

## **WATER BAPTISM**

1. **Water baptism is one of only two ordinances directed by Jesus for the Church age.**
  - a. **Mt 28:19-20** 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I [Jesus] have commanded you [apostles].
  - b. Every believer should be baptized. Water baptism is the the first command issued to a new believer and publicly marks the beginning his or her phase two spiritual life.

### 2. **The purpose of water baptism has been hotly contested in church history.**

#### *Historical Views on Water Baptism*

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|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Roman Catholicism</b>                      | Baptism removes the guilt and power of original sin. One receive an initial infusion of saving and sanctifying grace. For adults/unbaptized infants.                                                                           |
| <b>Martin Luther<br/>(German Lutheranism)</b> | Baptism removes the guilt of original sin, is a sign and sacrament of saving grace, and is validated when later confirmed by personal faith. For adults/unbaptized infants.                                                    |
| <b>Ulrich Zwingli<br/>(Swiss Reformed)</b>    | Baptism is an outward sign of initiation into the new covenant community, an act of obedience, and a pledge of a life of faith toward God as a member of his Church. For adults/unbaptized infants.                            |
| <b>John Calvin<br/>(Swiss Reformed)</b>       | Baptism is an outward symbol of an inner reality, of initiation into new covenant community (as circumcision was of the old covenant), and is validated when later confirmed by personal faith. For adults/unbaptized infants. |
| <b>Menno Simons<br/>(Anabaptism)</b>          | Baptism is an outward sign, a testimony of faith in Messiah. It is an act of repentance and obedience, valid when preceded by faith and confession. For willing believers only.                                                |

### 3. **Water baptism symbolizes:**

- a. The complete washing away of the new believer's sins.
  - (1) **Ac 22:16** 16 Now why do you [Saul] wait? Rise, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.
- b. The new believer's positional identification with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.
  - (1) **Ro 6:3-5** 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Messiah Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Messiah was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.
  - (2) **Col 2:12** 12 ...Having been buried with [Messiah] in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.
- c. The new believer's public association with the universal Church.
  - (1) **Eph 4:5-6** 5 ...One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.
- d. The new believer's intention to pursue sanctification.
  - (1) **1 Pe 3:20-21** 20 ...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 Messiah.

#### 4. Water baptism does not justify a person.

- a. Justification is always by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone.
  - (1) “Baptism originally marked a person’s conversion to Christ, confession of faith in the triune God, repentance from sin, and admission into the church. It also admitted a believer to participation in the spiritual blessings centered on the Lord’s Supper (or the Eucharist). Eventually, however, the church would emphasize baptism as the means by which justifying grace is received, the Spirit is imparted, and forgiveness is attained—not only to believers but also to their children.”<sup>1</sup>
- b. Believers are justified by grace through faith whether or not they are ever baptized.
  - (1) “Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, or remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life: which sacrament is, by Christ’s own appointment, to be continued in his Church until the end of the world. . . . Although it be a great sin to condemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.”<sup>2</sup>
  - (2) Mark likely did not write Mk 16:16. This verse belongs to a later addition to *Mark*.
    - (1) **Mk 16:16** 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.
- c. Baptism ordinarily should not be mentioned when sharing the gospel. It should be mentioned only once a person believes in Jesus.
- d. Baptism is important, but not all important. Evangelism is far more important.
  - (1) **1 Co 1:14-17** 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius 15 so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. . . . 17 For Messiah did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel.

#### 5. Water baptism differs from Spirit baptism, which happens automatically at the moment of faith in Jesus.

- a. **Ac 1:5** 5 John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.
- b. **Ac 10:46-48** 46 Peter declared, 47 Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Messiah.
- c. **Ac 19:2-6** 2 [Paul] said to them, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they said, No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. 3 And he said, Into what then were you baptized? They said, Into John’s baptism. 4 And Paul said,

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<sup>1</sup> Nathan D. Holsteen, *Exploring Christian Theology: The Church, Spiritual Growth, and the End Times*.

<sup>2</sup> Westminster Confession (1646).

- John baptized with the baptism of a change of mindset, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus. 5 On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.
- d. See *The Baptism of the Spirit*.

## 6. Infant baptism should not be practiced.

- a. There is no example of it in the Bible.
- b. OT circumcision of Jews is not analogous to baptism of believers in the NT.
- (1) Circumcision is practiced on Jewish infants as a sign of God's unconditional covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their physical descendants.
- (2) Baptism is a sign of a person's knowing and voluntary association with Jesus and the New Covenant and is for believers only.
- c. Infants lack the mental and volitional capacity to believe in Jesus.
- (1) Infant baptism is confusing because it implies that infant doesn't need to personally believe in Jesus to be justified.
- d. Children who die before the age of God-consciousness are justified on the basis of unlimited atonement through Jesus' substitutionary death.
- (1) Unbelief is the reason people are condemned. A child who has not reached the age of God-consciousness does not have the capacity to believe or disbelieve. Because that child cannot disbelieve the gospel message, he or she cannot be condemned.
- (1) **Jn 3:18** 18 Whoever believes in [the Son] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.
- (2) Parents may be assured their child who died in infancy will be with Jesus forever.
- (3) See *The Age of God-Consciousness*.
- e. A child who reaches the age of God-consciousness, understands the gospel message, and believes it, should be baptized in the same way an adult is baptized.
- (1) For example, our daughter Sophia believed at age three and was baptized shortly thereafter. Our son Noah also believed at age three and was baptized. Both underwent pre-baptism counseling with our church's children's pastor.

## 7. As soon as a person has believed in Jesus, he or she should be baptized.

- a. Faith in Jesus is the only prerequisite of baptism. A new believer must understand and believe the basic gospel message, but he or she does not need to have much understanding beyond that. In other words, a period of catechism is not a necessary precondition of water baptism. Furthermore, a new believer doesn't have to "prove himself" by good works or a changed life before he is baptized.
- (1) "We have tried to discover what teaching St. Paul gave to his converts. This teaching followed, it did not precede, baptism. For baptism, apparently very little knowledge of Christian truth was required as an indispensable condition."<sup>3</sup>
- b. Ideally, a new believer should be baptized soon after he or she has believed in Jesus. The quickness by which a new believers is baptized is a way of demonstrating that justification truly is by grace alone through faith alone.

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<sup>3</sup> R. Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*, 77.

- (1) “We have taught them that union with Christ is the source of strength, we have taught them that baptism is the sacrament of unity, and then we have told them that they must prove their sincerity by practising virtue in their own strength before they can be admitted to the sacrament by which they are to receive strength to be virtuous. In other words, we have taught them that the one great need of men is Christ, and that without Christ men cannot attain to righteousness, and then that they must attain to righteousness by themselves in order to receive Christ.”<sup>4</sup>
- c. Baptism, however, should be preceded by pre-baptism counseling. The new believer’s understanding of the gospel message and his or her personal faith in that message should be confirmed.
- d. Acts relates several examples of baptism following immediately after faith in Jesus.
  - (1) **Ac 2:37-41** 37 Now when [the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem] heard [Peter’s message] 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, Change your mindset and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ...41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.
  - (2) **Ac 8:12-13** 12 When [the Samaritans] believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Messiah, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip.
  - (3) **Ac 8:36-38** 36 As [Philip and the eunuch] were going along the road [to Gaza] 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.
  - (4) **Ac 10:46-48** 46 Peter declared, 47 Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people [Cornelius and his guests], who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Messiah.
  - (5) **Ac 16:32-34** 32 [Paul and Silas] spoke the word of the Lord to [the jailer] and to all who were in his house. 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. 34 Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.
  - (6) **Ac 18:8** 8 Many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.

## 8. Public baptism by immersion in running water is ideal but not absolutely required.

- a. The word baptize (βαπτίζω) means to “dip, plunge, or immerse.” Neither sprinkling nor pouring is found in Scripture as an appropriate symbol of believer’s baptism. Only baptism by immersion sufficiently symbolizes the totality of the forgiveness of the new believer’s sins and his or her identification with Jesus’s death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism by immersion is a powerful evangelistic tool.
  - (1) **Ro 6:4-5** 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Messiah was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too

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<sup>4</sup> R. Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*, 78.

might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

- (2) “Coming up out of the water, the candidate depicts the power of the resurrection. Jesus is alive, never to die again. Baptism proclaims the truth of this powerful Gospel story using a graphic illustration.”<sup>5</sup>
- (3) “Immersion is the proper form for demonstrating [one’s] allegiance most clearly, the only mode of baptism that reflects full identification with the gospel message.”<sup>6</sup>
- b. If necessary, use any clean water available. Remember there is nothing holy or magical about the water itself. It’s just H<sub>2</sub>O.
  - (1) “Water cannot effectuate the remission of sins; it merely conveys the message of the Gospel and the testimony of new life in Christ the new believer has received.”<sup>7</sup>
- c. Fasting beforehand by the baptizer and the baptized was an early Christian practice.
  - (1) “Baptize as follows: after you have reviewed all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running water. But if you have no running water, then baptize in some other water; and if you are not able to baptize in cold water, then do so in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times in the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. And before the baptism, let the one baptizing and the one who is to be baptized fast, as well as any others who are able. Also, you must instruct the one who is to be baptized to fast for one or two days beforehand.”<sup>8</sup>
- d. Passages:
  - (1) **Mt 3:5-6** 5 Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to [John], 6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan as they confessed their sins.
  - (2) **Ac 8:36-38** 36 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.
  - (3) **Ac 16:32-33** 32 [Paul and Silas] spoke the word of the Lord to [the jailer] and to all who were in his house. 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.

## 9. One should be immersed once in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- a. **Mt 28:19** 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name (sing.) of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit....
- b. Being baptized in the name of Jesus is the same thing as being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Luke uses slightly different terminology than Matthew, but they are both referring to the same church ordinance of water baptism.

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<sup>5</sup> Jim Richards, “Practicing Believer’s Baptism, SBC Life (March 1, 2012)(<http://www.sbclife.net/article/2081/the-church--practicing-believers-baptism>).

<sup>6</sup> J. Richards, “Practicing Believer’s Baptism.”

<sup>7</sup> J. Richards, “Practicing Believer’s Baptism.”

<sup>8</sup> Didache (50-70 ad), quoted in N. Holsteen, *Exploring Christian Theology: The Church, Spiritual Growth, and the End Times*.

- (1) **Ac 2:38** 38 Peter said to [the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem], Change your mindset and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- (2) **Ac 10:46-48** 46 Peter declared, 47 Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people [Cornelius and his guests], who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Messiah.
- (3) **Ac 19:2-5** 2 [Paul] said to them, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they said, No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. 3 And he said, Into what then were you baptized? They said, Into John’s baptism. 4 And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of a change of mindset, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus. 5 On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
  - (1) Note here John’s baptism was different from baptism in the name of Jesus.
- c. Baptism should usually be performed under the auspices of a local church. However, exceptions are permitted.
  - (1) **Ac 8:36-38** 36 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.
- d. Any spiritually mature male believer in fellowship with God may baptize a new believer.
  - (1) The baptizer’s authority to baptize from the commandment Jesus gave to the Church.
    - (1) **Mt 28:19** 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit....
- e. Water baptism is a joyous celebration of the new believer’s new life in Messiah.
  - (1) **Lk 15:10** 10 I [Jesus] tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who changes his mind.

## 10. By undergoing water baptism, one publicly declares:

- a. “I have changed my worldview from X to Jesus.”
  - (1) **Mt 3:11** 11 I [John] baptize you with water for a change of mindset (μετάνοια)....
  - (2) **Ac 2:37-38** 37 Now when [the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem] 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, Change your mindset (μετανοέω) and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- b. “I admit that, without Jesus, I am sinner justly condemned before God. I need forgiveness, and now I have it. My sins are washed away.”
  - (1) **Ac 2:37-38** 38 Peter said to [the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem], Change your mindset (μετανοέω) and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
  - (2) **Ac 22:16** 16 Now why do you [Saul] wait? Rise, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

- (3) **1 Pe 3:20-21** 20 ...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 Messiah.
- c. "I believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through faith in his death and resurrection I am now justified before God. I know I am born again and possess eternal life."
- (1) **Jn 20:31** 31 ...But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
- (2) **1 Co 15:3-8** 3 For I [Paul] delivered to you [Corinthians] as of first importance what I also received: that Messiah died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.
- (3) **Jn 3:36** 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.
- d. "Positionally, I have died, been buried, and been raised with Jesus. My old life has gone. My new life has come. I am a new person, raised to walk in newness of life."
- (1) **Ro 6:3-5** 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Messiah Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Messiah was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.
- (2) **Col 2:12** 12 ...Having been buried with [Messiah] in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.
- e. "I am now publicly and officially associating myself with Jesus, his Church, and his coming kingdom."
- (1) **Ga 3:27** 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Messiah have put on Messiah.
- (1) Baptism is like putting on a uniform, the uniform of Messiah.
- (2) **Eph 4:5-6** 5 ...One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.

**"My brother/sister [name], as a fellow believer in the Lord Jesus Messiah, I hereby baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, buried with Jesus in the likeness of his death and raised with him to walk in newness of life."**

*Notes*