



Water Baptism

Your consideration to be water baptized is a powerful and public outward expression of an inward work being done by God, with your permission. The act of water baptism is, essentially, a way of communicating to God... "I Belong To You!" ... to Satan... "I Don't Belong To You!" ... and, to The Church... "I Belong With You!"

As you prepare your mind and heart for this important and exciting faith-step, may this tool give you a better understanding of water baptism, as outlined in the New Testament scriptures of the Bible.

Why be Water Baptized?

- **Jesus commanded it.** He instructed His disciples to "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" (Matthew 28:19).
- **Jesus was baptized.** We are reminded to follow His example (Mark 1:9-11).
- **Water baptism is a symbolic burial,** by which the Christian publicly declares they have died, and are now beginning a new life in Christ.
- **Water baptism is a statement of faith:** my old life is behind me...I'm a new person.
- **Water baptism is a sign of repentance.** Repentance means change—a change so drastic the old person is "buried".
- **Water baptism is a sign of obedience and humility** (1John 5:2-3).

Five Facts About Water Baptism

1. Baptism is not Salvation

“Yet to all who receive Him, to those who believed in His name,
He gave the right to become children of God.” **John 1:12**

Your entrance into the kingdom of God and being saved from the consequences of sin comes to you by way of **believing** and **receiving** Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. This is done by a choice of your will to believe that Jesus Christ is the earthly expression of God, who died on a cross as a substitute for your sin. His resurrection from the grave is an example of God’s triumph over death and His ascension into heaven speaks of the eternal life we can expect as a people “on the way” to a heavenly home. To receive Jesus as your Savior means to follow Him with a faith to live in such a way to obey His direction for our lives. Water Baptism is the beginning of this journey of faith and obedience, but the work of salvation has been done by Jesus on the cross and is accepted by faith.

2. “Adult” Baptism is the Biblical Pattern

To be baptized, christened or sprinkled as a baby or child is fine, and shows that your parent(s) cared for you. But the biblical pattern for water baptism is to be mature enough to understand the concept of being a sinner that needs salvation and willing to “believe, receive, repent and obey.”

3. Baptism is Obeying the Commands of Jesus

“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, 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**

We are commanded, as Christians, to be disciples of Jesus. This means to be an imitator/follower of Christ. Jesus Himself was baptized and commands those who are following Him to do the same. Also, in the text above, Jesus mentions, “to obey everything I have commanded you.” Obedience is an important key to understand as you begin to live a life that God can bless.

Jesus explains to the disciples that “whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by the Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” **John 14:21**

Your obedience to the word of God and to His leading you will bring a blessing to your life. Showing your love for Jesus through obedience expresses your love for Him, His leadership over your life, and His promise is to love and reveal Himself to you. Consider your water baptism to be a practical faith-step in your relationship with God as you begin a new life of obedience to Him.

4. Baptism can begin new Degree of Spirit-Filled Life

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." **Matt. 3:13-17**

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by the prophet John, the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove when he arose from the water. As a disciple (follower/imitator) of Jesus, we can expect the same installment of His Holy Spirit and power for a new anointing. This comes by way of a new level of surrender and a new level of control by the Holy Spirit to lead and guide our lives. Just as it was for Jesus, we can receive an enabling for service and empowerment for serving God's purposes. Luke 11:13 tells us to "ask" for the Holy Spirit, and Ephesians 5:18 commands us to "be being filled" (regularly) with Him. We encourage you to "ask" and "be filled" on a regular, ongoing basis.

5. Baptism Celebrates the Death of Your "Old Self"

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. **Romans 6:4**

In a public way, through baptism, we are saying "no" to sin, and "yes" to a new life with Jesus. In essence, being lowered and raised from the water symbolizes the death and resurrection of Jesus. The lowering into the water represents the death and burial of the "old self" (without Christ), just as Jesus was crucified, put to death and buried. The raising up from the water represents the New Life in Jesus, just as He conquered death and hell by rising from the dead. Through the resurrection of Jesus, the grip of sin and death has been removed for all who step into this new life Him.

Baptism is not the final step in following Jesus. In contrast, it is a beginning step in a new relationship between you and God. Baptism is your outward expression of God's inward work in your life. As you continue your journey in Christ, allow your baptism to be a definite point where "the old is gone and the new has come."

You are to be congratulated for your desire to obey the commands of Jesus as it relates to water baptism. May it be a memorable day for you and your loved ones.

Other Scriptures on Water Baptism:

- Jesus' Baptism – Mark 1:1-11
- The Baptism Command – Mark 16:16
- The Gift of the Holy Spirit – Acts 2:38-39, 8:14-17
- Symbolism of Baptism – Romans 6:1-14
- Believers Challenge After Baptism – Colossians 3:1-14

An excerpt from In The Grip Of His Grace by Max Lucado

Grace Releases Us: In Romans 6 Paul asks a crucial question: “How can we who died to sin still live in it?” How can we who have been made right not live righteous lives? How can we who have been loved not love? How can we who have been blessed not bless? How can we who have been given grace not live graciously?

The Penalty Has Been Paid: Think of it this way. Sin put you in prison. Sin locked you behind the bars of guilt and shame and deception and fear. Sin did nothing but shackle you to the wall of misery. Then Jesus came and paid your bail. He served your time; He satisfied the penalty and set you free. Christ died, and when you cast your lot with him, your old self died too.

The only way to be set free from the prison of sin is to serve its penalty. In this case the penalty is death. Someone has to die, either you or a heaven-sent substitute. You cannot leave prison unless there is a death. But that death has occurred at Calvary. And when Jesus died, you died to sin’s claim on your life. You are free.

Near the city of So Jose’ dos Campos, Brazil, is a remarkable facility. Twenty years ago, the Brazilian government turned a prison over to two Christians. The institution was renamed Humaita, and the plan was to run it on Christian principles. With the exception of two full-time staff, all the work is done by inmates. Families outside the prison adopt an inmate to work with during and after his term. Chuck Colson visited the prison and made this report:

When I visited Humaita, I found the inmates smiling—particularly the murderer who held the keys, opened the gates and let me in. Wherever I walked I saw men at peace. I saw clean living areas, people working industriously. The walls were decorated with Biblical saying from Psalms and Proverbs. ...My guide escorted me to the notorious prison cell once used for torture. Today, he told me, that block houses only a single inmate. As we reached the end of a long concrete corridor and he put the key in the lock, he paused and asked,

“Are you sure you want to go in?”

“Of course,” I replied impatiently, “I’ve been in isolation cells all over the world.”

Slowly he swung open the massive door, and I saw the prisoner in that punishment cell; a crucifix, beautifully carved by the Humaita inmates—the prisoner Jesus, hanging on a cross.

“He’s doing time for the rest of us,” my guide said softly.

Christ has taken your place. There is no need for you to remain in the cell. Ever heard of a discharged prisoner who wanted to stay? Nor have I. When the doors open, prisoners leave. The thought of a person preferring jail over freedom doesn’t compute. Once the penalty is paid, why live under bondage? You are discharged from the penitentiary of sin. Why, in heaven’s name, would you ever want to set foot in that prison again?

Paul reminds us: “Our old life died with Christ on the cross so that our sinful selves would have no power over us and we would not be slaves to sin. Anyone who has died is made free from sin’s control” (Rom. 6:6-7).

He is not saying that it is impossible for believers to sin; He’s saying it is stupid for believers to sin. “It’s not the literal impossibility...but the moral incongruity” of the saved returning to sin.

What does the prison have that you desire? Do you miss the guilt? Are you homesick for dishonesty? Do you have fond memories of being lied to and forgotten? Was life better when you were dejected and rejected? Do you have a longing to once again see a sinner in the mirror?

It makes no sense to go back to prison.

The Vow Has Been Made: Not only has a price been paid, a vow has been made. “Did you forget that all of us became part of Christ when we were baptized?” (Rom. 6:2).

Baptism was no casual custom, no ho-hum ritual. Baptism was, and is, “a pledge made to God from a good conscience” (1 Pet. 3:21 TJB).

Paul's high regard for baptism is demonstrated in the fact that he knows all of his readers have been instructed in its importance. "You have been taught that when we were baptized into Christ we were baptized into his death" (Rom. 6:2 TJB).

What form of amnesia is this? Like a bride horrified to see her new husband flirting with women at the wedding reception, Paul asks, "Did you forget your vows?"

Indeed, baptism is a vow, a sacred vow of the believer to follow Christ. Just as a wedding celebrates the fusion of two hearts, baptism celebrates the union of sinner with Savior. We "become part of Christ when we are baptized" (v. 2). Do the bride and groom understand all of the implications of the wedding? No. Do they know every challenge or threat they will face? No. But they know they love each other and vow to be faithful to the end.

When a willing heart enters the waters of baptism, does he know the implications of the vow? No. Does she know every temptation or challenge? No. But both know the love of God and are responding to him.

Please understand, it is not the act that saves us. But it is the act that symbolizes how we are saved! The invisible work of the Holy Spirit is visibly dramatized in the water.

That plunge beneath the running waters was like a death; the moment's pause while they swept overhead was like a burial; the standing erect once more in air and sunlight was a species of resurrection.

Remove your shoes, bow your head, and bend your knees; this is a holy event. Baptism is not to be taken lightly.

To return to sin after sealing our souls in baptism is like committing, well, it's like committing adultery on your honeymoon. Can you imagine the distraught bride discovering her husband in the arms of another woman only days after hearing his vow at the altar? Among her many sizzling words will likely be the question, "Have you forgotten what you said to me?"

Similarly, God asks, "Does our union mean nothing to you? Is our covenant so fragile that

you would choose the arms of a harlot over mine?"

Who, in their right mind, would want to abandon these vows? Who will care for you more than Christ? Have we forgotten what life was like before our baptism? Have we forgotten the mess we were in before we were united with Him?