

A Primer on Baptism

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Much of the religious division among those who claim to follow Christ centers on baptism. The New Testament teaches baptism, both as to form and purpose. It is ordained of God, so men must allow God's Word to settle its function.

There are several things baptism will not do.

- It will not help the unbeliever (John 8:24; Mark 16:16).
- It will not help one who refuses to repent (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38).
- It will not help one who will not confess Christ (Mat. 10:32-33).
- It will not help one who is baptized against his own will (Rom. 6:17).
- It will not cleanse one from sins he commits after he becomes a Christian (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9).
- It will not help one who does not know its purpose (Acts 19:1-5).
- It will not guarantee eternal salvation (1 Cor. 9:27).

The Bible defines baptism. It is twice called a burial (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12). Its description requires a burial (Acts 8:38-39). The Greek word translated "baptism" (*baptidzo*), means to immerse, plunge, dip, overwhelm, etc.

The Bible says what baptism is for. It is for (in order to, action proceeding to a result) remission of sins (Acts 2:38). What does baptism do? It saves, assuming it is preceded by faith, repentance, and confession of Christ (1 Pet. 3:21).

Can anyone be saved without baptism? One answer is "yes". Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets will be saved (Luke 13:28), but they were never baptized. It is possible that some in the days of Jesus, such as the thief on the cross, were not baptized, but will be saved (Luke 23:42-43). However, all who will be saved apart from baptism lived **before** the Gospel began to be preached at Pentecost. The answer is "no" for those who have lived since the cross. Since the Great Commission (Mat. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15-16), baptism has been required for remission of sins (Acts 2:38), getting into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27), being added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13) and having sins washed away (Acts 22:16).

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