

BAPTISM

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

(Romans 6:3, 4)

The word “baptize” means to be “immersed in,” or “totally identified with” someone or something.

At the time we received Jesus as our Lord and Savior, spiritual baptism occurred. We were totally identified with Jesus Christ in His death, His burial and His resurrection.

. . . having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

(Colossians 2:12)

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

(1 Corinthians 12:13)

There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
one Lord, one faith, *one* baptism,
one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

(Ephesians 4:4–6)

We were placed into the body of Christ—the Church. We, the believers, are the body of Christ now. *Jesus baptized us with the Holy Spirit.* Without this spiritual baptism—the born again experience—no one will enter the kingdom of God.

Now let us back up a little, since there seems to be confusion about the spiritual baptism, and the water baptism, as performed by John the Baptist and his followers.

Who Was John the Baptist?

According to the Scriptures, he was a messenger, a forerunner of Jesus, who in the spirit and power of Elijah came to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah. John came to make people ready for the Lord (Luke 1:17). He was sent from God, and he came that he might bear witness of the Light (Jesus), that all might believe through him (John 1:6–8).

And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.”

(Acts 19:4)

Biblical repentance is to turn from unbelief in Jesus Christ, and to believe in Him and His accomplished work on the cross and His resurrection. In other words, to turn from “I didn’t know; I didn’t believe,” to “Now I do know, and believe.”

What Did John the Baptist Say About Himself?

As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

(Matthew 3:11)

I baptized you with water; but *[Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*

(Mark 1:8)

Do you see the contrast?

In the gospel of John, we read that the reason John the Baptist came to baptize in water was so that Jesus might be manifested to Israel. God told John to baptize in water, and that the one upon whom John would see the Spirit descending and remaining—He is the One. John testified that he has seen and has born witness that Jesus is the Son of God (John 1:31–34).

So now we know why John the Baptist came, why he baptized in water, and what he said about the One who was coming after him, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

In the gospel of John, chapter 4:1, 2, we read that the disciples of Jesus were also baptizing with water.

Water baptism is a picture of the spiritual baptism that saves. Just as the water cleanses in the physical realm, the blood of Jesus cleanses in the spiritual realm. A person who receives Jesus as his or her Lord and Savior goes to the depths of death. The blood of Jesus washes him—he receives the forgiveness of sins, and comes out born again—born of the Spirit, born from above, born of God. He is resurrected to a brand new life—life in Christ Jesus. One has to be totally immersed in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to enter the kingdom of God.

Before His departure from earth, Jesus told His disciples: “John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5). This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.

And Peter said to them, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
(Acts 2:38)

This is what happens at the time of salvation. We repent of the sin of unbelief in Jesus, and we now believe. We are baptized—totally identified with Jesus, in His death, burial and resurrection—and in that moment, we receive the forgiveness of our sins and are sealed with the Holy Spirit for eternity.

The same meaning can be found in the following verses:

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
(Mark 1:4)

And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and *wash away your sins, calling on His name.*
(Acts 22:16)

I think what confuses a lot of people is the book of Acts. We have to look at “Acts” not as a doctrinal book, but as a historical book, a book of transition. You will find this statement in most introductions to the book of Acts.

Think about this: The Jews have done “things” a certain way for a few thousand years. They have the Law and the prophets, their sacrifices, and their rituals. They keep the Sabbaths, they abstain from certain foods, they fast, they circumcise, and they bring tithes to the Levites—they live under the Old Testament (covenant). But all those things were just a shadow. The Reality is Jesus. Now something new is here—The New Testament (covenant), which came into effect with the death of Jesus.

For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it.

For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.
(Hebrews 9:16, 17)

For better understanding, read the book of Hebrews. It is such an important book to understand. Beloved, rely on the teaching of the Holy Spirit instead of your own, or someone else’s interpretation of God’s Word.

Do you think the Jews gave up the “old” right away and immediately embraced the “new”? Of course not! Actually, they even wanted to apply the “old” to the new Gentile converts. I cannot even imagine the transition! But with God, all things are possible!

When He said, “A new covenant,” *He has made the first obsolete*. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

(Hebrews 8:13)

So let us not think that they had a handle on things right away. Even some of the apostles erred. If they didn't err in anything else, they erred through compromise. The book of Acts shows that very clearly.

The fullness of the New Testament is best presented in the Epistles of Paul.

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

(Galatians 3:27)