

The Believer's Baptism in Water

“Repent and be baptised, 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.” **Acts 2:38**

Definition and Introduction

The English word baptise comes from the Greek word ‘baptizo’ which means to immerse or dip something in a liquid. Sometimes the context implies that the liquid causes a change in the object that is dipped (i.e., immersing a garment in dye). However, in water baptism the dipping in water does not symbolise change. It is a symbol of death. It is not possible to be a disciple of Jesus without dying.

Thus water baptism is not merely a form or meaningless ceremony; it is a definite experience in the life of a New Testament believer (**Acts 2:38 -47**).

Water Baptism is an essential part of our obedience to Christ; it is not optional. To refuse to be baptised is to live in disobedience to God and to His word.

1. Four reasons to be baptised.

To follow the example of Jesus.

Jesus himself was baptised in water. **Matthew 3:13-15**. Jesus set an example for other people to show that John’s message was from God.

To obey the command of Jesus

In giving the church its great commission to “make disciples of all nations” (**Matt 28:18-19**), Christ made it clear that He expected new disciples to be baptised in water.

To model the practice of the disciples

John 4:1-3 makes it clear that the disciples of Jesus were baptising those who had become his new followers. While Jesus was still on earth people who decided to follow him were baptised in water.

To model the practice of the early church

The record of the early church found in the book of Acts shows that water baptism for new disciples was both taught and practised (**Acts 2:38-41; 8:12;16:14-15**).

2. The Requirements for Baptism

- Hearing and heeding the Word (**Acts 2:41; 16:14-15; 19:5**)
- Conviction (**Acts 2:37**).
- Repentance (**Acts 2:38**).
- Faith (**Mark 16:16; Acts 8:12, 37; 16:31, 33**)
- Obedience (**Acts 9:6; 22:16**)
- Confession of the Lordship of Christ (**Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:36-39**)

- A clear conscience (**1 Peter 3:18-21**)

3. Who Got Baptised in the New Testament?

- Everyone who believed (**Mark 16:16**)
- The Samaritans who believed (**Acts 8:12-15**)
- The Ethiopian eunuch (**Acts 8:35-38**)
- A Roman soldier with his family (**Acts 10:47-48**)
- The Ephesian disciples (**Acts 19:4-5**)

4. When Were They Baptised?

- When they believed (**Acts 8:12; 37-38**)
- The same hour (**Acts 16:33**)
- The same day (**Acts 2:41; 8:36-38**)

5. The Biblical Method of Baptism.

The method.

In the New Testament people were baptised by being completely immersed in water. John baptised people by immersing right in the River Jordan (**Mark 1:5**). When Philip baptised the eunuch, “they both went down into the water” (**Acts 8:35-38**).

The pattern

In the NT the pattern was for people to hear the Gospel, repent and believe and be baptised in water (**Acts 2:37-41**).

Examples of the timing of baptism

Water baptism usually took place immediately upon conversion as the following examples show:

1. Philip at Samaria (**Acts 8:12**)
2. The Ethiopian eunuch (**Acts 8:36-38**)
3. The Apostle Paul (**Acts 9:18**)
4. Cornelius’ House (**Acts 10:46-48**)
5. Lydia and her house at Philippi (**Acts 16:14-15**)
6. The Philippian jailer and his house (**Acts 16:33**)

6. The Biblical meaning of baptism

It’s an identification with Christ

Water baptism is a public, symbolic way for us to identify with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. If I am to follow Jesus, I must die. Jesus said "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (**Matt 16:24**). Nobody likes to die, but my

new life cannot begin until I give up the old one. By going down into the water I die to my old self-centred way of life. When something dies, you bury it. Therefore by going under the water, I bury my past and my selfish habits of living. When I come up out of the water I am alive to God as I now live to please him (**Romans 6:1-11, 22**). Baptism is an outward ceremony that points to an inner reality. If the inner death to self has not happened or Christ has not taken over at the centre of my life, baptism has no more meaning than going for a swim or having a wash.

It means you join the Body of Christ

Water baptism pictures our entrance into the church of Jesus, which is the Body of Christ. The water is a symbol of Jesus and total immersion physically illustrates the fact that we have now become members of his Body (**1 Corinthians 12:12-13**). This means we cannot be lone Christians doing our own thing. Just as you cannot be a successful football player if all you do is play alone in your garden, you cannot effectively live the Christian life if you do not join with others, learn from them and work with them. Belonging to Jesus means belonging to a local church and sharing in their life of worship, prayer and work in order to see society changed by the power of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

It symbolises washing away past sins.

When we have a bath, it cleans the dirt from our bodies. When we have been baptised, it symbolises that we have been washed clean of sin and the effects of sin in our lives (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**).

It means receiving God's Holy Spirit.

Often in the Bible baptism in water is linked with baptism in the Holy Spirit. In **Acts 2:38** Peter says the Holy Spirit is given to those who turn away from sins and are baptised.

It means living out the Christian life

Followers of Jesus are expected to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him (**Matthew 16:24**). Baptism is declaring that you now belong to Jesus and that you are prepared to follow Him for the rest of your life. It means we must have a determination to be more like Jesus. (**Galatians 3:27; 2 Corinthians 5:17**). However it is important to remember that Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit to help us to live the Christian life.

Should you need further help, please feel free to contact us via the contact form on our website: www.rockchristiancentre.org