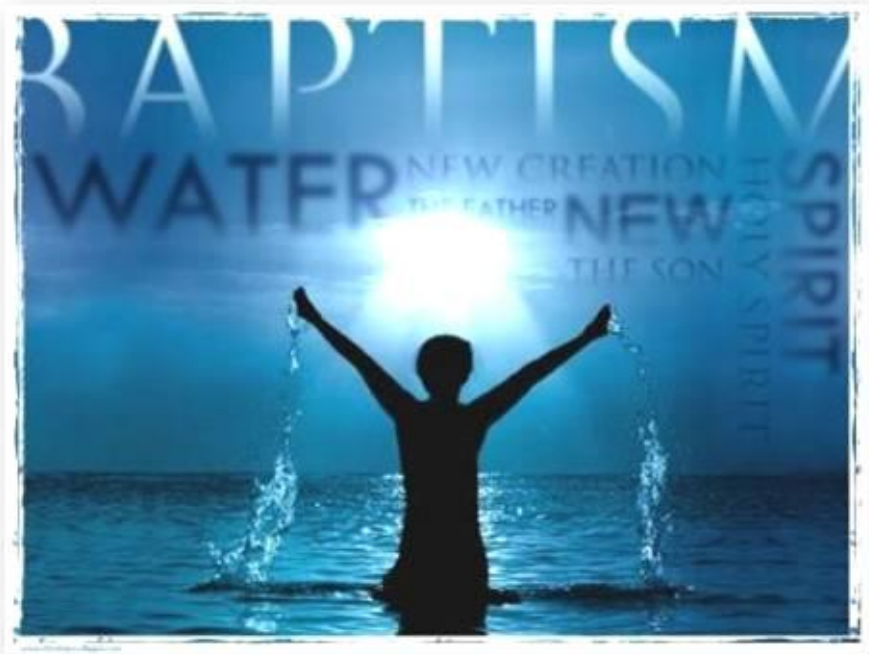


# Baptism: My First Step



## **BEREAN BAPTIST CHURCH**



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

The First Step.....	3
Jesus Our Example.....	4
Believer’s Baptism vs. Infant Baptism.....	7
Parental Responsibility.....	8
What Baptism is Not.....	8
Reluctance Toward Baptism.....	10
The Meaning of Baptism.....	11
Additional Study Questions.....	11
Getting Baptized at BBC.....	12

Before you get started, you will need a Bible and a pen or pencil. There is no need to do this all at one sitting—take breaks and be sure to pray for guidance before you get started each time.

## The First Step

Read Matthew 28:16-20

### *Celebration*

After becoming a disciple (follower) of Christ, Berean Baptist Church requires that candidates for church membership have been baptized by immersion<sup>1</sup> before becoming a church member; this is not because of a Baptist tradition, but because the Lord Jesus gave the church a commission<sup>2</sup> to make disciples and then baptize them (see Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus gave us the order. First, make disciples and then, after conversion<sup>3</sup> (being saved or born again), the church is to encourage those disciples to make their repentance<sup>4</sup> toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ public by being baptized before others. Therefore, no one who professes<sup>5</sup> to be a Christian should remain un-baptized in the manner in which Christ was baptized.

For Berean Baptist Church, baptism is a celebration of the mighty work God has done in the hearts and lives of children and adults who have been brought to repentance and faith in Christ. As one is being baptized, they are confessing Christ as Lord and Savior. We rejoice in this testimony as the fruit of salvation. We baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as a further acknowledgment of the entire Godhead's<sup>6</sup> involvement in the salvation of the sinner. We immerse in water as a celebration of the cleansing Christ provided through His death, burial and resurrection (read Titus 3:5).

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<sup>1</sup> Immerse means to cover completely with a liquid; to submerge.

<sup>2</sup> A commission is the act of giving someone the power and right to do something. Officers are commissioned into the military and thereby given authority to act as representatives of the President of the United States.

<sup>3</sup> Conversion describes the act whereby God makes a human a Christian when they put their trust in the Person and Work of Christ for personal salvation.

<sup>4</sup> Repentance describes the act where God changes a person's mind about who the Lord Jesus Christ is to them personally.

<sup>5</sup> By "profess" we mean to declare or to tell openly; a person who tells others they are a Christian should be baptized.

<sup>6</sup> Godhead (or the Trinity) is a word that reminds us that God exists as one God who has revealed Himself to mankind as three distinct Persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—who are one in nature and essence.

## ***Order Matters***

Read Matthew 3:13-17

A study of baptism in the New Testament reveals that it always follows repentance and conversion, as will be seen later. Infant baptism is not an acceptable alternative to baptism as a believer. As a Jew, Christ was circumcised (similar to the way Presbyterians<sup>7</sup> baptize infants), yet He was still baptized by immersion as an adult. He provides the ultimate example.

In Israel, two thousand years ago, before Jesus' baptism, John the Baptist boldly proclaimed<sup>8</sup> the need for men and women to repent and to be baptized as a sign of repentance or turning toward God (Matthew 3). In the same way, many Bible-believers insist that converts<sup>9</sup> be baptized and thus the name "Baptists." Our baptism is not a tradition; it is an

ordinance<sup>10</sup>—an authoritative decree—given to us by our Lord, King Jesus, Who is the Head of the Church (read Ephesians 1:22-23).

<b><u>Who Immerses?</u></b>	<b><u>Who Sprinkles?</u></b>
Baptist	Catholic
Bible Churches	Main-line
Evangelical Free	Protestant
Some non-denominational churches	Greek Orthodox

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<sup>7</sup> This is not the same as Roman Catholic infant baptism because of the Catholic belief that baptism washes away original sin.

<sup>8</sup> John the Baptist's proclamation was an authoritative and insistent demand like an old Testament prophet who called Israel back to worshipping the One True God.

<sup>9</sup> Converts are men, women, boys and girls who have changed their view of themselves and Christ and can now be called followers of and believers in Jesus Christ.

<sup>10</sup> An ordinance is a law or rule given to the local church by the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Jesus Our Example

### Read Romans 6:4

Although He was perfect in every way and had nothing for which to repent, Jesus submitted to this baptism in obedience to the will of His Father. We follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ who, at an age of understanding, was baptized in the Jordan River. If you are not baptizing by immersion, you don't need a lot of water. Although we don't baptize in a river, we follow the mode of baptism in which the person being baptized is fully immersed in the water as a symbolic<sup>11</sup> representation of dying to an old nature and way of life and rising to walk in the newness of life with Jesus as Lord and Savior (Romans 6:4).

## Review

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1. How many baptisms are there for the New Testament believer?

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*Ephesians 4:5*

2. With what is baptism closely associated?

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*Romans 6:4 & Colossians 2:12*

**Baptism symbolizes** by going down into the water, the union of Christ's death to sin and our leaving the old life.

**Baptism symbolizes** by coming up out of the water, the union of Christ's resurrection and the intention to live a new life for Christ while we await our resurrection at His coming.

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<sup>11</sup> A wedding ring is a good example of a symbol; the ring represents the covenant relationship between a husband and wife.

3. Where did John the Baptist baptize?

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*Matthew 3:6*

4. Why did John baptize in Aenon?

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*John 3:23*

5. Out of what did Jesus come after His baptism?

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*Mark 1:10*

6. How did the early church baptize?

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*Acts 8:38-39*

*Based on the examples of baptism in the scriptures you have read and the definition of "baptism," describe how baptism should be performed according to the Bible.*

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After Christ's ascension to Heaven, the Apostle Peter commanded those who were convicted in their heart of their need for salvation to first repent,<sup>12</sup> and then second, be baptized (Acts 2:38). The pattern we follow is outlined in Acts 2:41: first men and women received "the word," (**the**

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<sup>12</sup> Repenting is not something a person does like getting baptized; instead, it is a change in their perspective or way of thinking which always impacts behavior.

**Gospel**). That is, they were saved by faith in Christ. Next, they were baptized, and lastly they were added to the church.

## ***Why Should I Be Baptized?***

1. Jesus set the \_\_\_\_\_. It was even called “righteousness” to be baptized.  
*Matthew 3:13-17*
2. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ it.  
*Matthew 28:19-20*
3. The apostles said that “\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ of you in the name of Jesus Christ” should be baptized.  
*Acts 2:38*
4. The early church \_\_\_\_\_ it.  
*Acts 8:12*

## **Believer’s Baptism vs. Infant Baptism**

Read Galatians 3:7

Infant baptism is quite different in its order. First, the candidate is baptized; then they are added to the church; thirdly they may or may not repent and put their faith in Christ. This order is unacceptable because it does not symbolically picture what has already happened in the life of the believer. Baptism symbolizes conversion to Jesus—infants cannot be converted. An infant cannot repent or possess authentic<sup>13</sup> saving faith.

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<sup>13</sup> Authentic faith is real or genuine faith.



Prior to the church age, physical descendants of Abraham<sup>14</sup> were

## What If I Was Baptized As An Infant?

While Berean Baptist Church does not practice the tradition of infant baptism, we do acknowledge that infant baptism is often a way for a parent to express their desire to see their child dedicated to a life of serving God.

This act demonstrates the parent's intent to raise their child in a way that naturally supports them choosing to become a follower of Christ when they are older. Once the person has personally placed repentant faith in Christ, we believe the biblical next step is public baptism as a believer.

If you were baptized as a child, it was the intent and hopes of your parents that you would one day be a follower of Christ. Your baptism as an adult can be viewed as the fulfillment of

circumcised<sup>15</sup> at the age of eight days old; but in the new covenant (or testament), the focus is on spiritual descendants of Abraham (Read Galatians 3:7). Since the only way to become a spiritual descendent of Abraham is by repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus, we reject the argument that infant baptism is an appropriate alternative to circumcision for the church.

**Instead**, we insist that only those who can articulate<sup>16</sup> a testimony of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus should be baptized (Acts 20:21).

We believe an infant cannot inherit<sup>17</sup> the faith of their parents through baptism. Nor does one become a Christian through baptism or from being raised in a Christian home.

We believe the Bible teaches that baptism is not necessary for someone to be saved.

Our emphasis on baptism is not from a saving perspective but from the command we received from the Lord Jesus and the example He and His Apostles provided for all who would follow Him.

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<sup>14</sup> Abraham is first mentioned in Genesis 12 as the patriarch of the Jewish people.

<sup>15</sup> Circumcision was not performed in those days for medical reasons. Instead, it was a special sign of being part of the covenant people of God.

<sup>16</sup> Articulate means to express something clearly in a way someone can understand with normal words.

<sup>17</sup> To inherit something normally means someone receives a gift from a parent or grandparent.

## Parental Responsibility

We do not believe that infant baptism is an acceptable alternative to believer's baptism. We do not believe a parent should make this decision for the infant or child. Parents should not put any pressure on their child to be baptized. The parental focus should be upon instructing the child to follow Christ; which, often will indirectly result in a young person's desire to follow the Lord in believer's baptism.

We believe all followers of Christ should be baptized by immersion, unless it is physically impossible for someone to be baptized—like the thief on the cross<sup>18</sup> or a paraplegic confined to a hospital bed.

## What Baptism is Not

Read Acts 8:36-37

Sometimes it is necessary to articulate what one does not believe in, in order to be clear about what is believed to be true. We do not believe baptism is a sacrament<sup>19</sup> that gives grace for salvation like the Roman Catholic Church and the Episcopal Church. Nor do we believe it is a means of saving grace, or the way to obtain forgiveness of sin like the Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ or other similar denominations who teach a doctrine of baptismal<sup>20</sup> regeneration.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, we believe it is inappropriate to baptize infants like the Methodists, Presbyterians, or Lutherans as an alternative to believer's baptism. (Additionally, we reject as unbiblical the Salvation Army, the Quakers and the Bullinger ultra-dispensationalist<sup>22</sup> position that baptism is not necessary for the believer.) Finally, we completely reject everything the Mormon Church cult (LDS)<sup>23</sup> teaches about baptism for eternal life and baptism for the dead.

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<sup>18</sup> The story of the salvation of the thief on the cross is found in Luke 23:32-43.

<sup>19</sup> In some churches a sacrament is something a person can do that provides grace (undeserved favor from God).

<sup>20</sup> The act of getting baptized.

<sup>21</sup> Baptismal regeneration is the idea that God makes someone a Christian when he is baptized. Regeneration means to be reborn or made new.

<sup>22</sup> This is a very obscure sect in Christianity that has some strange views on the Bible.

<sup>23</sup> Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

1. *Water baptism is not a precondition<sup>24</sup> for salvation*

In every instance in the Scriptures, salvation is the precondition for baptism. See for example Acts 8:36–37.

The word “for” in Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3, and Acts 2:38 has caused trouble for some. The “baptism for remission of sins” is not intended to say that you get baptized to get your sins remitted, but rather to say that you get baptized “because” of remitted sins. In other words, you are showing proof of something when you are baptized. Of what are you showing proof? You are showing proof that your sins have been remitted.

Remission has the idea of “letting go.” **When we say** “my cancer is in remission,” we are saying “cancer is not clinging to my body.” **When we say** “my sins were remitted,” we are saying that God is not holding on to them. It is a synonym for “forgiveness.”

Read Ephesians 2:8-10; Mark 16:16

2. *Water baptism is not a means of salvation*

Ephesians 2:8–9 clearly states that a person is saved by grace through faith. Salvation is “not of works, lest any man should boast” and baptism is clearly a ‘work’.

Mark 16:16 is not unduly emphasizing baptism as a requirement for salvation. Actually, Jesus is underplaying it in comparison to “belief in the Gospel” (see verse 15). As a matter of fact, he scolded his “baptized” disciples for their “unbelief” (verse 14). He was telling some unbelieving disciples (who were to preach the Gospel) that their baptism was of no effect if they were not believers first (in that Gospel).

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<sup>24</sup> A condition that must be met before salvation.

### 3. *Water baptism does not wash away our sin*

Revelation 1:5 and 7:14 tell us that our sins are washed away, but they are washed away by the blood of Christ rather than the waters of baptism.

1. What made a man or woman a disciple?

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*Read Acts 2:41; 8:12; 8:37; 16:30-34; 18:8*

2. Read Acts 16:14-15: Describe the heart of the baptized disciple.

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### What if I don't feel like doing this?

A reluctance to be baptized needs to be examined. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15) and "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? (Luke 6:46).

#### Five Reasons Christians Don't Get Baptized

- Ignorance
- Pride
- Apathy
- Defiance
- False Conversion

**Mark 16:14-16** *Afterward he appeared unto the eleven...and upbraided them with their **unbelief** and hardness of heart because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, **Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.***

## ***What is Baptism?***

Strong's Concordance<sup>25</sup> indicates that the Greek word *baptizō* transliterated "baptize" in English (G907) means to "immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk) and to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash."<sup>26</sup>

Oepke's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*<sup>27</sup>, indicates *baptizō* means "to immerse" and shows how the word has been used: "to sink a ship," "to sink (in the mud)," "to drown" and "to perish" (1:530). This basic meaning accords with the emphasis of Scripture: Jesus was baptized by John "in the Jordan" and He came up "out of the water" (Mark 1:9–10; cf. Acts 8:38). On the other hand, the Greek language has words for *sprinkle* and *pour* that are not used for baptism.

The many pools in Jerusalem could have been used for immersion and would likely have been used to immerse a large group like the 3,000 on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). Many proselytes to Judaism were self-immersed, and immersion was also the mode practiced by the early church. Immersion best illustrates the truth of death and resurrection with Christ in Romans 6 (*The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 2009, p 374-376).

## **Additional Study Questions**

1. In Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus gave his disciples instructions for what they were to do in his absence. Often it is called the great commission. They were to "teach all nations. The idea here is to make disciples or followers of Christ. Then Jesus told the leaders of His church to \_\_\_\_\_ them.

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<sup>25</sup> A Concordance is a book that lists where every single word in the Bible is used and how it is used.

<sup>26</sup>This website provides a digital version of the Strong's Concordance: (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G907>).

<sup>27</sup> A theological dictionary is like a regular dictionary only it is written by Bible scholars.

2. What if the person who led you to Christ really wants to baptize you and is not a leader in your church?
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3. Read Acts 2:41-42 and 1 Corinthians 12:13: Baptism identifies you with other members of the \_\_\_\_\_ or the body of Christ.

***If being baptized identifies you with the body before whom you are being baptized, it only makes good sense to let the leadership of that body baptize you.***

4. Read 1 Peter 3:21: According to this verse, baptism does not put away the “filth of the flesh” but instead it gives a believer a good \_\_\_\_\_ toward God.



### **Consider This!**

Just as water lifted Noah above God’s judgment, so do baptismal waters lift the Christian above a dirty conscience before that judgment which “begins at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17). The word “saved” doesn’t always have the idea of being saved from Hell. In this context, it saves a believer from having a shameful conscience that comes with being a “closet Christian.”

### ***How Do I Get Baptized at Berean?***

If you need to be baptized in obedience to the commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ, please call the church at 868-5156 or let any usher, deacon or pastor know during any worship service.

Or, you could simply let your guide/teacher know about your intention to be baptized.

Do you need more information? <http://www.bbcfnc.org/baptism.php>

## **My Personal Statement of Faith in Christ and Understanding of Baptism**

I \_\_\_\_\_ believe that God the Creator sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, into the world; that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin; that He lived a sinless life, was crucified—suffering the wrath of God for my sins—and rose from the dead. I believe that, after the resurrection, Christ ascended to be with the Father and is seated on His right hand where He intercedes for me as my Savior. My faith is in Him and the promise He made that all who repent and believe in the Gospel will be saved. By God’s grace, I intend on living every day by faith with Jesus as my Lord. I know that water baptism does not cleanse me from sin or save my soul from hell. Instead, I understand my baptism is a public profession of my faith that Jesus is Lord and is a symbolic representation of my death to an old way of life and my commitment to live as a child of God in submission to Jesus as my God.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Berean Baptist Church Covenant

Having been led by the Holy Spirit to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and upon our profession of our faith in Him, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we do now solemnly and joyfully enter into this covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We fully realize that the strength to uphold this covenant comes from the grace of God our Father, the shed blood of God the Son, and the power of the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit.

We promise to actively pursue personal holiness; to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church's spiritual growth and unity; to faithfully abide by the doctrines and behaviors outlined in this church's Articles of Faith; and to give cheerfully of our time, talents, and finances for the support of this ministry and its missionaries.

We further promise to faithfully attend the church's worship services, to maintain personal spiritual disciplines; to teach our children the Word of God; to share the gospel with our relatives and acquaintances; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements; and to avoid all gossip. We promise that we will love and pray for each other and in times of distress help one another.

We promise to endeavor to obey the commandments of our Lord Jesus and to abstain from anything that would cause our fellow brother or sister in Christ to stumble or that will bring reproach to the name of Jesus Christ.

We further realize that if we should fail to live up to the promises we have made, our brothers and sisters in Christ will always strive for our reconciliation and spiritual restoration. However, if we partake in a sustained and unrepentant violation of an Article of Faith, we will be brought under church discipline in accordance with the Church Constitution.

We make this covenant with each other for the express purpose of glorifying God as the visible representation of the body of Christ.