

Baptism

To understand baptism we must look at what the Scriptures say.

What Is Baptism?

Baptism is a visible sign of the inward faith of a person who has come to know Jesus Christ personally as their Lord and Savior. In the New Testament, it is commonly the first act of obedience that new believers in Jesus Christ follow. Part of the reason Jesus commanded it is so that people would visibly declare the gospel. A believer who is baptized is immersed into water to symbolize that they have died to sin and buried their old way of life, and then they are raised out of the water to express a resurrection to a new way of life following Jesus Christ.

As stated, Jesus commanded that all Christians should be baptized. The book of Acts is full of examples of people who have done this in response to what the Lord has done in their lives.

- Read Acts 2 (*note especially Acts 2:38-41*)

We find out that from the beginning the early church practiced baptism to identify those who believe in Jesus.

The meaning of the word baptism (Greek - *baptizo*) is to dip, to wash, or even to take the plunge! Sometimes in New Testament times, the word could even refer to drowning. Most Christian traditions practice baptism, but there are disagreements on what it means, how it should be practiced, and even who should be allowed to be baptized. So we will look at the Scriptures to answer these questions, and conclude with an appeal that all Christians should do this.

Who Should Be Baptized?

- Read Matthew 28:16-20.

This passage gives detailed instructions on what the disciples are supposed to do now that Jesus has come back from the dead and is about to ascend into heaven. What commands does Jesus give?

What do you observe about what Jesus commanded his disciples here? Do you observe anything about who should be baptized? Does a person need to **be** anything before they are baptized?

- Read Acts 10:44-48.

What does Peter say about who should be baptized? What happens before they are baptized and what does it mean?

- Read Matthew 3:1-6

What did John the Baptist require of a person before they were baptized? Who did John think should be baptized?

When Should A Person Be Baptized?

- Read Acts 2:41 again.

When were the 3000 people at Pentecost baptized?

- Read Acts 8:26-39.

When was the Ethiopian court official baptized?

- Read Acts 9:17-19

When was the Apostle Paul baptized?

- Read Acts 16:25-34

When was the Philippian jailer baptized?

The pattern in the New Testament is that people believe in Jesus Christ before they are baptized. This is commonly referred to as a believer's baptism. Technically, it is also called *credobaptism* (in Latin, *credo* means "I believe"). Churches call it this to distinguish between other church traditions in which people baptize infants. Infant baptism is technically called *paedobaptism* (in Latin, *paedo* means "child"). While *paedobaptism* is widely practiced in the Catholic Church and in some other more traditional Christian denominations, the Scriptures describe that a person must come to a personal faith in Christ and repent of sin before they are baptized.

At Imprint Church, we do allow some Christian freedom in this. So while we practice *credobaptism*, we would consider hearing a testimony of an individual who was baptized in a Christian church and family as an infant to decide together on the validity of that baptism. We recognize that if you were baptized as an infant or a young child this may have been very meaningful to your family and loved ones. ***But we want it to be meaningful for you, too!*** We believe that all Christians should be baptized by immersion as a way to profess their faith in Christ and testify to the world about their faith in Christ.

How And Where Should A Person Be Baptized?

- Read Mark 1:9-11.

How was Jesus baptized?

- Read Matthew 3:5-6 and John 3:23.

Where did John baptize people? Why?

- Is baptism supposed to be a public or private event? Why do you say that?

It's pretty clear that wherever there is water, a person could be baptized! But there is a debate regarding how a person should be baptized. Some churches sprinkle with water. Others pour water on people from a basin. Many churches immerse people in water. At Imprint Church, we believe that the Bible describes and teaches baptism by immersion. It is the only type of baptism we see in the New Testament and it most faithfully represents the actual meaning of the word baptism discussed earlier. But the biggest reason we practice baptism by immersion is that the

immersion of baptism symbolically identifies with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection in a very real way. In short, Christians should be baptized in the same manner as Jesus was.¹

Why Should YOU Be Baptized?

- Read Romans 6:1-11.

What does this passage tell you personally about baptism?

In New Testament times, slaves were often baptized after they were sold as a way to show the community that the slave belonged to a new master. In the same way, a believer who is baptized is declaring to everyone that he or she now belongs to a new master, Jesus Christ.

- Read Colossians 2:12.

What two events happen at baptism that also happened in Christ's life?

When a believer goes under the water, it symbolizes that his or her old life is dead and buried with Christ; and when that person comes out of the water, it symbolizes that he or she is raised to a new life in Christ! This is the power and the message of baptism!

Two words of caution...

1. *Getting baptized does NOT give you salvation.*
2. *You do not have to be baptized in order to be saved.*

- Read Romans 10:9-10.

What must be done to receive salvation?

Baptism does not give you salvation. Salvation is a free gift to people who put their faith in Jesus Christ to forgive their sins through his death and resurrection. So a person does not have to go through the formality of baptism to be saved. Additionally, a person does have to be baptized in order to be a Christian. Take, for example, the thief that was crucified next to Jesus in Luke 23:43. However, out of obedience to Jesus and to publicly identify with Him, every believer should pursue baptism as soon as they possibly can.

What's the point? What's the bottom line?

If you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and He is your Lord and Savior, God wants you to be baptized.

Questions you should know and understand:

1. What is my Jesus story? People often share a bit of their story as part of their baptism.
2. When should a person get baptized?
3. How should a person be baptized?
4. Should you, or do you need to baptize your infant or young child? Why or why not?
5. Why should a Christian be baptized?

¹ There are exceptions for those who cannot be baptized by immersion because of a physical disability or another reason which impedes a person from being immersed in water.