

Baptism

1) What is baptism?

- A) Baptism is the act of immersing a person in water and raising them back up again. It is typically done in church baptisteries, but can be done anywhere where there is enough water (pools, rivers, lakes, etc.). The biblical method is immersion, but pouring or sprinkling can be used if immersion is not possible (e.g. when a person is ill, disabled, elderly, confined, etc.).

2) What does baptism signify?

- A) Your union with Christ. Baptism is symbolic of being saved. It is an outward physical sign of your inward spiritual union with Jesus Christ.
- (1) Being immersed in water is symbolic of your death and burial with Christ (Romans 6:3-4). When you were saved, you died with Christ, that is, you died, spiritually speaking, to sin and your old way of life. “Dying to sin” means that your relationship with sin is ended. Its power over you is broken, and you are no longer its slave (Romans 6:7).
 - (2) Being raised up from the water is symbolic of your resurrection with Christ (Romans 6:5). When you were saved, you were made alive with Christ, that is, you became alive, spiritually speaking, to God. Becoming “alive” to God means that you have begun a relationship with Him (John 17:3). God has regenerated you (Ephesians 2:4-5), and you have been born again (John 3:1-8).
- B) Your commitment to discipleship. When you are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, you are publicly declaring your faith in Him and your intention to become His disciple (Matthew 5:14-16). As we learned in a previous lesson, a disciple is a person who desires to learn from and follow after someone else. Your goal as a disciple of Jesus is to learn His teachings, model His way of living and become like Him in your thoughts, attitudes, actions and words.

3) What are the prerequisites for baptism?

- A) You must be born again before being baptized (see the lesson on salvation).
- B) You should be aware of and understand the spiritual significance of the act of baptism.

4) Why must I be baptized?

- A) Water baptism is commanded by Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).
- B) Jesus, our example, was Himself baptized (Matthew 3:13-17).
- C) Jesus and His disciples baptized those who believed and repented (John 3:22-26).

D) New converts in the early Church were always baptized (Acts 2:38–41; 8:26–38; 16:31–34).

5) Does getting baptized save me?

A) The act of baptism does not save you (cf. Luke 23:39–43). You are saved by grace through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8–9). Baptism is simply the first and necessary step of obedience as you begin your relationship with God.

(1) Doctrinal Error Alert: the Catholic church believes that “baptism confers the grace of justification.”¹ Catholics also practice infant baptism in which water from a baptismal font is poured over the baby’s head. The godparents then profess faith for the child by responding to a litany of beliefs and reciting the prayer of Jesus, the Our Father.

(2) If you were baptized as an infant, I recommend that you get baptized again. You will fulfill the hope your parents had for you when they baptized you as an infant, and you will declare your own faith in Christ at the same time.

6) When should I be baptized?

A) In the early Church, baptism took place very soon after conversion (Acts 22:16). Because of this, I recommend that you request baptism as soon as possible after being saved. The pastor of your church will work with you to arrange this, and he can answer any questions you have about the process.

7) Who can baptize me?

A) Anyone who is a Christian and who understands the nature and significance of baptism can baptize another believer. Scripture gives no other requirements. The reason baptisms are typically done by pastors is because of denominational restrictions and the desire to ensure that people are truly saved before they are baptized.

¹ Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, (TAN Books and Publishers; 4th Edition), p. 354.