

Keokuk Nazarene Church

Questions and Answers About Baptism

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

Baptism is a symbol that tells the world we are followers of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is an outward expression of an inward decision to align oneself with Christ and what He lived and died for. It is the believer's declaration to the world that Christ is that person's Savior and Lord. Baptism means God is the standard by which he or she intends to live from now on. Baptism is widely recognized in the Christian church as a), **sacrament** which means a symbol or a seal. Baptism is a symbol that we are believers. Our faith is not a private matter. In **Romans 10:9-10**, we learn that we are to "*confess with our mouth*" after "*believing in our heart*" that Jesus is Lord. Baptism provides the opportunity for believers to make such a public profession of their faith before the church and the world.

In baptism, believers identify with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The visual picture conveyed by baptism is that of a dying to self and rising with Christ to a new life. 1 Corinthians 5:3,4 reminds us "*Christ died for our sins...he was buried...and he rose again.*" And in Colossians 2:12 we read "*For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ.*"

WHY BE BAPTIZED?

Believers should be baptized to follow Christ's example

Simply put, we should do it because Jesus himself was baptized. All four gospels record Jesus going to the Jordan River to be baptized by John (Mark 1:9, Matt. 3:16, Luke 3:21, John 3:32). If Jesus needed to be Baptized to "*fulfill all righteousness*" (Matt. 3:15) then we certainly need to be baptized. We are baptized, therefore, to follow the example of Christ.

Furthermore, in the New Testament, and especially in the book of Acts, faith in Christ was accompanied by baptism (Acts 2:38, 8:12-13, 9:18) It was the natural response to the saving grace Christ offered.

Believers should be baptized because Christ commands it.

In **Matthew 28:19-20**, Jesus commands his followers to "*go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...*" Baptism is therefore an act of obedience to the command of Christ, fulfilled by individuals who have submitted themselves to His sovereignty. Baptism is the means by which followers of Christ are identified.

IS BAPTISM NECESSARY FOR SALVATION?

No, baptism is not necessary for salvation.

While baptism should be a part of every believer's experience, it is not a requirement for salvation. In **Luke 17:43** the thief on the cross had no time for baptism; yet Jesus assured him

that they would meet in paradise that day. Were baptism required for salvation, the thief would have missed out. It is clear from Jesus' words that the thief was saved the moment he believed. Besides, well over 150 times the Bible makes salvation conditioned solely on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone as personal Savior. Here are just a very few examples of these: John 1:12; 3:15-18, 36; 5:24; 6:35, 47; Acts 16:31; Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:12. These statements not only teach that water baptism is not "a condition to be met in order to be saved" or "an act of obedience for those who are lost," but eliminate every other human effort or attempt to merit favor with God. Ephesians 2:8-9 is perhaps the clearest of these verses as it reminds us that it is by God's grace alone we have been saved, through faith. Salvation is a gift of God, not by our works. Baptism was never intended to provide salvation for an individual, but rather to publicly identify a person with Christ.

WHEN SHOULD YOU BE BAPTIZED?

A person should be baptized after he or she believes in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior of their life.

Baptism follows belief. It is changing your mind about who Jesus Christ is (repentance) that causes God to wipe away all your sins and causes Him to send his Holy Spirit to live within you. Baptism is the sign this has been accomplished; it marks the beginning of a new life for you. Baptism is not the essential; the essential is belief; changing your mind about God. Also, in passages such as **Acts 2:41, 8:12 and 10:47-48**, it is evident that baptism follows an individual's decision to trust Christ alone for salvation.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

Every person who has made the decision to follow Christ should be baptized.

Baptism should be a part of every believer's experience. Christ commanded baptism and made it a part of His great commission (Matt. 28:19). The early church practiced baptism. In every recorded instance in Acts immediately upon receiving Christ as Savior, the believers were baptized: Acts 2:41; 8:12-13, 38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5. Also, Paul was baptized: Acts 9:18, he baptized others (1 Cor. 1:15; Acts 16:31-33) and in one case he even administered rebaptism Acts 19:1-7. Also the New Testament uses baptism for picturing the important truth that we are joint heirs with Christ to a glorious inheritance because of our identification with his death and resurrection (Romans 6:1-4; 1 Peter 3; Galatians 3:26-27). In baptism we identify with Christ, His message, and other believers.

HOW SHOULD YOU BE BAPTIZED?

The mode (the how) of baptism is important, but not essential.

Romans 6:1-11 explains how the **immersion** mode of baptism identifies the believer with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Going under water represents Christ's death and coming out of the water illustrates His resurrection. We believe that immersion is not the only valid mode of baptism however. At Keokuk Nazarene Church we believe there are several valid modes of baptism: **sprinkling**, which suggests a cleansing; **pouring** which reminds us of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and **immersion**, which dramatizes our dying and rising with Christ. While all three modes are acceptable, we believe the immersion mode of baptism best illustrates the work of Christ. Still, since the Bible does not mandate how much water should be used in Baptism, neither do we.