

LESSON 46 - WATER BAPTISM

What Is Christian Water Baptism and When Should It Be Done?

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Water baptism is very important in Christianity. It is a public demonstration of those who've put their trust in Jesus and entered His Church from those who haven't. It isn't optional for Christians; it was commanded by Jesus. This lesson covers: 1) What is Christian water baptism?, 2) What is Christian water baptism NOT?, and 3) What is the process for baptism?

1. What is Christian Water Baptism? Baptism comes from the Greek word *baptizó*, which means to dip, submerge, or immerse. Christian water baptism is the ceremonial rite of entrance, where a member of Jesus's Global Church dips a new believer in water. This act is a public demonstration and affirmation of the new believer's faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. It officially marks the new believer's decision to follow Jesus and join the visible expression of His Global Church. In Matthew 28:18-19 Jesus clearly commands baptism, saying, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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."* During the Church's official launch on the day of Pentecost, Peter echoed Jesus's command. Acts 2:37-41 it says, *"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' Peter 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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.' ... Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."* Baptism for new believers is also recorded in 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 baptized, both men and women."* Baptism is one of two sacraments given to the Church by Christ (the other is The Lord's Supper). A sacrament is a sacred, ceremonial act instituted and prescribed by Jesus. It has authority and power because it's bound up by Jesus's word, divine revelation, and authoritative decree. Baptism is an expression of faith and obedience. Baptism comes after God's grace and supernatural in-working in a person towards repentance and faith. The water is a visible symbol of our dying to sin, justification through faith, acceptance by God, and being raised to new life.

2. What is Christian Baptism NOT? Christian water baptism is not the same as John the Baptist's baptism, nor does it save us or change us. Before Jesus came, John the Baptist baptized people. His was a baptism of repentance meaning that a person was sorry for their sins against God. He did this to prepare the way for Jesus, who instituted a new, superior baptism (John 1:29-31, 3:26; Matthew 3:11;

Acts 19:1-7). Water baptism doesn't save nor make us a better people—not even a little bit, only trust in Jesus does. There's nothing we can do to earn salvation. No amount of obedience to God's moral commandments nor observance of religious rituals, including baptism. We're dead in our sins and we deserve God's wrath. It's only because God is merciful and gracious that He offers us salvation through faith in Jesus. Every aspect of our salvation is by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Not by any religious work, lest anyone should boast (Ephesians 2:1-10). Water baptism doesn't *change* us—only our *spiritual rebirth* and sanctification does. This happens when the dead spirit part of us is born again by the Holy Spirit of God and He comes to live inside of us. He transforms us over time as we submit to Him and give Him all of ourselves. The water doesn't change us during the baptism ceremony, it doesn't remove or cleanse us of sins, nor does it cause the new birth. The water is simply water. Baptism without genuine repentance or faith means nothing. Simon the sorcerer was water baptized but remained lost, unsaved, and far from God because his heart and faith weren't right (Acts 8:13-24). Our sinful nature changes through intimacy with Jesus, seeking the deliverance, healing, and guidance of His Spirit. Genuine faith is what matters. Faith always comes *before* baptism and baptism is a *response* to our faith. It's an outward action demonstrating what God has already done in your heart. Water baptism is a *symbol and picture* of our burial with Jesus in death and rising with Him in new life. The water represents our old sin nature, desires, and ambitions left behind in the water, as we then rise out of the water as a new creation with a new nature, desires, ambitions, and purpose. Romans 6:3-4 says, *“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.”* Water baptism is a *representation* of these things, not the cause or reality of them. 1 Peter 3:21 says, *“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.”* It represents our “official” decision to be “marked” as belonging to Jesus.

3. What Is The Process For Baptism? Every single believer should be water baptized by another born again believer using the triune formula. A person is eligible for baptism once they've reached an age of maturity and accountability. When they're able to hear the gospel, think, believe, decide, and speak for themselves. A person should be baptized promptly after they have: 1) repented of (turned away from) their sinful attitude against God, 2) believed in the Gospel (forgiveness of sin, adoption, and eternal salvation by faith alone in Christ's sacrifice for their sins on the cross), 3) surrendered to Jesus as their Lord and Savior, 4) confessed their faith and pledged their allegiance to Jesus for the rest of their life, and 5) have a correct understanding of what water baptism is. In Acts 8:26-39 there's a story about an Ethiopian eunuch who believed when Philip shared the good news about Jesus with him. In verse 36 he said, *“Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?”* He expressed his faith and trust in Jesus and he was baptized right then! Let us do likewise! I recommend the biblical example of being fully immersed in water by another in the name of the Father, Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, I believe You're the Son of God who died for my sins and rose again. If I haven't, I will get baptized soon. I will encourage others to do so too, and celebrate with them! Amen.