

BAPTISM BY WATER

STUDY 5

Baptism in water is a physical act that expresses a spiritual truth. When we are getting baptised, in reality we are sharing with Christ the act of death and resurrection. Obviously the person that is getting baptised is not dying to sin as Jesus did, but is giving public testimony that he is taking “hold” of the work of Christ. As Jesus died to sin, therefore the believer also dies to sin. When they are submerged in the water, it symbolises the burial of the sinful old nature. That nature is left under the water and the person is therefore symbolically resurrected to a new life in Jesus. The person that is baptised literally is in agreement with God that he is dead to sin and now is alive to God.

What does the Bible tell us?

1. **Mark 16:15-16** and **Acts 2:38**

In accordance with these verses, what is baptism? (Tick your answer)

- Optional for the Christian believer.
- A command for the Christian believer.
- Something that must be done even if you don't believe it.
- Compulsory for babies even though they might not have the capacity to believe.

2. **Romans 6:3-4** and **Colossians 2:12**.

We identify with the _____ and the _____ of Christ.

Baptism symbolises our death to our old way of living and the beginning of the new life that Christ gave us. It implies a firm decision to walk in newness of life, as far away as possible from sin, obeying only God. We recommend reading the whole of **Romans 6**.

Baptism is also a testimony to others, and external evidence that something has happened in our interior. Even though baptism does not save us, since we are saved when we believe in Christ (**John 3:16**), it is obedience to Jesus' command and fundamental for our spiritual growth.

Baptism by immersion:

In baptism we believe that the person should be submerged totally in water where possible. This is backed up by the following:

1. The word *baptise* comes from the Greek word *baptizo* that usually meant immersion. Therefore baptism is best done by totally submerging the person in the water.
2. John the Baptist was baptising in the river Jordan because there was lot of water there. This implied that it was a total immersion (**John 3:23**).
3. Only baptism by total immersion symbolises proper burial.

There may be occasions when total immersion is impossible, but whole submersion best represents the meaning of baptism in the New Testament.

What is the right age to be baptised?

Although the Bible does not put a limit in this respect, it is important that those who obey this commandment of God should understand what is taking place. The tradition of baptising babies and young children is based on the extra biblical belief that baptism is cleansing the original sin in children.

The Scriptures teach us that the kingdom of God belongs to children (**Mark 10:14**). Jesus himself was dedicated at his 8th day in the temple, but he did not get baptised until his 30th year.

Baptisms in the Bible:

The book of the Acts of Apostles tells us what happened in the early church:

- **The Day of Pentecost:**

Acts 2:40-41 *“With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”*

Acts 8:12 *“when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women.”*

- **The Ethiopian eunuch:**

Acts 8:26-39 *“Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” ...on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official ...This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.” The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptised?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.”*

- **The first Gentiles believe:**

Acts 10:44-48 *“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” So he ordered that they be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.*

- **The Philippian Jailer:**

Acts 16: 31-33 *“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptised. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.”*

According to what you read:

Which were the necessary conditions for being baptised?

How long did Christians have to wait before getting baptised?

Reflect and answer the following personal questions:

Should you be baptised? Why?

Did you get baptised when you were a baby? Is this valid? Why?

If you are thinking of getting baptised: When will you do it?

Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit?

Conclusion: Conversion should always be followed by baptism in water wherever possible. Baptism is best by full immersion and is a command of God for all Christians. When people are baptised it's also good to pray for them that God would fill them with the Holy Spirit.