

BAPTISM

What? | Why? | Who? | When? | How?

The Meaning of Baptism

The ordinance of baptism is the formal profession of faith for the believer and commitment to belong to the Lord and his church for the believer. It is an outward sign of an inward reality. It is an appeal to God for a clear conscience. (Article 26 of GFS Statement of Faith)

The New City Catechism Q. 44:
"What is Baptism?"

A. In this way, Baptism is the washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; it signifies and seals our adoption into Christ, our cleansing from sin, and our commitment to belong to the Lord and to his church.

Romans 6:3

Christians died to sin when they were baptized into Christ. Paul is not arguing that baptism magically destroys the power of sin. Baptism is an outward, physical symbol of the inward, spiritual conversion



What is Baptism?

Baptism is one of the two ordinances passed down from Christ to those who would follow Him. The New City Catechism defines the ordinances in question 43 when it states, "The sacraments or ordinances given by God and instituted by Christ, namely baptism and the Lord's Supper, are visible signs and seals that we are bound together as a community of faith by his death and resurrection. By our use of them the Holy Spirit more fully declares and seals the promises of the gospel to us."

Romans 6:1-4 (ESV) — 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

The Mode of Baptism

The key element in the ordinance of baptism is water. Baptism symbolizes the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Scripture clearly implies that the only acceptable mode for baptism is baptism by immersion.

Baptism is the only external means in scripture whereby the church can give affirmation to another's faith in Christ. Baptism, then, is the prerequisite for entrance into and enjoyment of the privileges of church membership. (Article 26 of GFS Statement of Faith)

Romans 6:4

In the early church, baptism was probably by immersion, at least as a general rule, though Christians dispute whether such a practice must always be followed literally today. Therefore, baptism pictures a person being buried with Christ (submersion under water) and being raised to new life with Christ (emergence from water). This symbolizes the person's union with, and incorporation into, Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit. Hence, they now have the power to live in newness of life. (ESV Study Bible)

The Word "Baptism"

The Greek word βαπτίζω (baptizo) literally means to plunge, submerge or immerse.

● **What inward reality does baptism signify according to Romans 6:1-4?**

● **How does verses 3-4 answer Paul's questions in verses 1-2? What does this mean for the significance of baptism?**

1 Peter 3:18-22 (ESV) — 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, 19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. 21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

● **What does the "water" represent in verse 20 and how does this fill out the symbol of baptism?**

● **How would you answer someone that would argue that you are saved by baptism from verse 21? (Hint: Be sure to interpret this verse in context)**

● **If the physical act of baptism does not save you, then what is actually happening when someone is baptized according to verse 21?**

Colossians 2:11-14 (ESV) — 11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

● **How is circumcision in the OT related to baptism in the NT? (Note any points of continuity and discontinuity)**

1 Peter 3:21

A comparison is drawn between salvation in the ark and baptism. In both instances, believers are saved through the waters of judgment, since baptism portrays salvation through judgment. The mere mechanical act of baptism does not save, for Peter explicitly says, "not as a removal of dirt from the body," meaning that the passing of water over the body does not cleanse anyone. Baptism saves you because it represents inward faith, as evidenced by one's appeal to God for the forgiveness of one's sins (for a good conscience). Furthermore, baptism "saves" only insofar as it is grounded in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism is a visual representation of the fact that Christians are clothed with Christ (cf. Gal. 3:27), and in union with Christ they share his victory over sin. Though Christians have disagreed about the proper mode of water baptism beginning in the early history of the church, Christians have generally agreed (irrespective of denominational differences) that water baptism is an outward sign of the inward reality of regeneration, which is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:5, 8; Titus 3:5), and which may be received only by grace through faith (see Eph. 2:8). (ESV Study Bible)

Why should Someone be Baptized?

Acts 2:37-41 (ESV) — 37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "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. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Who should be Baptized?

Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV) — 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Acts 16:33 (ESV) — 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.

● **Who was a part of the family that was baptized in Acts 16:33? Are there any children, if so, how old are they?**

When should Someone be Baptized?

Acts 8:12 (ESV) — 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Acts 8:35-38 (ESV) — 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about

Colossians 2:11-13

2:11 In him also you were circumcised. Paul here uses circumcision metaphorically for a spiritual (made without hands) action, which he describes as putting off the body of the flesh. Believers no longer live in the sphere of the flesh and its influence (Gal. 5:24) but have been transferred to the kingdom of Christ and live through and in him, under his lordship (Col. 1:13). In this "circumcision" performed by Christ, Christians have been removed from their solidarity with Adam and his sin (see Rom. 6:6) and are now in solidarity with Christ and his righteousness and can live for him, as they before could not.

2:12-13 buried with him in baptism ... also raised with him ... made alive together with him. In a second metaphor drawn from Christ's work on the cross, Paul says that the Christian rite of baptism represents an identification with Christ in his death (cf. Rom. 6:4-6) along with an identification with Christ in his resurrection (cf. Eph. 2:6). Dying and rising with Christ signifies death to the power of sin and Satan plus empowerment to live the new life that Jesus calls believers to live in imitation of him (see Rom. 6:3-11). (ESV Study Bible)

Jesus. 36 And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

Acts 22:16 (ESV) — 16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

How should Someone be Baptized?

Mark 1:5, 10 (ESV) — 5 And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.— 10 And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

Acts 8:38-39 (ESV) — 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

Next Steps:

☐ Evaluate with family and friends whether you should be baptized (2 Cor. 13:5)? Do you know the gospel and can you articulate the basics of the gospel? Does your life bear the fruit of repentance (Matt 3:5-8)?

☐ If you believe the gospel, can articulate the basics of the gospel and your life is bearing the fruit of repentance, you should seriously consider being baptized as an act of obedience to Christ. Contact the church office to schedule a time to be baptized at an upcoming service.

Tips on how to write a testimony:

A testimony is a public declaration of a person's conversion to personal faith in Christ. Here are some key elements of a testimony:

- ☐ Before conversion:
 - ☐ 1) Awareness of God's holiness.
 - ☐ 2) Conviction of sin.
 - ☐ 3) Insufficiency of your own righteousness.
 - ☐ 4) Inability to save yourself and the need for Christ.
- ☐ The Gospel – what is the Gospel and how did you hear the gospel? Family, Bible reading, church, friends.
- ☐ Conversion – describe what repentance and faith looked like for you. A dramatic 180 turn, a gradual turning from sin and personal growth in authentic faith, etc.?
- ☐ After conversion- joy and peace experienced, battle with sin, pursuit of God, purpose for life, hope of eternity in heaven, personal relationship with God, etc.
- ☐ The meaning of baptism and the reason why you desire to be baptized.

Additional Resources:

- Gospel Fellowship of Sussex Statement of Faith
- ESV Study Bible
- New City Catechism
- Improving your Baptism by David Mathis
 - (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/improve-your-baptism>)