



# Baptism at AHCC

---

Please read the sections below to become more familiar with baptism and some answers to common questions you may have.

## What is Baptism?

Baptism is the outward act that symbolizes the inward change of coming to, and accepting, Jesus Christ as real, God incarnate and the sacrificial means by which those who believe in Him can be forever reconciled to God. The purpose of baptism is to give visual testimony of our commitment to Christ. It is the first step of discipleship (Acts 8:26-39).

The Greek word for "baptism" is "βαπτίζω". The English letters look like this: "baptidzo." The Greek word "baptidzo" literally means to "dip" or to "immerse".

The symbolism of baptism is that, just as Christ died and was buried, so the baptized person is submerged (whether physically or symbolically) under water. And just as Christ rose again from beneath the earth, so the baptized person rises again from beneath the water. Under the water is the believer's old, dead, heavy, suffocating life. Out of the water, cleansed by the blood of Christ, is the believer's new, fresh, purposeful life.

Baptism is like a wedding ring. We put on a wedding ring as a symbol of our inward commitment and devotion to our spouse. In the same way, baptism is a picture of inward devotion and commitment to Christ. A wedding ring reminds us and tells others that we belong to someone special. In the same way, baptism reminds us and others that we are devoted to Christ and belong to Him.

## Do You Need to be Baptized to be Saved?

According to God's Word, Baptism is not a requirement of salvation. Let's examine what the Scriptures teach on this issue:

It is quite clear from such passages as Acts 15 and Romans 4 that no external act is necessary for salvation. Salvation is by divine grace through faith alone (Romans 3:22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30; 4:5; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 3:9, etc.). If water baptism were necessary for salvation, we would expect to find it stressed whenever the saving gospel of Jesus is presented in Scriptures. Paul, however, never made water baptism any part of his gospel presentation. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:1-4, Paul gives a

concise summary of the gospel message he preached. There is no mention of baptism. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:17, Paul states that “Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel,” thus clearly differentiating the gospel from baptism.

If baptism were part of the gospel itself, necessary for salvation, what good would it have done Paul to preach the gospel, but not baptize? No one would have been saved. The penitent woman (Luke 7:37-50), the paralytic man (Matthew 9:2), the publican (Luke 18:13-14) and the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43) all experienced forgiveness of sins apart from baptism. For that matter, we have no record of the apostles’ being baptized, yet Jesus pronounced them clean of their sins (John 15:3—note that the Word of God, not baptism, is what cleansed them).

There are two Bible verses that may cause confusion in regards to how baptism and salvation are mentioned together. Acts 2:38 says "repent and be baptized" ... meaning that baptism is not required but a physical next step to take after the spiritual step. Mark 16:6 "whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." ...again, baptism is stated as a natural next step after the spiritual belief. It is the belief that grants salvation and the failure to believe that causes condemnation.

Water baptism is certainly important, however, the New Testament does not teach that baptism is necessary for salvation.

*Excerpt from Is Baptism Necessary for Salvation? by John MacArthur*

## **Jesus' Baptism**

*Matthew 3:13-17 - "Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. 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 alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

If John was baptizing for repentance and Jesus was without sin, why would he have to be baptized? Jesus’ meaning in Matthew 3:15 was not a statement that baptism is necessary for salvation, nor that he needed to repent of anything. The intent of the Jewish people regarding baptism was to signify their readiness to follow the will of God. So by engaging in this action, by including himself in this tradition of his people, Jesus “fulfills all righteousness,” not merely by the physical act, but by the spiritual implications of it.

There was no written legal requirement for Jesus to be baptized in order to inaugurate his ministry. Jesus followed the law, but he also followed the traditions in line with the heart of the law. By this act, Jesus proclaims the beginning of his ministry.

*Excerpt from Why Was Jesus Baptized by Joel Stucki*

## How is Baptism a Beginning?

Think of baptism as a marker, a stake in the ground, if you will. It is a public declaration that you are identifying yourself as a follower of Jesus and one who trusts Him alone for salvation. That identification is also with the body of Christ, the church. Baptism is not just about you and Jesus, but also about you starting new with Jesus and the family of Christ's followers, called the church. So you are starting a new life with Jesus and with a new family. It is also a symbolic way of saying you acknowledge that you are washed clean by Christ and that your sins are forgiven by Him – that your future is not what it was, but is now guaranteed by Jesus.

## Infant Baptism vs Adult Baptism

What is the difference between infant and adult baptism? Let's take a look at how infant baptism began and why it's important for adults to take the symbolic step of baptism.

Infant baptism arose from the teachings of some early second and third-century church fathers that baptism washed away sin. This meant that if you died without being baptized then you died with your sins unforgiven and thus went to Hell (or purgatory as that concept developed over time). With the high infant mortality rate in the early centuries, the concept of baptizing babies as soon as possible came into vogue. Since it is not necessarily good to push baby heads underwater, the idea of sprinkling took hold.

Again, the word baptism does not mean "sprinkle" or "pour". The Greek word "baptidzo" literally means to "dip" or to "immerse".

Throughout the years of the Church, baptism by immersion has taken several forms. Some baptize by dipping three times in the "Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit". Others use the Jewish model for baptizing Gentile converts into Judaism. The initiates wear white robes and are dipped three times forward and three times backward. The most common mode of baptism is once backward to portray the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

According to Romans 6:1-10, baptism pictures at least three things:

- a. First, baptism is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. As we stand in the water we are representing Christ on the cross. As we are dipped under water we illustrate the burial of Christ. As we come out of the water we demonstrate the resurrection of Christ.
- b. Second, baptism is a personal testimony to us of the washing away of our sins. As we go under the water we reconfirm that our sins are forgiven, and as we come out of the water, we confirm our resurrection to new life in Christ.
- c. Third, baptism represents our personal identification with Christ. Paul declared in Romans 6:3-4 "*We were buried with Christ in baptism and we are raised to walk in a new life*" as forgiven followers of Christ empowered by the Spirit of God.

Being sprinkled or having water poured over your head when you were an infant, or too young to understand, misses the point of baptism on all three levels.

The Bible teaches that commitment to Christ always precedes baptism. In fact, baptism is your testimony of surrendering your life to Christ. The New Testament order is not be baptized and then receive Christ. It is always first you receive Christ and then you get baptized. If you were not aware of submitting to the Lordship of Christ then it is impossible to think of your baptism as a personal commitment to Christ.

*Excerpt from Is It Important to Get Baptized As An Adult? by Dr. Roger Barrier*

## **What if I've been Baptized Before?**

Sometimes people will have been baptized as infants or at a youth retreat when “everyone was doing it”. Should I get baptized again if I did it before, but didn't know what it meant? Yes.

Again, baptism is an outward symbol of an inward acceptance and allegiance to Jesus Christ. If you were baptized before, but did not have a relationship with Jesus, or were too young to know what you were doing, than getting baptized was a religious ritual with no real meaning. Now that you've come to faith in Jesus Christ, the next appropriate step is to publicly declare your commitment to Him through baptism.

## **What are Some Practical Next Steps to Take after Baptism?**

First, get a towel, and dry off! Then, tell somebody. Let someone know that you have been baptized. Of course, there will be people with you who know about it. But there will also be people who love Christ and love you and would be encouraged to know that you took this step in your journey with Jesus. You can also use it as a way to let others know about your faith in Jesus. It is, after all, a public statement that you are a follower of Jesus. It can be as simple as responding to someone asking, “What did you do this weekend?” or “What's new?” It can also be that you start a conversation by saying, “I did something really important this weekend that I want to tell you about. I got baptized at church.”

## **Scriptures on Baptism**

*Romans 6:3-10 – “Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We 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. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.”*

*1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:21 - “And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”*

Colossians 2:21 - *"Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead."*

Ephesians 4:4-6 - *"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."*

Acts 22:16 - *"And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name."*

## **How can I Help my Child Take Next Steps after They're Baptized?**

Parents are to be the first and most important spiritual influence on their children. Regularly praying with and for your child, teaching your child the Scriptures by reading the Bible with him or her and talking about its truths, worshiping with your child and serving others alongside your child are all things that parents should and must do with their children. Make sure they are involved in a consistent program, such as our Children's Ministries or Youth Ministries, and don't just drop them off and pick them up – engage them in what they learned that day. Make that lesson a part of your prayer life together as a family during the week. By far, the best thing you can do for them is walk as closely with Jesus as you can and bring them along with you.