

least two things about baptism: (1) that he is **lost** in sin before baptism, and (2) that he will be saved by the **blood of Christ**, through **faith**, **when** he is baptized. A person who thinks he has **already** been saved should not be baptized — **until** he understands these basic truths about the purpose of baptism.

To obey the gospel of Christ, a sinner must **hear** the gospel (Rom. 10:17), **believe** it (Jn. 8:24; Mk. 16:16), **repent** — decide to turn from sin (Acts 2:38; 17:30), **confess** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37), and **be baptized** in water for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mk. 16:16).

When you understand these things, you should not delay obeying the gospel. You do not need to wait for a preacher to baptize you. A friend can do it. The benefit of baptism does not depend on the person who helps you. The benefit comes from **God's grace** as you **obey** His command from your heart through **faith** (Eph. 2:4-9; Rom. 6:17-18; 1:16). You should be baptized *"in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matt. 28:19) for the forgiveness of sins. Many people realized the importance of obeying and were baptized immediately: *"that day"* (Acts 2:41); *"the same hour of the night...immediately"* (Acts 16:33); *"...why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16), *"...and he arose and was baptized"* (Acts 9:18).

Like facets of a diamond, salvation in Christ has many blessings which are received at baptism:

AT BAPTISM, a sinner RECEIVES — SALVATION — *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved..."* (Mk. 16:16); *"...which now saves us, namely baptism..."* (1 Pet. 3:21).

FORGIVENESS — *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [forgiveness] of sins..."* (Acts 2:38).

CLEANSING — *"be baptized, and wash away your sins"* (Acts 22:16; see 1 Pet. 3:21; 1:18-22).

NEW LIFE — *"buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead"* (Col. 2:12); *"newness of life"* (Rom. 6:4; see 23; 1 Jn. 5:11).

THE HOLY SPIRIT — *"...be baptized...and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:38; see Acts 5:32; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Rom. 8:9-11; Gal. 5:22-25).

AT BAPTISM, a sinner ENTERS — INTO CHRIST — *"baptized into Christ"* (Gal. 3:27); *"baptized into Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 6:3); and into *"every spiritual blessing...in Christ"* (Eph. 1:3).

INTO THE DEATH OF CHRIST — *"baptized into His death...buried with Him through baptism*

into death...united together in the likeness of His death" (Rom. 6:3-6; see Col. 2:12).

INTO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST — *"My church"* (Matt. 16:18; see Rom. 16:16; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23-25; Col. 1:18). True baptism puts us into His church, not into churches of men (see 1 Cor. 1:10-15; 3:11; Acts 4:12; Jn. 17:20-21; Matt. 15:13). *"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them..."* (Acts 2:41, see 47); *"...by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body..."* (1 Cor. 12:13); *"the church, which is His body"* (Eph. 1:22-23).

AT BAPTISM, a sinner BECOMES — A CHILD OF GOD — *"...you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"* (Gal. 3:26-27); *"born again...born of water and the Spirit"* (Jn. 3:3, 5); *"...you have purified your souls in obeying the truth...having been born again...through the word of God..."* (1 Pet. 1:22-23).

A NEW CREATION — *"...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation..."* (2 Cor. 5:17).

Like the Ethiopian man, we have great reason to rejoice when we obey the gospel. *"Now they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?' Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing"* (Acts 8:36-39)!



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BAPTISM

Each **word** in the Bible was chosen by God (1 Cor. 2:10-13; Jn. 14:26; 16:13; Eph. 3:3-5; 2 Pet. 1:20; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). When we consider all forms of the word "baptize" (such as baptizing, baptism, etc.), we find that the word occurs **115 times** in the New Testament (New King James Version). Any word which the Lord uses so often is certainly worthy of our study.

THE MEANING OF "BAPTIZE"

The New Testament was written in the Greek language in the first century A.D. It was later translated into many other languages. God did not create new words for the New Testament. Instead, He used words which were commonly used by the people of that day. "Baptize" is from the Greek word βαπτίζω. It was a common Greek word which meant: to immerse, submerge, dip, plunge, or overwhelm.

In most English versions of the Bible, the translators chose **not** to translate the Greek word βαπτίζω into its English meaning, "immerse." Instead of translating βαπτίζω, they chose to **transliterate** the word. That means they used English letters to replace the Greek letters. So βαπτίζω became "baptizo." They also "anglicized" the ending of the word to make it more like an English word. Thus, "baptizo" became "baptize" in English versions.

Baptizo did not merely describe a religious activity. It was used regarding **anything** being immersed in **any substance**.

Historians show that baptizo meant immersion. Polybius, born about 205 years before Christ, wrote in Greek about a sea battle, *"...they made continued assaults and submerged [baptized] many of the vessels"* (*History*, book i, ch. 51, 6).

Strabo, born about 60 B.C., wrote in Greek, *"...around Acragas are marsh lakes...even those who can not swim are not immersed [baptized], floating like pieces of wood"* (*Geography*, book vi, ch. 2, 9).

Josephus, a Jewish historian, was born in 37 A.D. In *The Wars of the Jews* (book iii, ch. 8, 5), he wrote in Greek, *"...I should esteem that pilot to be an arrant coward who, out of fear of a storm, should sink [baptize] his ship of his own accord."*

These quotations, and many others written during that time, clearly show that baptizo was a common word which meant immerse or submerge.

BAPTIZED IN WHAT?

In the New Testament, several people were "baptized" — totally immersed — in different things.

BAPTISM IN WATER. John the Baptist (“the Baptizer”) immersed people in water (Matt.3:6,11). He did **not** baptize them into Christ or into His death, because Christ had not yet died. Instead, “...*John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus*” (Acts 19:4). John baptized during the last part of the Jewish era, before the church began (see Matt. 11:11; 14:1-12; 16:18; Mk. 9:1; Acts 2; Heb. 8:6-8; 9:15). The purpose of John’s preaching and baptizing was to prepare the people to follow Jesus (Isa. 40:3; Matt. 3:3; Lk. 1:76-79; Jn. 1:7, 23, 29-37; 3:26-30).

After Jesus died and arose, other people were baptized in water. They **were** baptized into Christ and into His death. The purpose of baptism during the Christian era will be discussed later.

BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT. John said Jesus would baptize “*with the Holy Spirit and fire*” (Lk. 3:16; see Matt. 3:11). On the Jewish Day of Pentecost, the apostles were **totally overwhelmed, immersed**, with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4). Later, some Gentiles (non-Jews) were likewise overwhelmed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-46; 11:15-17). These are the only two occasions which the New Testament calls baptism with the Holy Spirit. No mere human can administer it. Baptism with the Holy Spirit was administered only by Jesus (Jn. 1:32-34; Matt. 3:11). It was never a command to obey. It was a special event which Jesus used to begin His church among Jews (Acts 2) and to open the way for Gentiles to enter His church (Acts 10).

BAPTISM IN FIRE. Jesus is the One who is able to baptize with fire. At the end of time, He will judge all people who have ever lived (Matt. 25:31-46; Jn. 5:27-29; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10). Then the disobedient will be immersed in fire: “...*every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire*” (Matt. 3:10); “...*He will...gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire*” (Lk. 3:16-17; see Matt. 13:42, 50; 18:8; 25:41; Mk. 9:43-46; 2 Thess. 1:8; Rev. 21:8).

BAPTISM IN SUFFERING. At the beginning of His work, Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River (Matt. 3:13-16). Later, He experienced a **different** “baptism.” Foreseeing His suffering and death, He said, “...*I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!*” (Lk. 12:50; see Matt. 20:19, 22-23; Mk. 10:38). In the garden, during His trials, and on the cross, Jesus was totally immersed in suffering to pay the penalty for your sins and mine (Lk. 22:44; Heb. 5:7-9).

WHAT IS THE “ONE BAPTISM” FOR US?

“*There is one body and one Spirit...one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**; one God...*” (Eph. 4:4-6). Baptism is **not** the most important item in this list. But it must be **very important** to be **included** in this list! What is the “one baptism”?

The one baptism which is commanded for everyone today is **immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins**. Cornelius, others at his house, and the Ethiopian were baptized in water (Acts 8:36-39; 10:47-48).

Jesus said we must be “*born of water and the Spirit*” to enter the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:5). When a person is lifted out of the water, it is the beginning of his new life in Christ (Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17). That is when the Holy Spirit comes to live within the new Christian (Gal. 3:26-27; 4:6; Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 6:19-20). At baptism, a sinner receives “*the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*” (Tit. 3:5).

Peter shows us that baptism in water is the one baptism for us today (Acts 10:47-48). During the flood, the **water** lifted Noah’s ark and his family to safety, away from the sinful world and its punishment: “...*eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us, **namely 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*” (1 Pet. 3:20-21). Noah’s family was not baptized in the flood water, but they “*were saved through water.*” Peter says that, in a similar way, the water of baptism is involved in saving us. We are saved by faith **when** we are baptized in water for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38; 10:47; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 22:16).

SUBSTITUTIONS BY MAN

Can we baptize by pouring or sprinkling? That is like asking, “Can we walk by flying or swimming?” They are **completely different actions**.

When God gives a command, people often want to substitute something more convenient or desirable. But if we want His spiritual help, we must let His teachings change us, not try to change His teachings (see Matt. 7:13-14; 21-23; Lk. 6:46; 13:24; Jn. 14:15-24; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; Gal. 1:8-10; 2 Jn. 9).

The New Testament does not tell of anyone trying to replace baptism with a substitute during the first century. However, men did start departing from baptism about 150 years after the New Testament was completed. The **first recorded case** of “pouring” as a substitute for baptizing occurred in **251 A.D.** In that year, a man poured water on the head of a sick man named Novatian and called it baptism (F. W. Mattox, *The Eternal Kingdom*, p. 151).

About the same time, some men departed farther from baptism by sprinkling water on people and calling it baptism. Sprinkling was not widely accepted in those days, but it became popular in later centuries. In **1311 A.D.**, a council of **twelve men** at Ravenna, Italy, declared that sprinkling was sufficient for baptism (*Johnson’s Universal Cyclopedia*, Vol. 1, p. 488; McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. VIII, p. 932).

What does **God** accept? We must **return to the Bible** for the answer. Old traditions or the decisions of men’s councils **do not change God’s will**. “*And in vain [emptiness] they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*” (Matt. 15:9).

Several New Testament verses show that we must be **immersed**. Paul reminded Christians how he and they had obeyed the gospel: “...*we were **buried with Him through baptism** into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*” (Rom. 6:4); “***buried with Him in baptism**, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead*” (Col. 2:12). When we bury a dead person, we do not merely pour or sprinkle a little dirt on the body. We **cover** the body completely. When Jesus was buried, He was completely covered by the rock of the earth. Likewise, when a person is buried with Christ in baptism, he is completely covered by the water.

John baptized people “*in the Jordan River*” (Mk. 1:5). Jesus was baptized “*in the Jordan*” (Mk. 1:9). Also, “...*both Philip and the eunuch went down **into the water**, and he baptized him*” (Acts 8:38). It would be **totally unnecessary** for the baptizer to go into the water to merely pour or sprinkle water on a person.

John baptized at Aenon “***because there was much water there***” (Jn. 3:23). Pouring and sprinkling do not require “much water.” But baptizing does.

In the first century, there were at least **two** Greek words which meant “sprinkle.” There were at least **five** Greek words which meant “pour.” If the Lord had wanted us to pour or sprinkle water on people, He could have used those words. But He did **not** use them. He used baptizo. When water has been sprinkled or poured on a person, he has not been baptized. Even when people call them “baptism,” pouring and sprinkling remain doctrines of men, not of God.

PURPOSE OF THE “ONE BAPTISM”

The beautiful purpose of baptism is **to enter into the blessings of salvation!** Before a sinner can obey the gospel from his heart, he needs to understand at