

Basic Discipleship

A Course On New Testament Discipleship

Topic #3

New Testament Baptism

Objectives: As a result of the study of this topic we want to be able to:

- 1. Understand the meaning of baptism and its relationship to the Great Commission.**
- 2. Examine the various uses of the term baptism in the New Testament.**
- 3. Analyze those Scriptures that have been used erroneously to teach that baptism contributes to one's salvation.**
- 4. Distinguish between paedobaptism and credobaptism.**
- 5. Discern from the Bible the timing & the mode of baptism is to be practiced.**
- 6. Ask and answer commonly asked questions about the practice of baptism.**
- 7. Memorize a verse of Scripture on baptism.**

Introduction

Very often baptism is described simply in terms of what some church or denomination teaches. You will hear people speak of the "Baptist doctrine" or the "Catholic or Methodist doctrine" or "the doctrine of our church." However, the only thing that matters is what the Bible teaches about baptism. God's people should be baptized because God commanded it, not because some church requires it. They should be baptized a certain way, because that is the way the Bible teaches and it should have a certain meaning, the meaning which God gave to baptism. People need to remember what the Lord says about baptism, and then do what He says, because He said so.

I. What Is the Meaning of Baptism & Is It Part of The Great Commission?

- A. Definition of the Greek verb for baptism (βαπτίζω).**
 - 1. A lexical study of "baptizo" indicates it means, "to dip or to immerse."**
 - 2. When used in relation to water, the word is used in first century Greek literature of a sinking ship, of someone sinking in mud, and of a fuller dying a piece of cloth by immersing it into the die.**

3. This study will demonstrate that when the Christian is being immersed in the water, he is proclaiming that Christ died and was buried for him.
4. The action of coming out of the water pictures Christ's resurrection.
5. By symbolism they are saying that they believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as the way of salvation.

B. Baptism is important because it is part of the Great Commission.

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

1. After people were initially converted or became disciples, as new believers they were to be baptized in the name of the Triune God.
2. The order is always the same in the Bible — first believe, and then after conversion, after a person is made a disciple, they are to be baptized.
3. A failure not to offer and encourage new believers to be baptized is a failure to obey a critical dimension of the Great Commission.

II. Does Baptism Have Any Part in Salvation?

People have often been deceived into believing that they can rely on their good works for salvation. Some trust in their morality, some depend upon confessions to priests, some on their church membership, and still others trust in their baptism to save them. However, the unanimous voice of all Scripture is that people are saved by simple faith in Christ as Lord and not by any works.

A. Baptism does not save or help save a person.

1. Baptism is defined as a work and works do not save a person.
2. Jesus describes baptism as an act of "**righteousness**" (Matthew 3:15), and Christ through His Apostles, specifically said that such acts of "**righteousness**" do not & cannot save (Titus 3:5).
3. Salvation is a gift of God, which is not deserved, is not bought, and absolutely cannot be paid for (Ephesians 2:8&9).
4. We are plainly told in Scripture that the one who trusts in Christ immediately has eternal life (John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47).

5. Anyone who teaches that baptism saves, or helps to save, is teaching a works righteousness and thus a different gospel (Galatians 1:8&9).

B. Illustrations of people who are saved apart from baptism.

1. The immoral woman — of whom we are told, “**her sins**” were “**many**” was immediately forgiven by her “**faith**” in Christ’s power & promise to forgive and save apart from her being baptized (Luke 7:37-50).

50 And He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace”

2. In Christ’s parable of two men going up to the temple to pray, the tax collector who relied on God’s mercy alone was said to saved by his faith apart from being baptism, (Luke 18:10-14).

14 “I tell you, this man went to his house justified . . .”

3. The thief on the cross simply turned to Christ in faith and without ever having been baptized he was promised that he would, that very day, be with Christ in Paradise (Luke 23:39-43).

43 And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

4. The Philippian jailor was told to simply “believe in the Lord Jesus” and he would be saved & then after He received Jesus his baptism followed his salvation—but did it not save him (Acts 16:22-34).

31 They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . .

C. Baptism is separated from the plan of salvation.

1. We are told in the Bible that the gospel is the power of God to save an individual (Romans 1:16).
2. The Bible defines the gospel—as the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-3).
3. When writing the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul distinctly separated the gospel from water baptism when he said that Jesus did not send him, “**to baptize, but to preach the gospel**” (1 Corinthians 1:17).
4. If baptism were necessary to salvation, then the Apostle Paul would not have made such a statement separating the two.

III. What Verses Do People Use to Teach That Baptism Saves?

To add ANYTHING to the Gospel is to say that Jesus' death on the cross was not sufficient to purchase our salvation. To teach that we must be baptized in order to be saved, is to invalidate the sufficiency of the saving power of Christ's death and resurrection (Galatians 2:21). Any verses that are used to try to prove that baptism saves, must be understood in the broader context of the Bible. Since the Bible never contradicts itself, the diligent student of Scripture will discover there is always a clear explanation for verses someone applies to falsely teach that baptism saves.

A. Acts 2:38 does not contradict Ephesians 2:8&9.

38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

1. The term, “**for the forgiveness of sins**” sometimes has been used erroneously to justify water baptism as a means to salvation.
2. However—when one uses the word “**for**” in this passage, much like it is used every day in conversational English, we can easily understand and apply what Peter meant.
3. When we state, “**A man is arrested for stealing**” or that one is “**grateful for a favor**” or that one is “**blamed for carelessness**” or “**commended for bravery**” — how are we using the word — “**for**” in English?
4. Certainly we do not mean, “**one is commended in order to be brave**” but rather that — “**one is commended — because he is brave.**”
5. Even so, the word “**for**” does not mean *in order to secure* the forgiveness of sins and it is not rendered that way—in any translation of the Bible.
6. The Greek word **eis** (εἰς), here translated “**for**” is sometimes translated in the Bible “**against, among, at, upon, unto,**” etc.
7. For instance, in Luke 11:32 we are told that the people of Nineveh repented “**at**” (εἰς), or “**because of**” — the preaching of Jonah.

32 “The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at (εἰς) the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

8. Likewise, we are to be baptized “**for the forgiveness of sins**” meaning, not “**in order to be forgiven**” but rather “**because we are forgiven.**”

9. We are baptized as a public expression of our faith to say that we are unashamed of the death, burial & resurrection of our Lord & Savior.
10. The misuse of the word “for” is an issue only in the English Bible, for when other languages—across the world translate Acts 2:28 it is crystal clear that baptism in no way contributes to our salvation.
11. Interestingly, when the plural and singular aspects of the verbs & nouns are isolated from the Greek translation — it become impossible to say that baptism — is a means to receiving — “the forgiveness of sins.”

38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

12. “Repent” is a second person plural verb whose plural meaning in this context means:

“All of you Jews who are listening need to repent or change your mind what you said about Jesus for you said He was only a man when He the Scripture just preached reveals that in reality the God-Man.”

13. All of you need to “repent for (meaning for the purpose of) the forgiveness of your sins, and you (all) will receive the Spirit.”
14. Then based on — the Greek grammar — Peter adds parenthetically, “And each of you (singular) be baptized” (as a testimony to your faith).
15. Clearly, in this context and in the context of Acts & the rest of the Bible, “forgiveness of sins” is linked to repentance & not to the act of baptism.
16. In mentioning baptism “in the name of Jesus” Peter is not denying the baptismal formula issued by Christ (Matthew 28:19) but emphasizing to these people their need to acknowledge Jesus whom they denied.

B. Mark 16:16 does not make baptism a requirement to be saved.

“He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”

1. Jesus was not teaching that baptism saves you—for then the verse would have read, “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved *and not been baptized* shall be condemned.”
2. Clearly, this was a combined promise of salvation and a warning.

3. Jesus did not say that condemnation belonged to the one who was not baptized but only to the one who does not believe.
4. The Lord never mentions baptism as a basis of condemnation for the simple reason that salvation is based on our faith in Jesus who by His grace — already has paid for our sins.
5. A shallow reading of Mark 16:16 will conclude that lost people must be baptized to be saved — because Christ’s emphasis is on believing which causes this *misinterpretation & misapplication* of this verse to disappear.
6. If a person does not believe in the Lord Jesus then & only then is he condemned — even if he has — been baptized.
7. The Lord Jesus assumed a child of God—would publicly—confess their faith (Matthew 10:32)—which in the first century was done by baptism.
8. Certainly, there are people today who have been saved, but who have never confessed their faith by believer’s baptism—not because they are rebellious but because they do not understand its importance.
9. It is unfortunate that God’s order—to believe and then be baptized has been—totally reversed by some believers—who baptize infants, and then later when they hear the gospel—they ask them to believe.
10. With all this said, it would be *terribly wrong* to minimize the importance of baptism as “**non-essential**” because while baptism is “**non-essential**” to one’s salvation — it is absolutely essential to one’s obedience.
11. Since the Lord Jesus told the true believer to be baptized after he believes — we must do it — because He commands it.

C. 1 Peter 3:21 does not teach that baptism removes sin.

21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

1. The key to understanding this is the phrase “**corresponding to that**” because the word “**corresponding**” is the Greek word “**antitupos**” (ἀντίτυπος) which gives us our English word “**antitype**” a word used in some translations like the KJV, NKJV & the YLT.

21 There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (New Kings James)

2. Baptism, immersion, is an “**antitype**” or a mirror image of an earlier type — namely Noah’s ark in the Flood — a type or a picture or a typological prophecy of the death, burial & resurrection of Jesus.
3. Peter does not say that baptism saves us — but that baptism “**corresponds**” (ESV/HCSB) or “**prefigures**” (NET) in that it pictures or symbolizes an antitype of that which does save us.
4. This is further clarified by the words that follow — “**not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**”
5. Peter is very careful to note that it is not the actual water of baptism that saves us but rather the spiritual reality behind the immersion.
6. Water on the body, or the body placed in water, cannot remove the stain of sin — only the blood of Christ can do that (1 John 1:7–2:2).
7. It is not your baptism that saves you, but appealing to God in faith for new life provided through the death and resurrection of Christ.
8. When a person is baptized or immersed—they picture this great truth.

D. Acts 22:16 does not teach baptism washes away sin.

16 And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.’

1. Knowing that Paul did not receive the gospel from Ananias but directly from Christ — Galatians 1:11-12 tells me that the Apostle Paul had already heard the plan of salvation on the road to Damascus.

11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

2. The phrase, “**wash away your sins**” is not grammatically connected to, “**arise and be baptized**” but to, “**calling on the name of the Lord.**”
3. The actual washing away of Saul’s “**sins**” came the moment he called in faith “**on the name of the Lord**” Jesus Christ — such that his baptism is a symbolic act — which depicts that cleansing.

4. The “**calling on the name of the Lord**” is synonymous — with faith in Christ as taught in Romans 10:13&14 — such that it was Saul’s faith that effected the washing away of his sins — and not his baptism.
5. Capturing this thought, the New Living Translation writes:

16 What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.’
6. In this case, Paul’s calling on Christ’s name (**for salvation**) preceded his water baptism (**in Acts 9:17 that Paul was filled with the Spirit before he was baptized indicating that he was already born again**).
7. In his Expanded Translation of the New Testament, the Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest puts it, “**Having arisen, be baptized and wash away your sins, having previously called upon His Name.**”
8. We are saved by “**calling on the name of the Lord**” by faith (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13) & we give evidence of that faith by being baptized such that it is the “**calling**” & not the baptizing — that effects the cleansing.
9. The agent of spiritual cleansing is faith in Christ & so Paul referred to faith in here in Acts 22:16 as “calling on His name” (cf. Joel 2:32).
10. Paul evidently experienced regeneration on the Damascus road when he believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the promise Messiah predicted in the Old Testament (Acts 22:10; cf. Galatians 1:11-12; Acts 9:17-18).
11. He experienced believer’s baptism in water after he called on the Lord.
12. We know that the Apostle Paul was saved on the Damascus Road, and not at the encounter he had with Ananias for several reasons.
13. First, as noted above, Galatians 1:11-12 tells me the gospel was given to Paul directly by Christ and not later on by Ananias.
14. Second, in verse 10 by the question Paul asks, “**What shall I do Lord?**” it is clear — that he had already submitted — in faith to Christ.
15. Third, for you linguists the Greek aorist participle (epikalesamenos) translated, “**calling on His name**” refers — either to action which is simultaneous with or before that of the main verb & so it means:

**“Having arisen, be baptized and wash away your sins,
having previously called upon His Name.”**

16. Through believer's baptism the Saul of Tarsus gave evidence of his in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus the Messiah.
17. It is the calling/believing & not the baptizing that effects the cleansing.

IV. Who Were the Subjects of Baptism in the Bible?

In the New Testament the only people we ever find that are water baptized are those who have exercised faith in Christ. The Bible is clear that people are to be converted first & then be baptized. Many refer to this as credobaptism/post conversion or believer's baptism because the order is always first believe and then be baptized.

A. Christ taught believer's baptism in the Great Commission.

1. **"Disciples"** or **'converts'** were first to be made or won to Christ & then these disciples were to be baptized and instructed (Matthew 28:18-20).
2. Christ's order is clearly conversion first and then baptism.
3. He also taught that His command and promise applied to the **"the end of the age"** (i.e. His Second Coming), which tells me this was not binding only on first generation believers.
4. Significantly, when Christ told them to go to **"all the nations,"** He did not tell them to circumcise those who became disciples.
5. Instead — they were to baptize them — suggesting a clear break with traditional Judaism and any Old Testament parallels to circumcision.
6. Notice too, that they were baptized **"into the name"** implying both the Triunity of God and an allegiance to the Father, Son & Spirit.

B. The early church always and only baptized new believers.

1. New believers were baptized at Pentecost (Acts 2:38).
2. Philip baptized new converts in Samaria (Acts 8:12,13).
3. The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized at conversion (Acts 8:37-39).
4. The Apostle Paul was baptized after conversion (Acts 9:18).
5. Peter baptized Cornelius at conversion (Acts 10:44-48).
6. Lydia and her household had believer's baptism (Acts 16:13-15).

7. The Philippian jailer and his household all believed & were baptized, and Crispus and his household along with other Corinthians were baptized after they believed (Acts 16:31-34; 18:8).
8. All the examples in the New Testament indicate that believers were baptized right after they believed (e.g. Acts 16:33).

V. Were Infants Ever Baptized in the Bible?

There is not a single verse in the entire New Testament that teaches infant baptism or even suggests that local churches should baptize infants. The first possible record of infant baptism dates to around 197 AD & we know that this practice did not become a widespread practice until the late fifth century. A major motivation in the early centuries for infant baptism was the high infant mortality rate. The average Christian could not search the Scriptures as we can today because it was in the language of the scholar & there were limited copies to study and so Paul's admonition in 1 Timothy 4:13 not to ignore the public reading of Scripture. The Bible is very clear, as we will address later in this course, that little children who die before being able to believe, go home to be with the Lord.

- A. Some argue for infant baptism (*paedobaptism*) based on circumcision.
 1. Protestants who practice infant baptism reason that just like infants in the nation Israel were circumcised and brought into the believing community, so infant baptism is the counterpart of circumcision, bringing infants into the Christian community.
 2. They reason that as the 1st generation of men circumcised were adults & after these infants (Gen. 17:22), but to establish from this Jewish rite a pattern for infant baptism is fraught with many problems.
 3. First, baptism is the “**initiatory symbol**” — into a believing community, whereas circumcision brought men & infants into a theocracy, namely, the nation of Israel — which had both believers and unbelievers in it.
 4. Second, circumcision was obviously for male infants and for adult men, whereas baptism is for both sexes alike.
 5. Third, circumcision was a sign for the nation of Israel only, whereas baptism is for all nation & peoples who have trusted in Jesus Christ.
 6. To justify infant baptism on the basis of the old covenant practice of infant circumcision — is to confuse the truth — that Israel and the Church fulfilled different purposes in their respective purposes.

7. Fourth, the equation between the circumcision of male infants under the old covenant & the baptism of born-again believers under the new covenant (*much less of infants*) is never made in the Bible.
8. Clearly, after God had the first generation of Jewish men circumcised, He specifically commanded them to circumcise their infant boys in Genesis 17:9-12 — but God gave no such command for baptism.

B. Some argue for infant baptism based on the household baptisms.

1. From the four household baptisms in the **Book of Acts** (Acts 10:48; 16:15; 16:33; 18:8) and the one passage in **1 Corinthians** (1:16), it is presumed by some that infants must have been present in each of these homes — thus legitimizing infant baptism.
2. The problem with this position is that inferences should not be taken as dogmas when there are other clear passages that instruct us that faith must first precede baptism (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:37-38; 8:36-37).
3. If faith, is a prerequisite to baptism, since an unaccountable infant is unable to understand the gospel & thus unable to exercise true faith in Christ — they should therefore — not be baptized.
4. While the age of children is never mentioned in any of the so-called “**household baptisms**” — we do learn that with Cornelius’ house, the jailor’s house & Crispus’ house — that all in the households heard and believed the gospel (Acts 10:44-45; 16:32-34; 18:8).
5. If there were any children present — then they were of an age that they could hear with comprehension such that they could believe.
6. To assume from Stephanas’ & Lydia’s households (1 Corinthians 1:17; Acts 16:14-15) — that there must have been infants that were baptized because these passages do not say specifically indicate that every single person in the house believed — is not to exercise sound hermeneutics.

C. Biblically, infant baptism is no substitute for believer’s baptism.

1. In the Bible, we find parents bringing their children to Jesus where He held them, prayed for them & commanded us to welcome them, yet He never baptized them — nor did He command anyone else to baptize them (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17).
2. Baptism is for those who have made a personal decision to trust Christ alone for their salvation & so Cornelius’ house did not have to become Jewish proselytes or be baptized before being born again (10:44-48).

3. As noted earlier, if baptism is necessary for salvation — for either an infant or for an adult—then why would Paul have said, “**I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius**” (1 Cor. 1:14)?
4. And if baptism is necessary for salvation — for either an infant or for an adult—then why would Paul have said, “**For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void**” (1 Cor. 1:17)?
5. And if baptism — is necessary for a person’s salvation — be they an infant or for an adult — then how could Paul possibly say, “**I am thankful that I baptized none of you**” (1 Corinthians 1:14)?
6. While some take infant baptism as salvific, even those who take it as a “**covenant**” between the parents & God are still infusing into baptism a meaning — that cannot clearly be exegeted — from the Bible.
7. If you were baptized as a child & it was the intent of your parents that you would one day be a follower of Jesus — then you might view your “**post-conversion**” baptism as the fulfillment of your parents’ wishes.
8. So, if you were baptized before you found the Lord, you may have been “**dedicated to the Lord**” — but you were not truly biblically baptized.
9. However, ultimately you need to be baptized, not to please or displease your parents, but to obey & please Jesus Christ (Matthew 10:37-39):

37 “**He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.**
 38 “**And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.** 39 “**He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.**”

VI. What Was the Form or Mode of Baptism in the Bible?

- A. Biblical baptism is never by sprinkling or pouring but by immersion.
 1. The “**primary meaning**” of the word “**baptize**” in every Greek lexicon, is simply defined as, “**to immerse/to plunge/to put into/to submerge.**”
 2. Even the figurative or metaphorical uses of the word carry the idea of immersion as someone ‘**immersed in cares**’ or ‘**plunged in grief.**’
 3. Baptism by sprinkling or by pouring is an oxymoron — that is something that is self-contradictory — because baptism by its inherent definition must be an act of “**immersion**” in water.

4. There are specific Greek words for sprinkling (**rhantizo**/Hebrews 9:13; 9:19; 9:21; 10:22.) and pouring (**ballo**/Matthew 26:12 & John 13:5), but these words — are never used — for the rite of baptism.
5. Immersion best pictures the significance of the Holy Spirit's baptism which is death to the old life & resurrection to the new (Rom. 6:1-4).

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

6. The action of being immersed in the water illustrates being buried with Jesus & the action of coming out of the water pictures His resurrection.
7. The symbol of death, burial, and resurrection — can only be clearly taught and explained by “**immersion**”—a symbol that breaks down if you pour or sprinkle someone (Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:27).
8. While we are never told to immerse a person backward in the water, for centuries Christians have done it this way because when you are buried you are laid on your back — and then you when are brought back up to the upright position you are representing the resurrection.

B. All the examples in the New Testament argue for immersion.

1. When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, we are told in Mark 1:10 that the Lord came, “**up out of the water.**”
2. Jesus illustrates for us the proper way of being baptized and so He Demolishes the human traditions that change the mode of baptism.

13 Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. 14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?” 15 But Jesus answering said to him, “Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he permitted Him. 16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him (Matthew 3:13–16).

3. Jesus' baptism, which is recorded in all four gospels, clearly shows that one would need to twist the text to conclude that He ‘**came up**’ from the **sprinkling** of water (Mt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn 1:29-34).

4. Obviously, if John the Baptist was baptizing, by either sprinkling or by pouring then there would be no need to go down into the Jordan River.
5. When “**Philip the evangelist**” baptized the believing eunuch, we are told that, “**He ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him.**”
6. If sprinkling or pouring was in view in Christ’s or the eunuch’s baptisms, then there would be no need for either John & Jesus, or Philip & the eunuch to both enter into the water together.
7. They would not — have had to have gone “**down into the water**” but simply to the water’s edge & then used a cup to pour or to sprinkle.
8. In fact, we learn that when John the Baptist performed his baptism of repentance, we are told in John 3:23 of why he chose this area:

“**John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized.**”

9. Again had he sprinkled or poured there would be no need for plenty of water for “**much water**” is only necessary when immersion is practiced.
10. Immersion, could have been used — in every recorded case of baptism found in the New Testament — for even apart from the oasis found on the desert road to Gaza — in Jerusalem there were sufficient “**mikveh baths**” to immerse the 3,000 new converts — on the Day of Pentecost.
11. Even non-immersionists such as Calvin (*Institutes*, 4:15:19), Luther (*see Luther’s commentary on Galatians 3:27*) & Wesley (*see Wesley’s commentary on Romans 6:4*), all acknowledge that immersion was the universal practice — of the early church.

VII. Some Other Commonly Asked Questions About Baptism

A. What is baptism for the dead?

1. The question concerning “**baptism for the dead**” arises from 1 Corinthians 15:29 when the Apostle Paul said:

29 “**Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?**”

2. In the second century, historians record that there were some heretical groups — that practiced — “**vicarious baptisms**,” but the church at large never accepted their practice.

3. This verse has more recently been misapplied by Mormons who claim that Paul supports their view of “**proxy baptism**” for dead people.
4. In this practice, individuals go to their local Mormon temple, dress appropriately for a baptism—representatively adopt the name of a person who has died & then are baptized for that deceased person.
5. By this “**proxy baptism**” the living Mormon has fulfilled for the dead person “**salvation**” if they died without knowing Jesus’ teachings that supposedly were entrusted to Joseph Smith—when they were alive.
6. Letting Scripture *interpret* Scripture the Bible is clear that our destiny is settled the moment we die — and that no one can make a decision, for someone else (Hebrews 9:27; Luke 16:19-31; John 3:36).
7. His argument in addressing our resurrection in chapter 15, is that if there is no future resurrection—then why bother—to reach sinners who are then baptized to take the place—of those who have died?
8. Paul is speaking of the certainty of the good news we preach as seen in the resurrection & so “**those do who are baptized for (ὕπέρ) the dead**” refers to those baptized “**to take the place of those who have died.**”
9. Simply put, the Apostle Paul is reasoning—that if the Christian life is only a “**dead-end street,**” then you would be wise to get off of it!

B. At what age should children be baptized?

1. Since the New Testament contains no clear example of a child receiving baptism or of a child being refused baptism, each local church must seek God’s wisdom on this ordinance.
2. Baptism requires a level of both cognitive & developmental readiness, so if a child — cannot answer basic questions — about the meaning of salvation & baptism—it is better to wait than to prematurely baptize.
3. While we must be careful never to communicate to children, that they are too young *to understand* the gospel or *respond* to Jesus for He said:

“Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14).
4. At the same time, we need to be sure *that since understanding* precedes *precedes* genuine salvation (Romans 4:1-5), as best as we can humanly assess, we want to make sure — that their conversion — is real.

5. Even if it is not a pastor's practice to baptize children—he should always thrilled—when a child expresses a desire—to be baptized because it is a wonderful opportunity to speak to that child about their soul and to encourage him—to continue to seek the Lord.
6. In an effort to prevent young children — from making a premature commitment, that they may not understand fully, as a pastor I like to a period of time between the child's decision and their baptism.
7. I baptize very few seven or eight-year-old children & typically only if they have been believers for several years and demonstrate exceptional cognitive and spiritual development.

C. Why in some churches is baptism withheld until the candidate reaches a certain level of spiritual growth & maturity?

1. Some churches—wait until the new believer grows to a certain level of maturity — in order to prove his salvation and so one's baptism is withheld after one's confession — sometimes for several years.
2. However, all the examples in the New Testament indicate that believers were baptized — right after they believed.
3. For example, three thousand believers were baptized at Pentecost probably within an hour or so after their conversion (Acts 2:41).
4. The eunuch was baptized — the same day he believed Acts 8:26–38), and Saul of Tarsus — three days after he came to faith (Acts 9:18).
5. In addition, Lydia & her house were baptized—the same day they came to faith (Acts 16:14-15) and Acts 16:33 notes the Philippian jailer and his family were baptized the very night they believed.
6. Clearly, from such passages the argument can be made that baptism was not withheld—until someone reached a certain level of maturity because baptism is the believer's initial confession of faith in Christ.
7. While there is not a command for immediate baptism—and while caution needs to be exercised—in days of apostasy & persecution, there seems to be a clear emphasis on one's confession & baptism.
8. In light of the examples in Acts, the fear of potentially baptizing an **“unbelieving believer”** a church would do well to keep the space of time between a person's confession & baptism as short as possible.

9. In addition, since some churches do not allow a person to partake in the Lord's Table until after baptism — this & other factors further add to the importance of baptizing a child — in a timely manner.

D. What if I was baptized by immersion before I became a Christian, or when I look back on my baptism, I am not certain that I was a genuine — born-again believer — should I be rebaptized?

1. There is one clear example of people being “**rebaptized**” or baptized twice (Acts 19:1-5) — “**about twelve men**” from Ephesus who were baptized by John the Baptist when they were in Israel—but were rebaptized by Paul after they believed — the Christian message.
2. John's baptism was a call to repentance and preparation for the Messiah but not a personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ.
3. Their baptism — was not a true profession of faith in the Messiah since they had not even heard about the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:3-5).
4. While this is a unique issue — *related to John's baptism* — it still gives us a helpful example — for counseling those who — were baptized as unbelieving infants, adolescents, or adults before they came to faith.
5. The principle drawn from Acts 19 — is that if the baptism was not biblical in its character then the individual should be re-baptized.
6. In addition, some people have been baptized as part of a cult group or other non-Christian group have not truly had Christian baptism.
7. Even if they were born again — at the time the baptism was done, it is still not a biblical baptism — since baptism has its meaning in the context — of the local assembly — of believers.
8. Clearly, if you found Christ as your personal Savior & you made a public profession of your faith — in the assembly of the saints by being baptized — then you never again — need to be baptized.
9. The biblical principle, is to put your baptism on “**the right side**” of your salvation as an emblem of what Christ has done for you.
10. If you are uncertain whether your baptism followed your conversion, then err — on the side of obedience to Christ — and do it again.

F. Should I be baptized if I am physically handicapped or if I am afraid of being immersed under the water?

1. Two extremes are taken in answering this question on baptism.
2. Some will say baptism is of little importance concluding one should not worry about it & still others who falsely require baptism for salvation end up motivating the above cases out of fear rather than out of love.
2. Biblically, I believe that every Christian should seek to be baptized even with a physical limitation — if it is safe for them to do so.
3. If they are able to obey by being baptized even with a handicap, their motivation should only be — out of their love for Christ.

15 “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments (John 14:15).

4. If one is not physically able to be baptized — one might understand this like one who is financially broke & unable to give (2 Cor. 8:12).
 5. However, in most cases even those who are physically handicapped can be baptized — by taking some extraordinary measures using a mechanical device — or being carried by a couple of people.
 6. On more than one occasion we have had individuals in our baptistry in place & ready to be baptized with the window down and then after their baptism — the window is immediately lowered.
 7. In regard to those who are afraid of the water, I have discovered that this is often the case because they do not know how to swim and the thought of being placed under the water is sometimes terrifying.
 8. I have baptized dozens of people with this fear & I have learned as a pastor that walking a person through the process ahead of time, and reminding them of God’s care — will get them through.
 9. I always remind them — that God will never ask them to do something that He does not give them the strength to accomplish (Hebrews 11:6; Phil. 4:13) & that I have never lost a single person in baptism!
- E. What if I was baptized in another denomination as a believer, by immersion, and my new church does not accept it?**
1. Some churches will not accept your baptism, even if it was done after conversion by immersion, if it was done in a different denomination.
 2. This is referred to as “**alien baptism**” practiced by some independent Baptists and very rarely in a handful of Southern Baptist Churches.

3. “**Alien**” means foreign, strange, or not native to its original design, and when this is applied to baptism, it views such baptisms as “defective.”
4. Such thinking is very rigid and not founded in Scripture & I suggest that one prays long and hard before joining such a fellowship.
5. Some churches like this — are driven by a very narrow view of the Body of Christ (e.g. Landmark Baptists), while still others with a motivation to drive up the number of baptisms.
6. Our church will receive anyone biblically baptized after they were saved by another Bible believing church.

CONCLUSION

In summary, we have discovered from our Bible study that a biblical baptism is one which involves:

THE RIGHT PERSON: *A consenting believer in Jesus Christ*

THE RIGHT TIME: *After a person has trusted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.*

THE RIGHT REASON: *Symbolizing the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Memory verse for this topic: Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **19** “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”