the New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit communicates all truth directly to believers (John 16:13, Page 1688; 1 John 2:27, Page 1906). At the moment of salvation, all believers are sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit of promise, and the blessings of the New Covenant imparted to every believer (Hebrews 9:15).

Bert Allen
Christ Assembly
friend@christassembly.org
321.779.1211