

Baptism

What is baptism?

Baptism is the act of immersing a person in water and raising them back up again. It is typically done in church baptisteries, but can be done anywhere where there is enough water (pools, rivers, lakes, etc.). The biblical method is immersion, but pouring or sprinkling can be used if immersion is not possible (e.g. when a person is ill, disabled, elderly, confined, etc.).

What does baptism signify?

Your union with Christ

- Baptism is symbolic of being saved—it is an outward physical sign of your inward spiritual union with Jesus Christ.
 - Being immersed in water is symbolic of your death and burial with Christ (Romans 6:3–4). When you were saved, you died with Christ—that is, you died, spiritually speaking, to sin and your old way of life. “Dying to sin” means that your relationship with sin is ended—its power over you is broken and you are no longer its slave (Romans 6:7).
 - Being raised up from the water is symbolic of your resurrection with Christ (Romans 6:5). When you were saved, you were made alive with Christ—that is, you became alive, spiritually speaking, to God. Becoming “alive” to God means that you have begun a relationship with Him (John 17:3)—God has regenerated you (Ephesians 2:4–5), and you have been born again (John 3:1–8).

Commitment to discipleship

- When you are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, you are publicly declaring your faith in Him and your intention to become His disciple (Matthew 5:14–16). As we learned in a previous lesson, a disciple is a person who desires to learn from and follow after someone else. Your goal as a disciple of Jesus is to learn His teachings, model His way of living and become like Him in your thoughts, attitudes, actions and words.

What are the prerequisites for baptism?

- You must be born again before being baptized (see the lesson on salvation).
- You should be aware of and understand the spiritual significance of the act of baptism.

Why do I have to get baptized after I'm saved?

- Water baptism is commanded by Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18–20).
- Jesus, our example, was Himself baptized (Matthew 3:13–17).
- Jesus and His disciples baptized those who believed and repented (John 3:22–26).
- New converts in the early Church were always baptized (Acts 2:38–41; 8:26–38; 16:31–34).

Does getting baptized save me?

- The act of baptism does not save you—you are saved by grace through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8–9). Baptism is simply the first and necessary step of obedience as you begin your new relationship with God (Luke 23:39–43).
- If you were baptized as an infant, you should be baptized again. Your infant baptism was a symbol of your parents' faith, not yours. Every baptism recorded in the New Testament was a believer confessing his or her own faith. So be baptized "again," fulfilling the hope your parents had when they baptized you as an infant. Don't fear that you are dishonoring them. What better way to honor their hope for you than to choose for yourself to follow Jesus?

When should I be baptized?

Immediately after being saved. Water baptism goes hand-in-hand with conversion. In the early Church, it always followed immediately after repentance. If water baptism is not possible after conversion, or you were unaware of the necessity of water baptism, don't panic. God understands—but don't delay. Do it as soon as you can!

Who can baptize me?

Anyone who is a Christian and who understands the nature and significance of baptism can baptize another believer. Scripture gives no other requirements. The reason baptisms are typically done by pastors is because of denominational restrictions and the desire to ensure that people are truly saved before being baptized.