

Why Do We Baptize in Water?

The first person in the New Testament who baptized people is **John the Baptist**.

John “the Baptist” was sent by God to prepare the people to receive Jesus, the promised savior, who was soon to come. One of the most noted aspects of John’s ministry was baptizing people, as his title suggests. He called people to repent and turn to God. When the people repented, God forgave them and “washed” away their sins through baptism. This “washing” is what baptism symbolized. It was an important public statement of the change in their hearts.

1. Water baptism is commanded in Scripture.

After Jesus rose from the dead, and before He returned to heaven, He gave instructions to His followers.

“Jesus told them, ‘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

In Acts 2:38-4, we find an example of how Jesus’ followers did just as He had commanded. To a crowd in Jerusalem,

“Peter replied, ‘Repent and **be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.’ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ Those who accepted his message **were baptized**, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” — Acts 2:38-41

2. Water baptism is a public sign of repentance from sin and identification with Christ.

Jesus died, was buried and rose to life on our behalf, to pay the penalty for our sin. Water baptism is a picture of the death of our sinful nature. Going under the water symbolizes burial with Christ, and coming up out of the water symbolizes rising to new life in Him.

“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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 6:3-4

Who Should Be Baptized?

Jesus said, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16), and Peter encouraged people to “repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38).

People should be baptized if they have believed and turned to Christ.

In order to believe and repent, people must be old enough to understand that they are sinners and need forgiveness through Christ. Jesus blessed the little children (see Mark 10:16), but His command of baptism was directed to those old enough to make a personal choice to follow Him. Our tradition of dedicating infants is modeled after Jesus blessing the children.

How Do We Baptize?

We baptize by immersing people in water (that is, by dipping them under the water) for several reasons.

- First, this is the way it was done in New Testament times.
- Second, the word “baptize” in Scripture means “to immerse.” Therefore we baptize by full immersion
- Third, the symbolism of death to sin and resurrection to new life in Christ is clearly pictured by immersion.

If you have believed in and received Christ through repentance, but have not been baptized in water, you will want to obey this important command.