

# Why Do We ...

## Baptize New Members By Immersion?

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Why do Baptists baptize new Christians by *immersion in and under the water*? Does a Christian *have* to be baptized in order to be saved? Why do we baptize Christians from other denominations before accepting them into full membership in our local Churches? These are questions that I'm sure you will be asked or have been asked, so let's see if we can answer them according to the Holy Scripture.

**Why Do Baptists Baptize New Believers By Immersion In and Under The Water?**  
**Answer: Because of Jesus' Example**

Some denominations within Christianity *sprinkle* water on new converts to the faith, whereas other denominations *pour* water over the believer and call it *baptism*. We who are Baptists – no matter whether we classify ourselves as Southern, Independent, Regular, Northern, Primitive – always baptize believers by immersion in and under the water. Why do we do this?

There is truly no *English* word for “baptism”. The words “baptize, baptized, or baptism” are actually Greek New Testament words that have been adopted into the English language. We who are Baptists look at how our Lord Jesus Christ was baptized and try to follow His example. We read concerning His baptism:

**Matthew 3:13-17<sup>KJV</sup> Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. (14) But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?**

(15) And Jesus answering said unto him, **Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.** Then he suffered him.

(16) And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

(17) And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

We see several things in the baptism of Jesus. Let's do this by the numbers:

**1** Jesus Christ is, was, and will always be *sinless* – yet He submitted to water baptism. John told Jesus, “**I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?**”. John recognized Jesus as the ...

**John 1:29 ... Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**

The **Lamb of God** had to be *without spot or blemish of sin*, else He could not be the sacrifice for our sins:

**1 Peter 1:19 [You were redeemed with] ... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:**

God made Jesus Christ ... **to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)** He was and is

sinless – and yet, Jesus told John:

**2** **Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill<sup>1</sup> all righteousness.** What does this mean? Jesus is already perfect, sinless, so **fulfill all righteousness** cannot mean “**to get right with God**” or “**to add to His already perfect righteousness**”. So what did it mean? It meant that Jesus Christ *submitted Himself to the will of God the Father*. His act of submission to John's Baptism was not an act of submission to John, but *to God the Father Who sent Him*. Jesus tells us in another place:

**John 5:30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.**

When Jesus submitted to water baptism under the hand of John, He was **doing the will of the Father Who sent Him**. Jesus so identified Himself with the Father's will that He said

**John 14:9-10 ... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou [then], Shew us the Father? (10) Believest thou not that I**

<sup>1</sup> Aorist Active Infinitive of G4137, πληροῶ, plēroō, *play-ro'-o*, From G4134; to *make replete*, that is, (literally) to *cram* (a net), *level up* (a hollow), or (figuratively) to *furnish* (or *imbue, diffuse, influence*), *satisfy, execute* (an office), *finish* (a period or task), *verify* (or *coincide* with a prediction), etc.: - accomplish, X after, (be) complete, end, expire, fill (up), fulfil, (be, make) full (come), fully preach, perfect, supply.

am in the Father, and the Father in me? **the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.**

If you saw Jesus do it, it's what the Father wanted Him to do – even in the matter of baptism.

**3** We also read, **Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water.** John Gill's **Exposition of the Bible** states:

“Everyone would naturally and reasonably conclude, without the mention of such a circumstance, that as soon as his baptism was over, he would immediately come up out of the water. However, we learn this from it, that since it is said, that he came up out of the water, he must first have gone down into it; must have been in it, and was baptized in it; a circumstance strongly in favor of baptism by immersion”

The People's New Testament commentary states:

**Dr. Whitby**, of the Church of England, on this passage, says: "The **observation of the Greek Church is this, that he who ascended out of the water must first descend into it. Baptism is therefore to be performed, not by sprinkling, but by washing the body.**" **Dr. Schaff**, the great Pedo-baptist scholar, says: "While the **validity of baptism does not depend on the quantity or quality of water, or the mode of its**

**application, yet immersion and emersion is the primitive and expressive mode to symbolize the idea of entire spiritual purification and renovation."** **Dr. Schaff** also says: "The Greek word baptize is derived from a root that means 'to dip,' 'to immerse.'"

You may not know who these people are that I just quoted (though they are well respected preachers and Biblical scholars), but I know you know who this is. The late **Dr. Adrian Rogers of Bellevue Baptist Church** stated<sup>2</sup>:

“When we read about the baptism of Jesus in **Mark 1:9**, we find out the Lord was baptized in the same way: "And it came to pass in those days, that **Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.**" Jordan refers to the Jordan River, so Jesus went down into the Jordan River to be immersed. He wasn't baptized near the Jordan, or with water from the Jordan, but actually into the Jordan. The next verse reads, "and straightway coming up out of the water . . ." Now, if He came up out of the water, He had to have been down in the water. **Jesus was baptized by immersion.**

It's important to note that **Jesus wasn't baptized by immersion just because it was convenient. As a matter of fact, it was downright inconvenient. It was about a sixty mile trip, one way. But He went to the Jordan because that's where the water was, and it takes a lot of water to immerse someone. John 3:23**

2 The sermon Start Right: Believer's Baptism By Dr. Adrian Rogers. Found online at <http://www.bellevue.org/>

notes that John the Baptist was baptizing in Aenon near Salim "because there was much water there." Now if John had wanted to sprinkle people, he could have baptized everybody in Jerusalem with a fifty-five gallon tank of water. But John had to find a place that had plenty of water, because it takes a lot of water to immerse someone."

The Baptism of Jesus was therefore *an act of obedience to God the Father*. The Christian is not baptized *to be saved, but because he or she is being obedient*. Christ's Baptism was *ceremonial* in that it *did not change Jesus' righteousness* – He was sinless before, and sinless after His baptism. In the same way the Christian's baptism does not make him or her sinless – it is *ceremonial*. Baptism does not save you, but is something that saved people do! Finally, Jesus was *baptized by immersion, and commanded we baptize others in the same way*. The Great Commission that Jesus gave us is:

**Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:**

We who are Baptists follow this pattern. We **Go**, we **teach of Jesus**, then we **baptize new converts by immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Spirit)**. This is what Jesus did, what Jesus commanded, and what we do.

**Does a Christian Have To Be Baptized To Be Saved?**

**Answer: No, Though Obedient Christians Are**

The Bible teaches that water baptism is a *ceremonial washing and a witness to others* that you have been saved. We read:

**1 Peter 3:21 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:**

The Scripture defines water baptism as **the answer of a good conscience toward God**. If you have been saved then you, like our Lord Jesus, should *want to be baptized*. After all, the Master commands your baptism! Jesus said:

**John 15:14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.**

He has commanded water baptism in the Great Commission – why debate it? Too many believers will *strain at a gnat and swallow a camel*. Jesus commanded water baptism – just DO IT! Good Christians do not mind going under the water for Christ. When **Phillip the Evangelist led the Ethiopian Eunuch** to accept Christ as Savior we see that this unnamed man was *eager* to be baptized. We read:

**Acts 8:36-38 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? (37) And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (38) And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.**

Once the Ethiopian believed he immediately saw water and asked, “See, [here is] water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”. Why wait, Philip, I'm ready! Oh, that all new converts had the same attitude toward serving the Lord! Notice that Philip said before baptizing this man, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest”. Only believers are baptized. This is, by the way, the reason that **we who are Baptists do not baptize babies**. They can not properly answer “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest”. Only an person at the age of accountability can do this – and babies are not able.

Please note also that **both went down into the water, and Philip baptized the Ethiopian**. Again we see an instance of water baptism *by immersion* – not by sprinkling or pouring.

If you love Jesus, if you were saved by faith in Him, you *should be baptized*. Jesus said:

John 14:15, 21 **If ye love me, keep my**

**commandments. ... (21) He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me:** and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

There's a problem in the life of a professing Christian who will not submit to water baptism. Jesus commanded it upon all who believe. If you love Him, do it. Baptism, however, *does not save*. Water baptism is a *symbolic act showing that you have been planted together and risen with the Lord Jesus Christ*.

**Romans 6:4 ... we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also [in the likeness] of [his] resurrection:** (6) Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with [him], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Baptism symbolizes that we are *now dead to this world, but alive to the next world because of Christ*. Salvation is entirely a gift from God. The Scripture says of salvation:

**Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: (9) Not of works,**

## **lest any man should boast.**

That it is **not of works, lest any man should boast**. If water baptism is a work that saves, then *what about those who are baptized by pouring or sprinkling – are they saved?* If you believe that the work of water baptism is necessary for salvation then you would have to say those who are baptized by a *non-Biblical formula* are unsaved. Yet we as Baptists do not believe that. We believe that water baptism is a work that a Christian *should* do, but we affirm with the Scripture that *salvation is entirely of faith*. The Bible declares:

**Titus 3:5-7 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us**, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; (6) Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; (7) That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

**Galatians 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.**

We who believe are saved because *Jesus Christ died for us on Calvary, and rose again to ever make intercession for us (Hebrews 9:22; 7:27; 1 Peter 1:18-19)*.

Salvation is not of works, but of faith. We who are Baptists believe that people saved by faith exist in *every denomination of Christianity*, whether they be Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Catholic, Nazarene, Non-Denominational, ad infinitum – as long as they **confessed with their mouth the Lord Jesus, and believed in their heart that God has raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9-10)**. We believe that **whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed (Romans 10:11)**.

We know that water baptism does not save because there is Scriptural evidence that salvation and the subsequent *indwelling of the Holy Spirit* come on the believer *before he or she is ever baptized*. Look at the salvation of the Gentile Cornelius:

**Acts 10:44-47 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. (45) And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. (46) For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, (47) Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy**

## Ghost as well as we?

The Gentiles were dramatically saved by faith *prior* to their baptism. Peter said “**Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?**”. I have heard people say, “well, that was then and this is now” - but God's Will does not vary. The Holy Spirit could not indwell the Gentiles until they were saved – and they were baptized in water *after* the Holy Spirit indwelt them. Our Lord Jesus Christ accepted the **thief who hung next to Him into Heaven without benefit of baptism:**

**Luke 23:42-43 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. (43) And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.**

This thief had no works to commend him to Heaven but his faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord honored that faith and promised him – as He does all who believe – that upon our death we **shall be with Him in paradise.**

If water baptism is an integral part of the salvation of the believer, then why would the **Apostle Paul** say to the Corinthian believers:

**1 Corinthians 1:14-17 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and**

**Gaius; (15) Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. (16) And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. (17) For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.**

The Corinthians were fighting amongst themselves over who was the *better Christian* – the one baptized by Paul or the one baptized by Apollos. Paul **thanked God that he had only baptized a few.** If water baptism is necessary that salvation be true, why would the Great Apostle have said such a thing? Why would he have said “**Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel**” if water baptism is an integral part of salvation? We must stand on this truth, dear ones, that salvation is *entirely of faith.*

But we also affirm that the *faithful will be baptized in obedience to the command of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* Finally,

**Why Do We Baptize Professing Christians From Other Denominations Before Accepting Them Into Full Membership In Our Local Church?**

**Romans 12:10 [Be] kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another;**

**Ephesians 4:1-3 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, (2) With all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; (3) Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

If we believe salvation by faith in Christ alone, why do we require Christian believers from other denominations to be re-baptized before we accept them into full membership at this Church? We have one example in the missionary journey of **the Apostle Paul**. Paul was in Ephesus and came across some of **John the Baptist's disciples**. These men were baptized by John *before* Christ died on the Cross, and had not heard that Messiah had come. We read:

**Acts 19:2-5 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. (3) And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. (4) Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. (5) When they heard [this], they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**

Once these men heard that Messiah, Jesus Christ, had come they believed on Him and were **baptized in the name** or under the Great Commission of Jesus. We who are Baptists believe that water baptism is a *public profession of your faith in Christ*. When people joined the early Church they were baptized by immersion in obedience to the Great Commission of Christ (**Acts 2:41**). When people come to us from non-Baptist churches we expect them to *align themselves doctrinally with us in all things*. People from some churches may have been baptized by sprinkling or pouring – we do not recognize this as the proper Biblical format for water baptism. People come to us from churches that teach the doctrines of *pedo-baptism* (baptism of infants) or *baptismal regeneration* (baptism is a necessary component of salvation). We reject these false doctrines, and reject baptisms under false premises.

As a local Church we do allow in our charter possibility that someone can be accepted into full membership without being baptized by immersion before this congregation. But, dear ones, to maintain peace and unity in the Body we – on most instances – will require those from non-Baptist denominations to be publicly baptized by immersion before they will be given full voting rights in this congregation. Why this should be an overwhelming deterrent to joining this assembly of believers is ludicrous. Any Christian should be proud to stand before the congregation that God has led him or her to, and be willing to profess their faith in Christ through the beautiful ritual of water baptism.