

Baptism

The ordinance signifying identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection

Baptism marks the public beginning of the Christian life. From the Greek baptizo (to immerse, submerge), this ordinance pictures spiritual reality through physical action. When believers go under the water, they identify with Christ's death and burial; when they emerge, they proclaim His resurrection and their new life in Him.

Scripture presents baptism as the normal response to saving faith. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). Throughout Acts, new believers were baptized immediately upon profession of faith—the Ethiopian eunuch, the Philippian jailer, Lydia, and thousands at Pentecost. Baptism follows faith; it does not produce it.

The meaning of baptism encompasses multiple truths. It symbolizes **union with Christ**: "buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him" (Colossians 2:12). It signifies **cleansing from sin**, though not as the cause but as the picture: "the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5). It represents **entrance into the visible church**, publicly identifying with Christ's body.

Jesus Himself was baptized, not for His own sins but to "fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). His baptism inaugurated His public ministry and received divine approval: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Believers follow their Lord's example, obeying His command: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

Christ's Baptism

Jesus' baptism and its significance

Matthew 3:13-17 — Jesus baptized by John

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

Mark 1:9-11 — Spirit descending like a dove

And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

Luke 3:21-22 — Heaven opened after baptism

Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

John 1:31-34 — John's witness of Christ's baptism

And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

The Command to Baptize

Christ's instruction for the church

Matthew 28:19 — Baptizing in name of Trinity

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Mark 16:16 — He that believeth and is baptized

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Acts 2:38 — Repent and be baptized

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 22:16 — Arise and be baptized

And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Meaning of Baptism

Spiritual significance of the ordinance

Romans 6:3-4 — Buried with him by baptism

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Colossians 2:12 — Buried and risen with Christ

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Galatians 3:27 — Put on Christ in baptism

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

1 Peter 3:21 — Answer of a good conscience

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Examples of Baptism

Baptisms recorded in Acts

Acts 2:41 — Three thousand baptized at Pentecost

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Acts 8:36-38 — Ethiopian eunuch baptized

And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

Acts 16:14-15 — Lydia and her household

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Acts 16:33 — Philippian jailer baptized

And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.