

Baptism Is Immersion

In the religious world today minds differ on the necessity and the mode of water baptism. In this study we will focus on the action necessary to effect New Testament baptism. Does the New Testament authorize sprinkling, pouring or immersion? Is one mode to be preferred over another, or are all three acceptable before God and Christ? We will learn through our study of the Scriptures that baptism is immersion only.

Baptism Is Immersion Only (Route 3)

Matthew 3:5-6 John was baptizing in the Jordan River. Why in the river if all he needed was a cupful of water, or a branch dipped in water with enough water on it to sprinkle?

John 3:23 You would not necessarily need much water for sprinkling or pouring, yet the reason John was baptizing in this particular place was because there was much water. What was John doing that necessitated much water?

Mark 1:5,9-10 The men of Jerusalem, Judea and all around Jordan came to John to be baptized. Finally, Jesus came to be baptized of John. When John completed baptizing Jesus, He came up and out of the water. What was John doing that required that men go to him? If sprinkling is the action in view, why would it be necessary to be in the river, and to come up and out of the river?

Acts 8:36-39 As in the cases above the amount water necessary to accomplish baptism is such that the candidate must come to it. Notice also that the baptizer and the baptized both go into the water. Why should both go into the water if only a cupful for sprinkling or pouring was needed? Finally, considering all that the text says, what action could possibly necessitate going into the water, baptizing, and coming up out of the water? Immersion is the only action that corresponds to all of these facts.

Acts 22:16 Baptism is called a “washing.” Which action, sprinkling, pouring or immersion, is most consistent with the idea of “washing away sins”?

2Kings 5:10,14 Elisha told Naaman to go and wash in the Jordan River seven times. When Naaman obeyed the commandment of the prophet he dipped seven times in the river. [Note: In the LXX (the Greek translation of the OT), the words “wash” and “dip” are the same Greek words translated “wash” and “be baptized” in **Acts 22:16**]. Only an immersion could accomplish a washing of the body.

Leviticus 14:15-16 This text supplies all three actions that are claimed for baptism—dipping, pouring, and sprinkling. It is clear that “dipping” is not the same action as “pouring” or “sprinkling.” Compare this text with **Acts 8:38**. Did Philip dip, pour or sprinkle the Eunuch when it says, “He baptized him.” [In the LXX text of this verse the Greek words *baptizo* and *rhantizo* are used for dip and sprinkle respectively.]

Ephesians 5:26 There is one thing commanded by Christ associated with salvation that involves water, namely, baptism. Which action, sprinkling, pouring or immersion, is most consistent with the idea of “the washing of water”?

Titus 3:5 Which action, sprinkling, pouring or immersion, is most consistent with the idea of the “washing of regeneration”?

Romans 6:3-4 This passage tells us we are buried with Christ. How could sprinkling or pouring come close to resembling a burial? Does one “bury” by sprinkling a little dirt on a dead body or is it accomplished by immersing the body in the grave? Paul tells us that the old man of sin is crucified with Jesus and destroyed in the grave of baptism; then, the new man is raised to walk in “newness of life.” Which action, sprinkling, pouring or immersion, best represents this truth?

Genesis 23:4,19 What did Abraham require in order to bury Sarah? He said he wanted to bury her “out of my sight,” so he buried her IN the cave of the field of Machpelah. A literal burial is an immersion in the grave of earth, and baptism is an immersion in the grave of water?

Colossians 2:12 Buried and raised in baptism. Compare to **Romans 6:3-4**. Note that baptism also involves a resurrection. What action, sprinkling, pouring or immersion, facilitates the representation of being “risen with Christ” in the “likeness of His resurrection”?

Colossians 3:1-4 When are we said to be risen with Christ? What action portrays our resurrection to new life, sprinkling, pouring or immersion? It is only when we have been “risen with Christ” in baptism that we are “dead” to sin and alive “in Christ”. Only those risen with Christ have the hope of appearing with Him in glory. What is your condition without immersion?

Do you have any hope of eternal life?

The Design Of Water Baptism

Almost every denomination practices something that it calls baptism (the Quakers and some hyper-dispensational Calvinist groups are the notable exceptions). However, while there is wide acceptance of it, there is great diversity in conviction regarding its purpose or design. Many sects accept it as wholly symbolic, the outward sign of an accomplished salvation. Others contend that it is a sacrament administered by the Church necessary for the removal of Adamic sin. Still others accept it as essential for Church membership but non-essential for salvation.

The purpose of this study is to simply learn the purpose or design of water baptism. It shall attempt to answer questions concerning who should be baptized and why.

The Design of Water Baptism (Route 4)

Mark 16:15-16 Whom did Jesus command to be baptized? What was the purpose for which He gave this commandment? Consider what some say about baptism contrasted with what the text really says:

- (1) Quakers say: "He that believes and is not baptized shall be saved."
- (2) Catholics say: "He that does not believe and is baptized shall be saved."
- (3) Universalists say: "He that doesn't believe and is not baptized will be saved."
- (4) Baptists say: "He that believes and is saved may be baptized upon a vote."
- (5) The Bible says: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

1Peter 3:21 The waters of the flood were the means by which God brought Noah into a saved relationship (**Genesis 7:7**) by destroying the wickedness of which they had once been a part (**2Peter 3:6**). Corresponding to that, baptism brings the believing penitent into the kingdom of God's dear Son purging his conscience of sin through the remedial work of Christ (**Hebrews 9:14**).

Acts 22:16 Saul's sins were washed away after he was baptized. Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus, or while praying in Simon's house. The Lord said he would be told what he "must" do in Damascus (**Acts 9:6**). The only thing that Ananias told Saul that he had not already heard from the Lord is the command given to him in this text (cf. **Acts 22:13-15** and **Acts 26:16-18**).

Ephesians 5:25-27 What does Christ use in order to sanctify and cleanse the Church? It is water through the word. The only water that comes through the Word is the water of baptism.

1Corinthians 6:9-11 Paul says that the Corinthians were sinners alienated from the kingdom of God before their washing, justification and sanctification. Baptism is the only washing in the New Testament associated with the cleansing of sin.

Titus 3:4-5 We are saved by the "washing of regeneration" which is the "renewing of the Holy Ghost." We have just learned that the only washing connected with salvation is water baptism.

John 3:1-8 Jesus identifies two agents in the "new birth," water and the Holy Spirit (**3:3,5**). The water of the text is not the "water" (amniotic fluid) of physical birth (**3:6**). It is not the Holy Spirit (it is water and the Holy Spirit, **3:5**). The only water associated with salvation is the water of baptism (**1Peter 3:21**).

Romans 6:3-4 There are three things which this text asserts: (1) baptism stands between the believer and Christ; (2) baptism stands between the sinner and the death of Christ; (3) baptism stands between the old man of sin and being raised to walk in newness of life. Therefore, what is the condition of the unbaptized man? He is without Christ; he is estranged from the blood of Christ, and he is dead in his past sins.

Colossians 2:11-12 In baptism there is a spiritual operation performed by Jesus Christ—"the circumcision made without hands." Before baptism we possess the body of the sins of the flesh, in baptism that body of sins is cut off through faith when we are buried and raised with Christ. Before baptism we are dead in our sins, after baptism we are dead to sin and alive in Christ (cf. **Colossians 3:1**).

Galatians 3:26-27 Prior to baptism we were "under sin" (**Galatians 3:22**). However, we became "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" when we were baptized into Christ. We are "in Christ" when we are "baptized into Christ" which is when we "put on Christ." This may be illustrated after this fashion: Jeff is in the jacket when Jeff puts on the jacket by slipping Jeff into the jacket. Similarly, we are in Christ when we put on Christ by being baptized into Christ.

Acts 2:36-38 Here are men that were convicted in their hearts that Jesus of Nazareth was the crucified, resurrected, glorified Son of God and Saviour of the world. What were these believers told to do? Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Repentance and baptism are joined together. Whatever their repentance was "for" baptism was "for." Both are "for" remission of sins, salvation. They were not baptized because they were already saved any more than they repented because they were already saved (cf. **Matthew 26:28**).

Matthew 28:18-20 It is Jesus, the Son of God that commanded water baptism. He is the Saviour of those that obey Him (**Hebrews 5:8-9**). Notice only those that are taught the Gospel can be baptized (cf. **Mark 16:15-16**). In addition, notice, baptism is not the final step in our life of commitment to Christ—rather it is the initiatory rite of the new life (**Romans 6:4-7**). However, the most compelling aspect of the text is the statement that baptism is in or into "the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." In water baptism we are brought into a relationship with the Godhead. We are not in God, in Christ or in the Spirit apart from being baptized into the name.