

BAPTISM

A Biblical Perspective

H2O
CHURCH

BAPTISM: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Why is baptism such a big deal for Christians? What does dunking people in water have to do with God? This is a quick study/look into the act of baptism that will take you through the who, what, when, where, why, and how of baptism.

Baptism is a ritual that has been practiced for thousands of years in every culture of people who profess faith in Jesus and trust him for salvation. With a proper understanding of baptism, we will see an incredibly meaningful event that occurs in the life of a Christian that reminds us of the connection we have to God through Jesus.

If you are considering being baptized, or would like to talk more about it, please contact Jason Slack at jslack@h2okent.com.

A PLACE TO START: 4 CRUCIAL QUESTIONS

As you begin this overview of baptism, we must start by acknowledging that baptism is for those who declare themselves Christians. In considering this, please ask yourself the following 4 questions:

1. Do I believe that Jesus is God?
2. Do I believe that sin in my life keeps me from God?
3. Have I asked Jesus to forgive my sins, bringing me to God and guaranteeing me eternity with him?
4. Have I committed to follow Jesus for the rest of my life?

If you have answered “Yes” to these 4 questions, you are ready to be baptized!
Let’s continue through this booklet and look at what baptism is all about!

If you were unable to answer “Yes” to all of these questions or are unclear on what you believe about them (or have questions), we would love to talk with you more before you pursue baptism. A great next step for you would be to contact a staff member or leader whom you know.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

The Bible presents baptism as an outward sign of an inward faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

READ ROMANS 6:3-4

These verses refer to our spiritual baptism into Christ. According to Paul in Romans, what two events in Christ's life are represented through water baptism?

The believer being baptized is immersed beneath the water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which represents the believer's death to sin and the burial of their old life, and then emerges out of the water, representing the believer's resurrection to a new life in Christ Jesus.

Baptism is the sign and seal of membership into the community of God through faith in Jesus. We believe that baptism is for all people who believe, and is a sign and public declaration that a person has dedicated their life to Jesus Christ.

WHY BE BAPTIZED?

One reason to be baptized after we trust Christ for salvation is simply that Jesus commands it.

READ MATTHEW 28:19; JAMES 1:22-24

Jesus and the apostles commanded that Christians be baptized, which explains why we see baptism consistently practiced throughout the early church in the book of Acts.

Do you have to be baptized to be saved?

READ ROMANS 1:16; ACTS 16:31; EPHESIANS 2:8-9

What is it that saves us and restores our broken relationship with God?

Salvation is solely a gift given by God to those whose faith rests in the grace of God to forgive their sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus. The apostle Paul did not mention baptism for salvation, but simply said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus” (Acts 16:31). Likewise, Jesus promised the un-baptized thief who died on the cross next to him, “today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). Someone can be un-baptized and yet be a Christian who is destined for heaven.

Nonetheless, even though one can be a Christian without being baptized, a Christian should be baptized. Not being baptized does not stop someone from being a Christian, but a Christian should be baptized as Jesus commands it.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

The consistent view of the New Testament is that someone first believes in Jesus and then is baptized as a sign of this declaration and commitment. There is no Biblical evidence that points to the reverse order occurring, where someone, such as an infant, is baptized and then later believes in Jesus. Below is support from the New Testament for this position:

1. READ ACTS 8:12; 9:18-19; 10:44-48; 16:14-15, 29-36; 18:8

Every baptism in the New Testament only occurs after repentance of sin and faith in Jesus.

2. READ ACTS 2:41

Baptism is set aside only for those who have come to faith in Jesus.

3. READ ROMANS 6:1-10

Baptism shows personal identification of the believer with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, which comes through faith.

4. READ MATTHEW 28:19; ACTS 2:38

Jesus and his apostles gave the command for disciples to be baptized as a sign of the discipleship relationship.

WHO SHOULD PERFORM BAPTISMS?

READ MATTHEW 28:19; 1 PETER 2:5-9

Jesus points to every believer (disciple) having the responsibility to teach and baptize others. Likewise, the apostle Peter gives us the truth that we (Christians) are a kingdom of priests, in which every believer has the responsibility and duty to teach the gospel and baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

WHEN SHOULD SOMEONE BE BAPTIZED?

READ ACTS 2:41; 8:35-38; 9:17-19; 16:32-33

The consistent witness of the New Testament is that a believer should be baptized as soon as he/she believes. There is no need for a “waiting period.”

HOW SHOULD SOMEONE BE BAPTIZED?

READ MARK 1:9-10; ACTS 8:38-39

H2O practices baptism by immersion (going under the water), as Scripture seems to indicate that Jesus and early believers were baptized by this method. As you read the baptism events in the New Testament and the imagery used in Romans 6, we can gain an understanding of baptism in this fashion.

WHERE SHOULD SOMEONE BE BAPTIZED?

READ ACTS 8:36-38; MATTHEW 3:5-6; JOHN 3:23

The Scriptures of the New Testament show us that wherever there was enough water, people were baptized. This means that baptisms can occur anywhere.

THE NEXT STEPS

1. If you have not already done so, express your desire to be baptized to either your Life Group leader or one of the staff members. They will put you in contact with Jason Slack (jslack@h2okent.com) who will want to walk through the Bible study on baptism with you to confirm you have a firm Biblical understanding on baptism and answer any questions you may have.
2. We also feel that it is extremely important to honor your parents in this decision. If you feel that your parents would object to you being baptized, then we suggest you talk about it with them and explain your decision with gentleness and respect. We believe it would be wise to ask them for their blessing and approval. Oftentimes parents and relatives love to be at the baptism service to celebrate.
3. Next, prepare your Grace Story (or testimony). At the time of your baptism, you will briefly (1-2 minutes) tell your story as to how you became a Christian and why you're being baptized. The next section will help you organize your Grace Story and cover the important points. Your Grace Story should be typed and printed out for you to read at the baptism service. Once you complete your story, email it to Jason Slack (jslack@h2okent.com) prior to the baptism service to be reviewed.
4. You are welcome to ask your Life Group leader and/or a friend to help baptize you. We also encourage you to ask a staff member to be involved in your baptism.
5. At the baptism service: wear clothes that will be easy to change out of and into modest swimwear or shorts. We suggest wearing an oversized t-shirt as well. Bring a towel. Ask someone to get pictures!

GRACE STORY GUIDE

To help write out your grace story.

1. BEFORE CHRIST

Before you came to faith in Jesus, what was your life like: your actions, attitudes, feelings, relationships, etc? (If you became a Christian as a child, go on to the next question)

What caused you to begin considering Jesus?

What were the steps/actions (events in your life) that took place as you searched for answers about God?

2. CONVERSION / FINDING CHRIST

What realization did you come to that led you to surrender your life to Jesus?

Specifically, how and when did you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

3. YOUR LIFE NOW AS A CHRISTIAN

How has your life changed since you put your trust in Jesus?
