

BCC Policy: Water Baptism

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All believers who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior, and have not publicly given testimony to their relationship with Him through water baptism, should do so.

WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

There are three reasons why believers should be baptized. The first reason is to obey Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19.

The second reason for being water baptized is to publicly confess one's faith in Jesus Christ. Water baptism is a public testimony that you have trusted Jesus as your only hope for eternal life. The New Testament examples indicate that as soon as people trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior, they were water baptized, for it graphically portrayed their new relationship with Jesus Christ and break with their old life. Therefore, if possible, it is best to be water baptized as soon as you become a Christian.

The third reason for being water baptized is to follow Jesus' example in Matt 3:13-17 as His disciple.

MEANING

The word "baptism" is not an original English word, but a transliterated (copied letter for letter from the original language) Greek word. To determine its meaning, you must know the meaning of the Greek word BAPTIZO. BAPTIZO comes from BAPTO, which primarily meant "to dip." This meaning is seen in these passages: dipping a finger in water (Luke 16:24), dipping the sop in wine (John 13:26), and dipping a garment in blood (Rev. 19:13). Thus the literal meaning of baptism is "to dip." Words often acquire metaphorical meanings as well as literal. This happened to BAPTIZO. Anything dipped in another substance is identified with it (as a piece of cloth is identified with the dye in which it is dipped). This is seen in 1 Cor. 10:2. Thus, the metaphorical meaning of baptism is "to identify."

MESSAGE

Water baptism is a symbolic portrayal of a believer's identification with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection. Romans 6 indicates every believer is baptized into or identified with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection the moment they trust Him as Savior. They are spiritually baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ and His work on the Cross. This means they are immediately made to be dead to sin (separated from sin's necessary rule over their lives). They are also spiritually alive with Christ. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me..."

MODE

The issue of how and when one should be baptized has been very controversial. There is no clear Biblical statement that teaches one particular mode. Yet there are four reasons why immersion (dunking) of believers is the most appropriate.

- 1) The word itself—BAPTIZO means to dip. There are perfectly good Greek words for pouring or sprinkling that could have been used if that is the mode God had intended.
- 2) The historical evidence indicates that in the first two centuries of the church, water baptisms were immersions.
- 3) The strong implications of Scripture point to immersion. John 3:23 notes John the Baptist was baptizing in a certain place because there was much water for immersions.
- 4) The symbolism of water baptism of being buried with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection favors immersion.

MISUSE

Some people teach that water baptism is necessary to be saved or that it helps people be saved in some way. Because of this belief, infants and people who are dying are sometimes baptized.

But Scripture does not support this belief. Baptism is clearly a physical act of obedience, that a person does, who already has been saved through personal repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ. For those who were baptized as infants before they had the chance to personally trust Jesus, Acts 19:1-5 teaches it would be appropriate to be re-baptized as a believer.