

# BAPTISM

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

Take a minute to pray for God to guide you as you study...

I put on the black robe that was way too big for me. It was strange to be wearing what looked like a “dress,” but I was ok with it. A nice lady helped me walk up the steps, and I stood at the top looking down at my dad, Pastor Dave, as he held out his hand to help me down the steps into the baptistry. I wasn’t sure what to expect as my feet touched the water. Pretty soon, I was standing there, in front of the whole church, waiting to be baptized. My dad said some nice things about me, and then he said, “And now, it is an extreme privilege to baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” With that, I took a deep breath, covered my nose with a white handkerchief, and then bent my knees as the water came rushing over me. A moment later, I came up out of the water with a fresh feeling of life! I had been baptized! I had officially, in front of the world, gone public with my faith in Jesus!

For so many people, baptism is one of the most special events in their entire life! They look back on that day as the day where they made a commitment to Jesus. Baptism is one of the most important decisions anyone can ever make. In fact, Jesus makes it pretty clear that baptism is a step towards salvation.

**Mark 16:16**, “Whoever believes and is \_\_\_\_\_ will be saved...”

Baptism is the “next step” in a growing relationship with Jesus. It’s a symbol of your commitment to Him. It not only impacts you as you make this powerful decision to be united in Jesus through baptism, but it also makes a powerful impact to those that get to watch. It’s a testimony to others of how you are choosing to put Jesus first and live for Him. Jesus even shares its importance in this next verse.

**John 3:5**, “Jesus answered, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.’”

Obviously, baptism doesn’t save you; Jesus does! And not everyone that is baptized automatically goes to heaven, but Jesus says that baptism is a commitment step in your relationship with Him! It is a pledge, a vow, a promise that says that you belong to Jesus.

Baptism also is a step towards building a community of believers that will watch out for you, encourage you, and help you. In ‘The Great Commission,’ Jesus tells the Church what our job is, and He says:

**Matthew 28:19-20 says**, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, \_\_\_\_\_ them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Our job is to make disciples by baptizing others as they come to know Jesus. When you are baptized, you join the global Christian Church, but you also are baptized into a local church family too.

**1 Corinthians 12:13 says**, “For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one \_\_\_\_\_...”

Baptism is the way that you join God’s church, and it’s the way that you join a local church body. The Bible uses the analogy of a body to describe the church, because there are so many people that have different talents and abilities but work together for one purpose...kind of like a body has different parts, but it works together to move and breathe and exist. Baptism joins you to a local church body with your gifts and talents to serve God and others in your local community.

### ***Is there more than one kind of baptism?***

Well, yes and no. The Bible only talks about one kind of water baptism. You can see it in many places, and you can definitely see it at Jesus’ baptism.

**Mark 1:9-10a**, “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As soon as Jesus came \_\_\_\_\_ of the water...”

Jesus went **down into** the water and then came **up out of** the water. That means that he was fully submerged. He went all the way under! It wasn’t some sort of sprinkling on his head. He wasn’t wiped with a cloth. He went completely under the water and came up out of the water. You can see another example in Acts of how baptism is done in the Bible.

**Acts 8:38 says**, “Then both Philip and the eunuch went \_\_\_\_\_ the water and Philip baptized him.”

In Greek, the word for baptism is ‘Baptizo.’ It literally means, ‘to be fully immersed.’ That means that there is only one way to be baptized, and it means to go fully under the water and come up out of the water. You may feel like it is silly to get soaking wet for something that is symbolic, but there is so much meaning in how and why we do baptism.

## BASIC POINT

God gave us baptism to remind us of the Savior and to give us a chance to show our love for Him

God gave us baptism to remind us of the Savior. When people die, we usually go to a cemetery where there is already a grave dug. We stand around the grave and cry and listen to a pastor or someone read a verse from the Bible. Then, eventually, the body is lowered **down into** the grave. When Jesus comes back, the body of the person that died will be recreated, brand new, without any defects or disease, and they will come **up out of** the grave to live a new life with Jesus. This is the symbolism that God gave us in baptism. As we are baptized and go down into the water, symbolically, we are dying to the life before we met Jesus. For some people, the life they have lived before being baptized and before meeting Jesus is a life that is full of a lot of awful things! For some people, their life may not be so terrible, but either way, the symbolism is still there. Then, when we come up out of the water, it is just like we are resurrected from the grave as a new person who is fully connected to Jesus. The past life no longer matters. It no longer holds us hostage. It isn’t even baggage that we carry around. We are NEW, fresh and clean and begin a new life with Jesus.

You can read about the symbolism in this next verse.

**Colossians 2:12** "...Having been buried with him [Jesus] in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead..."

The symbolism carries so much meaning. But there is another baptism that takes place at the same time as the water baptism. It's the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When you give your heart to Jesus officially through baptism, the Holy Spirit is given to you in a powerful way. You are now empowered, in a supernatural way, to go share the message of Jesus with others. He is also given to you, because as soon as you make a public commitment to Jesus, the Devil attacks! And when the Devil attacks, you definitely want the Holy Spirit to guide you and lead you through temptation and struggle.

### ***Will I be perfect after baptism? What if I sin again?***

For some reason, people think that being baptized means that you will be perfect and never sin again. This holds people back from making that important commitment, because they are worried about sinning. Listen, we will be sinners until Jesus comes to take us home to a sinless world! You WILL sin after you are baptized, but the beautiful thing about God's grace and forgiveness is that you can be forgiven over and over again. He will ALWAYS forgive you and give you His grace. And He's given us something else that is symbolic that represents a rebaptism, being baptized again. It's called: Communion. Have you ever participated in it? It's where there is cracker-like bread and tiny cups of grape juice that everyone eats and drinks at the same time. It can feel kind of weird if you've never seen it before, but it's full of meaning and symbolism too, and it even connects with baptism. When we eat the bread during communion, it represents the body of Jesus. The grape juice represents Jesus' blood. When we think about Jesus dying for us, we remember the grace that He gave us then and gives us again and again. It's because of His death that we can be forgiven.

### **BUT THERE'S MORE!!!**

In the Seventh-day Adventist church, we practice something even before we eat the bread and drink the grape juice. Some churches call it the Ordinance of Humility. Other churches just call it footwashing. It's where you go to a room in the church that has already been prepared. There might be a bunch of chairs that have towels laid on them. Maybe there is a table that has a giant

basin full of water. Usually there is someone that is standing by the basin and will fill up your bowl with warm water that you take back to your chair. Once you are there, you and your partner wash each other's feet. The symbolism comes from the last time that Jesus ate with His disciples before He died. He washed their feet too! One of the disciples tells Jesus that his whole body needs to be washed, and Jesus says that if a man washes his feet, then his whole body is clean. In a way, Jesus was re-baptizing the disciples and cleansing them for the work that they would be doing. When we participate in footwashing, we too are going through a "re-baptism." It's a time where we again are washed clean with the grace that Jesus gives us. It's a re-commitment of our faith in Him. It's a time where we can ask for forgiveness and confess our sins and then be washed clean!

There is a verse in Acts that I believe is an appeal to all Christians.

It says in **Acts 22:16**: "'And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'"

If you haven't been baptized, what are you waiting for? What is holding you back from making this commitment to Jesus? This is a commitment you'll never regret! If you haven't be baptized, why not now?

## **FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS**

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1. Why do people think that they will be perfect when they are baptized?
2. If you have been baptized, what was your experience like?

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### **LESSON 9: BAPTISM**

