

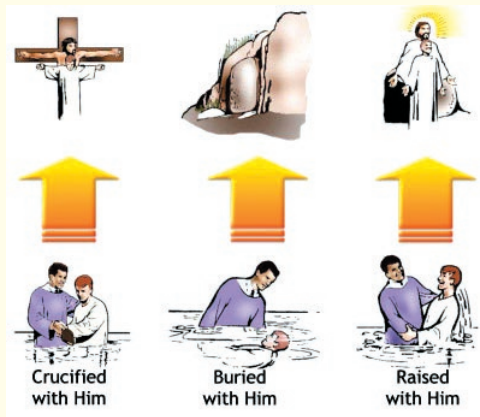


# BAPTISM AND THE CROSS

The link between baptism and the cross begins in the Old Testament.

In the story of the Flood, water was the means of both the salvation of eight souls and the instrument through which God destroyed the sinful world (Genesis 6:17). Peter connects Noah's salvation through water and our salvation from sin through baptism. "...In (the ark) only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves

you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ..." (1 Peter 3:20-21). This straight forward passage makes it clear that baptism is for our salvation.



Elisha told Naaman the leper to dip himself in the Jordan river seven times to be healed of his disease. After some initial reluctance and anger Naaman did what the prophet of God told him to do. His flesh was restored to the quality of a young boy (2 Kings 5:1-14). The power to cleanse Naaman was not in the water of the Jordan, but a work of God. Naaman had to fully obey God's instructions to be healed. Anything less than washing seven times would not have cleansed Naaman. This amazing story is a example of what God does for us at the point of baptism. There is nothing powerful in the water of baptism itself. The power to save resides in the power of God. Baptism, like the healing of Naaman the leper, is a work of God.

When a person is immersed he imitates the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:1-6). The process is a literal event where we appropriate the power of His cleansing blood for our sins. Before baptism we must repent of our sins, for if our hearts are not "crucified with Christ" prior to immersion there cannot be forgiveness. Rather than a continued desire for sin after baptism, there should be a hatred and rejection of sin, the very thing that caused Jesus to die in the first place. We must "die to sin and live to righteousness" (I Peter 2:24).

If you have followed the example of Jesus by dying to self, being buried with Him by baptism, and being raised to walk a new life, praise the Lord! If you have not been immersed to have your sins washed away in Jesus' blood, please let us assist you in your obedience to Christ.

—Timothy Tarbet  
Church of Christ, New Milford, Connecticut

# BAPTISM: A NEW BEGINNING

When we consider the experience of baptism revealed in Scripture we are challenged to have a new beginning — to be “born again”. Jesus teaches about this in John 3:3-5: “No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and of the Spirit.” The new birth consists of two important elements — “**water** and the **Spirit**.” Our original birth brought us into a world where sin and death reign, but Jesus offers a “new birth” into a world where righteousness and life reign.

Baptism is the act of obedience that puts us in contact with the Spirit of God. The Spirit is God’s promise to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32).



If Jesus spoke only of the “**water**” of baptism we might think we were ac-

complishing the rebirth by our own effort and establishing our own righteousness. However, the new birth involves the “**Spirit**” as well, and man cannot produce that. I can make the necessary arrangements to get myself immersed in water but only God can provide the Spirit. “How much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17). God’s abundant provisions of “grace” and “righteousness” come to those who are “born again” of “**water**” and the “**Spirit**”.

What surprises some people is the fact that God cannot fulfill His promise unless we obey His commands. His “**Spirit**” cannot act without the “**water**.”

Jesus said one must be “born of **water** and the **Spirit**” (John 3:5). In a parallel passage of Scripture the apostle Paul put it like this: “He saved us through the **washing of rebirth** and renewal by the **Holy Spirit**” (Titus 3:5). Considered together, these verses teach that the “**water**” of baptism in the new birth is indeed a “**washing**.” The Bible says, “get up and **be baptized** and **wash** your sins away, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16).

That is why the apostles of Jesus carried this message into the world as the answer to our sin problem. Here are the words of the Apostle Peter: “Repent and be **baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the **Holy Spirit**. (Acts 2:38).

— Leo Woodman  
Church of Christ, Kittery, Maine

# Should Infants Be Baptized?

Once a person has believed the gospel of Jesus Christ, there should be an urgency to follow through with water baptism. One example is the Ethiopian eunuch who was taught by Phillip.

As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” (Acts 8:36)

Urgency must not cause us to dispense with the teaching of, and obedience to, the gospel, however. Even in those cases where households were baptized (Acts 16:32, 33) all members need to be taught the word of God first. There is no biblical basis for baptizing someone apart from their own knowledge of the word of God and his own personal faith.

So what is the status of young children in regard to eternal life? The Bible teaches that learning the difference between right and wrong is a defining aspect of growing up.

“And the little ones that you said would be taken captive, your children who do not yet know good from bad—they will enter the land. I will give it to them and they will take possession of it” (Deuteronomy 1:39). “But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste” (Isaiah 7:16).

Infants have no conscience in regard to sin and therefore cannot repent, so they are not accountable. They are not immune from physical death, any more than adults, but infants are immune from the eternal consequences of sin. King David fasted and prayed for one of his children who was dying. When the child died he surprised everyone by returning to normal and they asked him why.

He answered, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, ‘Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.’ But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me” (2 Samuel 12:22,23). His answer should comfort all those who have lost children who were too young to be baptized.

— Arthur Barry  
Church of Christ, Sayre, Pennsylvania



# Getting Baptism Right

## SPRINKLING, POURING OR IMMERSION?

Why has the Baptism been so controversial over the course of history? What's up with immersion, sprinkling, or pouring? It seems men's ideas of improving God's plan for the salvation of mankind has gotten in the way of God's truth.

Here is what I mean. Until approximately 1100 AD all churches believed in immersion of the repentant sinner. That is because the word baptism is a *transliteration* of the Greek word "*baptizo*." So what is a transliteration? A *transliteration* is when a translator carries over the sound of a word rather than what it means. Notice how similar "*baptizō*" and *baptize* sound? We now know what *baptizo* sounds like. The question is: what does "*baptizō*" mean? "*Baptizō*" means to immerse or to overwhelm, to submerge. Yes, that's right! But you might ask the question 'Why can't sprinkle, or pour, work for baptism?'

There is actually a simple answer. Because the New Testament was originally written in Greek and must be translated into English. There are three Greek words for immersion, sprinkling and pouring. We can easily find the Greek words for each using our computers or Greek-English lexicons. Sprinkling in Greek is "*rhantizō*," and is used to describe a Levitical process of covering over something spiritually unclean by sprinkling blood and water. In the New Testament it is used in Hebrews 9:19, 9:21 and 10:22 to refer to Old Testament practices of sprinkling blood and water on things. In Hebrews 10:22 and 1 Peter 1:2 it figuratively refers to sprinkling the blood of Jesus on our conscience. The word "*rhantizō*" is a different word from "*baptizo*," and is never translated "baptism" in the Bible. In other words, sprinkling is not immersion.

The Greek word for pouring is "*anachysis*" or "*cheo*" which literally means to *pour* and only occurs in the New Testament in 1 Peter 4:4, and no reference to baptism. So once again "*anachysis*" or "*cheo*" are not "*baptizo*." God is very specific in choosing "*baptizo*" for baptism.

The actual meaning of "*baptizo*" is *immersion*. So, as you encounter the word baptism in your reading, I hope understanding these simple facts will open your mind and change your life the way it has changed mine.

Kirk Israel  
Church of Christ, Castleton, Vermont

# THE URGENCY OF BAPTISM



When most of us were children and our parents called us to do something, we responded immediately. We did not wait nor did we say “I’ll get back with you later”. Because of our love and respect for our parents, we responded to their request as soon as possible. That kind of response is required when the Lord calls us to salvation. We

are not to harden our hearts toward God (Hebrews 3:7).

The book of Acts presents us with examples of individuals who responded immediately to the Lord’s command to be baptized. In Acts 2:41, the Jews present on the Jewish holiday of Pentecost were taught about Jesus and we are told that “Those who accepted his message were baptized and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” In Acts 8, when Phillip went to the city of Samaria and preached the Word of God to the people “they were baptized, both men and women.” Later in this same chapter, we are introduced to an important Ethiopian official involved in taking care of the queen’s treasury. Phillip taught him about Christ. The eunuch said: “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized? And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Phillip and the eunuch went down into the water and Phillip baptized him.” (Acts 8:26-39). In Acts 10, we meet a very religious man named Cornelius who needed to be taught how to become a Christian. Peter taught Cornelius and his family. He asked: “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have. So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”

There are more examples of individuals being taught the word of God and being baptized immediately. There is Lydia in Acts 16:13-15. Also, there is the jailer in Acts 16:25-33. When we understand the connection of baptism and the forgiveness of our sins, we will want to respond to baptism immediately too.

The word of God is easy to follow in its direction. I am glad I was baptized after hearing and understanding God’s word. What about you?

— Maurice Davis  
Church of Christ, Milton, Massachusetts



**“All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ”  
(Galatians 3:27)**

**“Having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God”  
(Colossians 2:12)**

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