

The Meaning of Baptism - A Personal Bible Study on Immersion

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him." - Matthew 3:16 NIV

Many questions and controversies have arisen over baptism. The purpose of this study is to look solely at what the Scripture says regarding this practice. You are encouraged to put aside what other people have said, whether they be preachers, priests or parents. After that, it would be beneficial to deeply study this subject with an open and obedient mind.

Read the following Scriptures and answer the questions that follow them.

Acts 5:29

29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

Mark 7:8,13

8 "You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." 13 "Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

Proverbs 3:5-6

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

What should (and shouldn't) be the Christian's standard for life?

Who is baptized in Matthew 3:13-17 and why?

(Note: He walked approximately 60 miles to do so.)

Matthew 3:13-17

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

What is God the Father's reaction to this event?

Matthew 28:18-20

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

What was the last thing Christ Jesus told His disciples?

What are the disciples told to do along with the baptism they are to perform?

Acts 2 describes the first time the gospel of Jesus was ever fully communicated. As you read verses 37-41, answer the questions that follow.

Acts 2:37-41

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 the people were ready to accept Christ, what did Peter tell them to do? (verse 38)

What were they assured of if they sincerely took these steps? (verses 38-39)

When were they baptized? (verse 41)

In every case in which a person accepted Christ, as told in the book of Acts, what was their very next step?

Acts 8:12 People in Samaria

12But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Acts 8:36 The Ethiopian Eunuch

36As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"

Acts 10:48 The First Gentiles

48So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Acts 16:15 Lydia

15When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

Acts 16:30-33 The Philippian Jailer

30He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household." 32Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

Acts 18:8 People at Corinth

8Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

Acts 22:16 The Apostle Paul

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

Read the following and answer the question that follows.

Acts 19:1-5

1While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples 2and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

3So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied.

4Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

What was done when a group of believers did not have a proper understanding of baptism?

Romans 6:3-4

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 picture does this Scripture give you about baptism?

Verse 4 connects baptism with burial. Would you say that picture indicates a baptism by sprinkling, pouring or immersion?

Which form of baptism do these references point toward, immersion, pouring or sprinkling?

John 3:23

23Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.

Matthew 3:16

16As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.

Acts 8:38

38And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

The word "baptism" is a transliteration of the Greek word "baptismos." That is, the Greek letters simply changed into English letters. So everywhere you read "baptism" in the New Testament, it is the Greek word "baptismos," or one of its forms. Here is what accepted Greek scholars give as the meaning of the word "baptismos."

- A dipping in water (Liddell and Scott)
- Dipping, to dip, to immerse (Arndt and Gingrich)
- The whole person was immersed in water (Kittel Encyclopedia)
- Immersion (Smith's Dictionary)

Read the following Scriptures and answer the questions that follow.

Galatians 3:26-27

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.

What assurance is given to those who have faith and are baptized?

1 Peter 3:21

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,

This states that baptism is "not the removal of dirt from the body," but it is what?

From your study, give Scriptural answers to these questions.

Who should be baptized?

What method or form is indicated in Scripture?

When should a believer be baptized?

In light of your study and prayer, what is God telling you?

One final thought!

Romans 6:4

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.

If you want to talk with someone about your relationship with Jesus, we can be reached at 910-822-2402, Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. You may also email us using the Contact link above.

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