

What is Baptism?

Romans 6:1-4

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ²By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We 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.”

- ◆ **What do we learn about baptism in verse 3?** ...that a person is Baptized into Jesus & Baptized into His Death.
- ◆ **What do we learn about baptism in verse 4?** ...that a person is Buried with him through baptism...raised from the dead...to a new life.
- ◆ Paul connects their baptism with a ...Death (vs. 3); Burial (vs. 4); and Resurrection (vs. 4). This is the “Gospel” as Paul also affirmed in I Corinthians 15:3,4.
- ◆ This is why a “baptism” is immersion—it represents a death, burial, and resurrection.

What do we think of when we think of “Death, Burial, and Resurrection”?

- The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. He died, was buried and raised by the power of God.
- The death, burial, and resurrection let us know that **if God could raise Jesus from the dead then he can also raise us up with Christ.**
- Word for baptism is βαπτισμα (baptisma): consisting of the processes of immersion, submersion and emergence.

Col. 2:8-14

“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. ⁹For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, ¹⁰and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; ¹¹and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; ¹²having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ¹⁴having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

- ◆ **In verse 10 Paul reminds the Christians at Colossae that they have been what?** ...that they have been made complete in Christ (despite what the false teachers have told them)
- ◆ **As confirmation of them being complete in Christ and lacking nothing, what does he offer as proof in verses 12-14?** ...the fact that they have been buried (immersed) with Him in baptism and raised up, made alive, and forgiven.

When they were buried with Christ in baptism, by whose power were they raised up? ...by the “working” or “power” or as in the Greek the “energeia” of God.

Note: Many say that baptism is not essential to salvation because it is a “work,” actually it is a work, but **not our work but God's**...He is the one who has the power to raise us up, forgive us, and make us complete in Christ.

John 3:1-7

“Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ²He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

³In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

⁴"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

⁵Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ”

- ◆ **What does Jesus tell Nicodemus he must do to enter the kingdom of God?** ...he must be born again vv. 3, 7; that he must be “born of the water and the Spirit” v. 5.

Jesus does not use the word “baptism” here, but one must ask where in scripture do we find “water” and “Spirit” mentioned along with newness of life? (note Acts 2:38; 22:16, as well as passages like I Peter 3:21).

What Happens When a Person is Baptized?

Acts 2:36-41

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

³⁷When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

³⁸Peter 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. ³⁹The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."

⁴⁰With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”

- ◆ **When those in the crowd cry out “what shall we do?” what does Peter tell these first responders to the good news of Jesus?** ...that they need to repent and be baptized.
- ◆ **What will be the result, the promise if they repent and are baptized?** Forgiveness of sins and gift of the Holy Spirit.

Note here that they already have “belief” that’s why they asked Peter, “what shall we do?” If belief alone saved them, they would have no need to repent or be baptized. Yet seeing their spiritual needs Peter assures them that they must repent and be baptized for forgiveness and renewal with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 22:16

“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.”

- ◆ **Ananias comes to Saul at God’s command and tells Saul that he must do what?** ...be baptized and call on His name.
- ◆ **If Saul does what Ananias says, what will be the result?** ...a washing away of sin (forgiveness).

Note, Saul is not told to “pray Jesus into his heart” or to “say the sinner’s prayer” [neither found in scripture] he is simply asked by God to be baptized and call on the name of Jesus. The result is a cleansing or washing away of sin.

Galatians 3:22-29

“But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

²³Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. ²⁴So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

²⁶You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

◆ **Paul reminds the Christians in Galatia that it is not “the Law” that makes them an heir to the promise, but it is what?** ...the fact that they have an inheritance through faith which was expressed in baptism.

◆ **The result of their faith and being baptized has done what for them?** ...clothed them in Christ and made them heirs of a promise.

Faith is always necessary for repentance or baptism. Paul encourages them here that the law does not save but rather faith in Christ Jesus which led to their being baptized. When they were baptized *into* Christ they were also clothed or put on Christ (this did not happen before their baptism, but rather as a result of).

1 Cor. 12:12-13

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

◆ **Paul reminds the Christians at Corinth of their unity and oneness in Christ (in the face of their disunity and factions) by pointing out what?** ...the fact that they are “one body”

◆ **How did they become “one body” or the church?** ...they were all baptized by one Spirit.

Paul gives them a focus point for their unity. He refers to their baptism and the one Holy Spirit who put them into the one body...the body of Christ or the church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22,23). We do not join the church or add ourselves. God adds us to body as a result of our baptism by the Spirit (see also Acts 2:47).

1 Peter 3:18-22

“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison ²⁰who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.”

◆ Peter is giving encouragement to brethren who are undergoing persecution. He gives them the example of Noah who was obedient to the Lord and was therefore saved. **They will also be saved because they have been obedient to what?** ...baptism, v. 21.

Note Peter says, “baptism that now saves you.” He proceeds to remind them that they have not undergone a bath (for the removal of physical dirt) but the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead proves that He can also remove the dirt of sin and raise them to a spiritual renewal.

Mark 16:15-16

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Which of the following is consistent with the teachings of Jesus:

- Believe + Baptized = Saved
- Not** Believe + **Not** Baptized = Saved
- Believe + Baptized = **Not** Saved
- Not** Believe + Baptized = Saved
- Believe + **Not** Baptized = Saved

Jesus says: Believe + Baptized = Saved

Universalist says:

Not Believe + **Not** Baptized = Saved

Atheist says: Believe + Baptized = **Not** Saved

Infant Baptism says:

Not Believe + Baptized = Saved

Faith Only says:

Believe + **Not** Baptized = Saved

Ephes. 4:4-6

There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

- ◆ The Christians at Ephesus were called into oneness because God is one: One body, One Spirit, One Lord, One faith, One baptism...

The "one baptism" proclaimed and responded to in scripture relates to the death, burial, and newness of life as Paul presented in Romans 6.

Questions to Consider

- ◆ **How do you think these passages apply to your own obedience to the good news?**
- ◆ **Do you see how baptism is essential to salvation?**
- ◆ **What about your own response to God's grace, do you see the importance of being baptized?**

If through the working of God our...

- Sins are taken away
- We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit
- We are clothed with Christ
- We are added to the body, the church
- We are saved

How can you refuse God's gracious gift?

We would love to study with you further concerning salvation. **Please see the chart below for additional Biblical examples of baptism.** If you are convicted by the scriptures realize that baptism can be done at any time. **The bottom line is that if you understand what you need to do, then you need to do it. Like the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:36, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"** The same goes for you. If you have seen God's grace then it is time to respond in faith and be baptized to receive God's marvelous promises. Faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are all essential to God's plan for salvation. All of these are made possible because of God's grace. All the promises and blessings related to these are totally a result of God's work, His power. When we are obedient to God, He will add us to His body (Acts 2:47).

This study on baptism was prepared by Andy Miller, Evangelist for the Starkville Church of Christ

Starkville Church of Christ
1107 East Lee Blvd.
Starkville, MS 39309
(662) 323-1499



Chart: How did those who heard the Good News of Jesus respond to be SAVED?

PREACHING	BELIEVED	REPENTED	CONFESSED	BAPTIZED	SAVED
Pentecost Acts 2:14-41		Repented vs. 37-38		Were Baptized vs. 38-41	Remission of Sins vs. 38-47 ; Saved
Folks of Samaria Acts 8:5-13	Believed v. 12			Were Baptized vs. 12-13	
The Eunuch Acts 8:35-39	Believed vs. 36-37		Confessed v. 37	Was Baptized v. 38	Went on his way Rejoicing – v. 39
Saul Acts 9:1-20				Was Baptized v. 18	Sins washed away Acts 22:16
Cornelius Acts 10:34-48	Believed v. 43			Was Baptized v. 48	Remission of sins v. 43
Lydia Acts 16:13	Gave Heed v. 14			Was Baptized v. 15	
The Jailer Acts 16:32	Believed v. 31			Was Baptized v. 33	
The Corinthians Acts 18:8	Believed v. 8			Were Baptized v. 8	
The Ephesians Acts 19:1-5				Were Baptized v. 5	