
Grace Fellowship Church

Why We Are Baptisers!

Evidence from Acts

From the beginning of the apostles' preaching, baptism is associated with repentance and conversion.

Acts 2³⁸ And Peter said to them, "*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.*" ...⁴¹ *So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*

Acts 8¹² *But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*

It is only when people were clearly converted that they received the ordinance of baptism.

Acts 10⁴⁷ "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, *who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?*"

Was Anyone Other Than Believers Ever Baptized?

No. Some have argued that in "household" baptisms children were baptized as well as adults. A closer reading of the text, however, proves insightful.

Acts 16²⁹ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas.³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"³¹ And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, *you and your household.*"³² And they spoke the word of the Lord *to him and to all who were in his house.*³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, *he and all his family.*³⁴ Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced *along with his entire household* that he had believed in God.

Acts 18⁸ Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, *together with his entire household.* And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.

What Does the Word Actually Mean?

- *Baptizō* – to put under water as an initiatory rite for the purpose of renewing or establishing a relationship with God; to wash ceremonially; to plunge, dip

Gal 3²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (See also all the references from Acts; Rom 6:3; 1 Cor 1:13-16)

- *Baptō* – to dip something in a liquid

John 13²⁶ Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. (See also Lk 16:24)

- *Baptisma* – ceremonious use of water for purpose of renewing or establishing relationship with God; plunging; dipping

Eph 4⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism,⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (See also Rom 6:4; 1 Pet 3:21)

- *Baptismos* – washing; cleansing; plunging experience

Col 2¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

All that complicated jargon to simply say this: the meaning of the words used for "baptise" and "baptism" in the New Testament militate against two false notions with regard to baptism:

1. That baptism can function as a precursor to faith. Baptism is clearly an initiatory rite with regard to the beginning of one's relationship to God.
2. That baptism can be by sprinkling, pouring, or any means other than plunging. The words used by the New Testament authors clearly indicate that a dipping or plunging is in view.

Isn't Baptism the New Covenant Fulfilment of Circumcision?

No. First of all, it must be noted that even in the OT circumcision was a symbol of an inward cleansing and renewal of heart (Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4; Ezek 44:7). This symbolic force is brought into the NT in places like Phil 3:3 where the Gentile Christians are called "the true circumcision" since they worship in the Spirit.

A key text here is Col 2:11-14.

Col 2 ¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

It is understandable here to see how some would think circumcision and baptism are being paralleled. The following verses must be included, however.

Col 2 ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

These Christians were buried with Christ in baptism and also raised with him through faith. Thus regeneration—the inward circumcision which is made without hands—is the NT fulfilment of OT circumcision of the flesh.

Again, if baptism were the new covenant fulfilment of circumcision, the letter to the Galatians would have been much shorter. When convinced that they needed to be circumcised to be in the covenant all Paul would have needed to say is this: "You don't need to be circumcised anymore because we have been baptized." Instead, Paul insists with the strongest language that the true heirs of Abraham do not inherit the promise through family connections or works at all. Rather, the promised blessing is received by those who receive the Spirit by faith.

What Does Baptism Symbolize?

The washing away of our sins

Acts 22 ¹⁶ And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

Union with Christ in his death and resurrection (as above in Col 2:12).

Rom 6 ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Passing through (the waters of) judgment safely.

1Pet 3 ²⁰ because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...

Conclusion

Baptism of believers by immersion is a fundamental part of Christianity. In the great commission Jesus gives one great command to his followers: preach my gospel to the whole world, and when they believe baptize them in the name of the Triune God and then continue to instruct them to obey my commands. Small wonder throughout all the rest of the NT the authors simply cannot conceive of a believer who is (a) not instructed in the things of the faith, and (b) not baptized. Anything less fails to meet the standards of the great commission.

Our call is to go and preach, "Repent and be baptized!"