

Question: "What is the importance of Christian baptism?"

Answer: Christian baptism is one of two ordinances that Jesus instituted for the church. Just before His ascension, Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19–20). These instructions specify that the church is responsible to teach Jesus' word, make disciples, and baptize those disciples. These things are to be done everywhere ("all nations") until "the very end of the age." So, if for no other reason, baptism has importance because Jesus commanded it.

Baptism was practiced before the founding of the church. The Jews of ancient times would baptize proselytes to signify the converts' "cleansed" nature. John the Baptist used baptism to prepare the way of the Lord, requiring *everyone*, not just Gentiles, to be baptized because *everyone* needs repentance. However, John's baptism, signifying repentance, is not the same as Christian baptism, as seen in Acts 18:24–26 and 19:1–7. Christian baptism has a deeper significance.

Baptism is to be done in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit—this is what makes it "Christian" baptism. It is through this ordinance that a person is admitted into the fellowship of the church. When we are saved, we are "baptized" by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, which is the church. First Corinthians 12:13 says, "We were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." Baptism by water is a "reenactment" of the baptism by the Spirit.

Christian baptism is the means by which a person makes a public profession of faith and discipleship. In the waters of baptism, a person says, wordlessly, "I confess faith in Christ; Jesus has cleansed my soul from sin, and I now have a new life of sanctification."

Christian baptism illustrates, in dramatic style, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. At the same time, it also illustrates our death to sin and new life in Christ. As the sinner confesses the Lord Jesus, he dies to sin (Romans 6:11) and is raised to a brand-new life (Colossians 2:12). Being submerged in the water represents death to sin, and emerging from the water represents the cleansed, holy life that follows salvation. Romans 6:4 puts it this way: "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Very simply, baptism is an outward testimony of the inward change in a believer's life. Christian baptism is an act of obedience to the Lord *after* salvation; although baptism is closely associated with salvation, it is not a requirement to be saved. The Bible shows in many places that the order of events is 1) a person believes in the Lord Jesus and 2) he is baptized. This sequence is seen in Acts 2:41, "Those who accepted [Peter's] message were baptized" (see also Acts 16:14–15).

A new believer in Jesus Christ should desire to be baptized as soon as possible. In Acts 8 Philip speaks "the good news about Jesus" to the Ethiopian eunuch, and, "as they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?'" (verses 35–36). Right away, they stopped the chariot, and Philip baptized the man.

Baptism illustrates a believer's identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Everywhere the gospel is preached and people are drawn to faith in Christ, they are to be baptized.

<http://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-baptism.html>

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Acts 18:24-26 (NIV)

24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. **25** He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. **26** He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

Acts 19:1-7 (NIV)

19 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples **2** and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

3 So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?”

“John’s baptism,” they replied.

4 Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” **5** On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. **6** When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. **7** There were about twelve men in all.

1 Corinthians 12:13 (NIV)

13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Romans 6:4 (NIV)

4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Colossians 2:12 (NIV)

12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

Romans 6:11 (NIV)

11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Acts 2:41 (NIV)

41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 16:14-15 (NIV)

14 One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. **15** When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

Acts 8:35-36 (NIV)

35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?"