
INTRODUCTION

Historically, the subject of water baptism has been perhaps one of the least understood doctrines of the New Testament. There is much controversy over its practice and its importance. Many false teachings and false doctrines have been based on the traditions and reasoning's of men. This has resulted in confusion over the precise meaning of this important doctrine. Some teach that water baptism is really not important at all, while in fact, according to Hebrews 6:2, the doctrine of baptism is part of the foundation that must be laid in the Christian life. We will therefore take this time to try to understand what the Bible has to say on this matter.

Water Baptism first appears in the Bible with John the Baptist. "John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism for the remission of sins. And all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." (Mark 1:4,5).

In those days, baptism was understood to be a rite of initiation into something new. It was also seen as a sign of devotion to the teachings of the teacher. John's teaching was repentance of sins and those who received it, had to repent, confess their sins (Mark 1:5) and "bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:7-8). Before John would willingly baptize someone, there had to be evidenced in them a change of heart.

On the day of Pentecost, in A.D. 31, The New Testament church was established. The apostle Peter gave an extremely powerful sermon to many listeners and his message was so convicting, that 3,000 people were saved and baptized. Before their baptism, many asked Peter and the other disciples, "Brothers, what shall we do?"(Acts 2:38) and Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."(Acts2:39) Obviously, baptism was extremely important to their faith in Jesus.

These days, just as it was then, Christian baptism signifies a dedication to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and to be His disciple. (Mathew 28:19) Baptism is something practical that a person does in order to humbly identify themselves with Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Just as He dedicated himself, "thus to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15), so must you do the same by being baptized in water. It is a sign of covenant between you and God, in which you submit yourself to obey the Spirit of God. It is dying to the fleshly desires of the body and all that is old, letting the past be buried while rising up to live in fulfillment of righteousness through the new life given to you by God.

If you are a believer, you need to take baptism seriously. This handbook is designed to answer all of your questions about baptism and its' apparent significance to living anew in Christ. We will be discussing many of the issues pertaining to baptism in hopes that you will better understand its importance to the Christian faith and to your personal faith as a believer.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What Is Water Baptism?

- What is the Greek meaning?
- What does baptism represent?
- When did baptism first appear?

Why Should I be baptized?

1. Jesus commanded it.
2. It is an identification made with the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. There is a remission of sin or a release from sin.
4. It is a public declaration of your faith

Who May Be Baptized?

1. Believers may be baptized.
2. Those who have repented of their sin may be baptized.

When Should A Person Be Baptized?

1. When they have *believed* and *repented*.
2. NO infant baptism taught in the New Testament.

How Should A Person Be Baptized?

1. By full immersion in water.
2. Immersion - supported by the Greek meaning.
3. Immersion - further validated by its' likeness to burial.
4. Sprinkling and pouring are NOT supported biblically.

Into What Name Should A Person Be Baptized?

1. The name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Preparation for Actual Baptism

1. Preparation & Prayer

WHAT IS WATER BAPTISM?

The word "baptism" in Greek is "baptisma", while "to baptize" in Greek is "baptizo". Obviously, this word has not really been translated from Greek, but rather it was simply copied into the English language. In Greek "baptizo" means "to immerse, cause to be dipped, to submerge, to overwhelm". To baptize something in water means to put it under the water. Therefore in the Biblical sense, baptizing a person in water literally means to put that person fully under the water.

Water baptism for the Christian symbolizes our death, burial and resurrection with Christ. It means identification with Christ. Read Romans 6:4, *"Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*

The practice of water baptism first appears in the Bible with the appearance and ministry of John the Baptist. *"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism for the remission of sins. And all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins."* (Mark 1:4,5)

As you read in the introduction, Baptism in those days was understood to be a rite of initiation into something new. It was a sign of adherence to the teachings of the respective teacher. John taught repentance for the remission of sins. Those who received his teaching had to repent (turn from sin), confess their sins (Mark 1:5) and *"bear fruits worthy of repentance"* (Luke 3:7,8).

In order to make this dedication, you must first be truly repentant of your sin, and you must confess your sin to God. Second, you must truly believe in the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. With this baptism you commit yourself through the power of the new life of Jesus within you, to *"bear fruits worthy of repentance"*.

WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

1. Jesus commanded it.

Water baptism is most important because Jesus commanded it. When you decide to be baptized, you are acting in obedience to God. Jesus gave this commandment in what is known as the great commission when he says, *"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"*. This can be found in Matthew 28:19, and also in Mark 16:16.

The apostles also commanded baptism. The apostles understood Jesus' great commission and the seriousness of baptism, so they embraced it and were obedient to it. They commanded others to be baptized and they were even baptized themselves. This is evident through the lives of Peter, Paul and even Jesus himself. Peter commanded the people to be baptized in Acts 2:38, *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the forgiveness of your sins..."* Peter also tells the people to be baptized in Acts 10:48, *"So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ"*. The apostles knew it was God's will for those who believed to be baptized. Paul baptized believers in Acts 19:1-5, and he himself was commanded to be baptized in Acts 22:16. Even Jesus Himself submitted to baptism. Matthew 3:13-15 reads, *"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.' Then John consented"*.

2. It is an identification with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Baptism is an act of identification with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. It is an act of bringing death to the old nature, the old ways, habits and lifestyle. It is a burial of all sinful things and an acceptance of new life in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is also the recognition of Jesus Christ as your master and you as his disciple (Matthew 28:19). Water baptism is a separation from the old life of disobedience into the new life of obedience through the Spirit. Take a look at Romans and Colossians,

“Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God.” (Col. 2:12)

“Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.” (Rom. 6:3-5)

3. There is a remission of sin or a ‘release’ from sin.

*“Repent...and be baptized...for the **forgiveness of and release from your sins**.” (Acts 2:38 Amp. Version)*

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death....Our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.” (Rom. 6:4-7)

“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash you sins away.”(Acts 22:16)

“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 3:21)

We must realize that in itself, water baptism does not wash away your sins, but rather is an expression of our faith in the working of the blood of Jesus, shed for us through his death. It is the blood of Jesus that symbolizes the real purifying work and brings the forgiveness of our sins. The water used in baptism does not purify us, but is symbolic of the inward purification that has already taken place in the life of a new believer.

4. It is a public declaration of your faith

Water baptism is important because it is a public declaration to all those who bear witness to it that you are humbling yourself and identifying yourself with Christ who died, was buried and resurrected. It is a sign to others that you have made the decision to die to your sinful nature and whole-heartedly live for God. Hebrews 6:2 says that baptism is one of the foundations of the Christian faith, and as such, many denominations have embraced it as an essential part of a person’s walk with God. For a Christian, it is a time when the person being baptized gets to declare to the public that they believe in Jesus with every part of their being. Nearly every time baptism is mentioned in the New Testament, it is done in the presence of witnesses. In the local church, water baptism’s are celebrated by the church body, by close friends and by family members, as it is a sign of spiritual maturity. Although the Bible doesn’t say that others must absolutely be present when a person is baptized, it is most commonly done in a public setting and is certainly celebrated corporately. Furthermore, the public declaration allows the baptized person to be accountable to those who have witnessed his or hers decision to turn away from sin and towards a new life in God.

WHO MAY BE BAPTIZED?

1. Believers may be baptized.

Baptism is reserved for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all their heart. This is clearly shown in Acts 8:36-37, *“Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, See, here is water. ‘What hinders me from being baptized?’ Then Phillip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may’”*. It was necessary that the eunuch believed with all of his heart in order to be baptized, and the same applies to people today. Baptism is not for those who believe in the gospel half-heartedly. It is for those who sincerely desire to be obedient to God in every way. A person should never be baptized to please another person such as a pastor, a parent or a friend. God is looking for honesty and sincerity. Those who are baptized should have a genuine trust in Jesus as their Savior and Lord. They should sincerely want to die to sin and commit themselves to live devotedly for God.

2. Those who have *repented* of their sins may be baptized.

The Bible clearly shows that no one should be baptized unless they have repented of their sin. Remember Acts 2:38, Peter says, *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the forgiveness of your sins...”* Since baptism is a sign of identifying with Jesus death, burial and resurrection, it is also an acceptance of the overcoming of sin, through Christ’s blood on the cross. The word repent means to change or literally, *“To make a change for the better as a result of remorse or contrition for one’s sins.”* Therefore, before a person is baptized, they must commit not just to the confession of their sin, but must come to a place where they are truly convicted about the depth of their sin. The two verses before the command to repent and be baptized, Acts 2: 36-37, portray an audience of listeners who were moved, even stunned, by Peter’s sermon. They had just been told that they had crucified Jesus Christ. When they heard this appalling statement, the Bible records that they were, *“cut to the heart”*. The Greek word used here is ‘katanusso’, which means ‘to pierce thoroughly, agitate violently or sting to the quick’. This implies a group of people who were absolutely torn apart about what they had done. They were shocked about what they had done, and that their own actions (sins), had played a role in the crucifixion of Jesus. When they asked, *“What shall we do?”*, Peter’s answer was simply this, *“Change!”*, or repent. Therefore, repentance involves more than confession, it also involves making a turn from a life of sin, to God’s way of righteousness. You must understand whole-heartedly what the death of Christ represented so that you can honestly repent of your sin, show genuine repentance and your intention to live for Jesus.

WHEN SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

1. A person should be baptized when they have *believed and repented*.

As previously discussed, there are two conditions to being baptized. You must believe and repent. Peter said, *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins”*(Acts 2:38). You should not be baptized unless you absolutely believe in the sacrifice of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. Baptism symbolizes complete belief that Christ’s sacrifice applies to anyone who exercises this faith. Remember also, when Phillip was counseling the Ethiopian eunuch for baptism, the eunuch asked him, *“What does hinder me to be baptized?”* And Phillip said, *“If you believe with all your heart, you may”*(Acts 8:37).

Many people ask, “At what point should I go forward with baptism? When am I ready for this next step?” The New Testament has several accounts showing that we should never delay baptism once it is clear that the believer is repentant and ready. For example, 3,000 people were baptized almost immediately after hearing Peter’s sermon.

The Bible mentions no specific time limit that a person should wait before he or she is baptized. There are some denominations that insist a person demonstrate they have gained a great deal of knowledge concerning readiness for baptism, and this is true to an extent. Certainly, basic knowledge and understanding is required, but we should not be so cautious in baptizing people that we refuse to do it until a person’s character in Christ is well proven. There is no biblical evidence of waiting until a person has reached a certain level of holiness. Even Simon the magician was baptized by Phillip the evangelist and continued with Phillip for some time until Peter, to whom God gave great discernment, rebuked the foolishness of the magician, who wanted to buy the ability to impart the Holy Spirit. Although Simon had been baptized, he still needed to repent, and to humble himself more deeply. You do not have to be perfect in order to be baptized, so do not delay it. Just be sure you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, be sure that you have repented, and be sure you understand the significance of what you are doing.

2. There is no infant baptism recorded or taught in the New Testament.

As shown above, water baptism is for those who believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and for those who repent of their sin, understanding the significance of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. Mark 16:16 says, *“Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved”*. Therefore, before a person is baptized, they must believe. Nowhere in the Bible is there found any basis for the notion that you can be baptized without belief. Many people are “baptized” as babies, by immersion in the Orthodox Tradition, or by sprinkling in the Catholic, Anglican and Reformed traditions. However, there is no example in the New Testament of babies being baptized at all. A baby is not capable of believing in the gospel or even understanding it. And, a baby cannot confess or even repent of their sin. Also, babies and young children are not mature enough to understand the symbolism of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and how it is paralleled in the baptism ceremony. For that reason, it is pointless for parents to baptize babies, since babies are nowhere near capable of understanding the significance of what they are doing.

There is one passage in the New Testament, that many advocates of infant baptism believe has supportive implications and these conclusions are drawn from the story of Phillip the jailor and the fact that Phillip

was baptized with his whole family. Some people presuppose that the family included one or more small children. However, a careful examination of the passage will bring clarification. Acts 16:30-34 reads,

“He then brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.”

First of all, Paul’s instruction was, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household”*. Believing on Jesus had to precede water baptism.

Second, Paul preached to the whole household, so there must have been a foundation for faith on Jesus and all of the household must have heard the word of the Lord.

Thirdly, they were all baptized, but the passage says nothing of infants or children. Rather, in verse 34, it says, *“he had come to believe in God - he and his whole family”*. It is clear then that all believed before they were baptized. Since babies cannot believe, it is clear that there is no example of infant baptism here.

HOW SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

1. By full immersion in water.

Jesus himself was baptized by full immersion. Notice Mark 1:9-10; *“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up **out of the water...**”*

John also baptized by full immersion. Notice John 3:23; *“Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was **plenty of water**, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.”*

2. The Greek word for baptize (baptizo) means to fully immerse something.

Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament words states that the word was used among Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another. Therefore, in the Biblical sense, to baptize a person in water literally means to put that person wholly under the water.

3. Baptism by full immersion is further validated by its’ being likened to burial.

“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:3-4)

“...having been buried with him in baptism, and raised with him in your faith through the power of God...” (Colossians 3:12)

The symbolism found in being completely immersed in water has great meaning. Baptism symbolizes death, burial and a rising from a grave, which is exactly the pattern of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.

4. Sprinkling and pouring are **NOT** Biblically supported.

When searching for the meaning of anything mentioned in the Bible it is important to revert back to the original meanings of the words used. Since the New Testament is written in Greek, we must ask what the word baptize means in the original Greek. Does it mean to sprinkle? Does it mean to pour? The answer lies in the meaning of this particular Greek word used in the Bible and as already explored, and the word literally means ‘to immerse’.

The English word ‘pour’ derives from the Greek word *cheo* and “sprinkle” derives from the Greek word *rantidzo*. Therefore, it is evident that the writers of the New Testament chose the word *baptizo* because it best fit the proper symbol of baptism. Furthermore, consider this issue logically. A person cannot be immersed by the action of pouring or sprinkling. In order to remain faithful to the Biblical command and the Greek text, a person can only be immersed by being fully immersed.

In addition, notice that in the text above John chose locations that had ‘*plenty of water*’ (John 3:23). This would not have been necessary for sprinkling or pouring. Also, the example of Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch does not fit with the idea of sprinkling or pouring; ‘*The Phillip and the eunuch went down...into the water and Phillip baptized him. When they came up out of the water...*’ Again, this verse does not fit with merely using a little water to sprinkle or pour over a person’s head. The passages strictly describe amounts of water large enough for full immersion.

Furthermore, sprinkling and pouring are in no way consistent with the symbolism that baptism represents. Baptism symbolizes death, burial and a rising from a grave, which is exactly the pattern of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. Neither sprinkling nor pouring so clearly reflects this representation. Consider again Romans 6:3-5;

“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life”.

INTO WHAT NAME SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

Christians should be baptized in the name of the *Father* and of the *Son* and of the *Holy Spirit*, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to be baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit? Perhaps this explanation will serve to bring further clarification. When a policeman tells someone to, “Stop in the name of the law!” most people recognize that this means to stop “by the authority (the power, the office) of the law. In the same way, there is power and authority in God and his law. Christ specifically authorized His disciples to baptize on His behalf – in His name.

Jesus clearly instructed in the Great Commission, for baptism to be done in this manner. See Matthew 28:19. *“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**.”* However, throughout the New Testament we see that the apostles baptized many people in a variety of names:

*“Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of **Jesus Christ** for the forgiveness of your sins.”* (Acts 2:38)

*“So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of the **Lord**.”* (Acts 10:48)

*“On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the **Lord Jesus**.”* (Acts 19:5)

Although a variety of names is used in the examples above, they all have the same significance. The name shows that we are baptized in the name of Jesus, not simply in the “name of God”. The importance lies in the recognition of Jesus, or the Son, as it is with Him that we are identifying through baptism.

PREPARATION FOR ACTUAL BAPTISM

Take note of the following in order to prepare yourself for this important step.

All the candidates will be remaining in the service until dismissed to prepare for the baptism. Before the service, make sure you have placed everything you need in the preparation room or a safe place that you can access it. (You do not want to have to be running back into the gym because you forgot certain articles.)

To assist you in your preparation: You will be asked a few questions in front of the congregation, pertaining of course to your baptism. Some of the questions may be:

- How long have you been a Christian?
- How long have you attended this church?
- Why do you want to be baptized?

There are also some very important *practical* ways you can prepare for your baptism.

1. Be on time!

This is a very important Sunday and you want to make sure that you have not stressed yourself out before church running around at the last minute. Plan ahead.

2. Make Arrangements

If you have small children, make sure you have arranged for someone to care for them before, during and after the baptism.

3. Come Prepared

You will need to bring extra clothing for underneath your robe. Please make sure you bring a dark t-shirt and dark shorts, just incase the robes are see-through in any way. And don't forget extra undergarments, as you will be wearing these in the tank as well. Please do not wear your bathing suit under the robe.

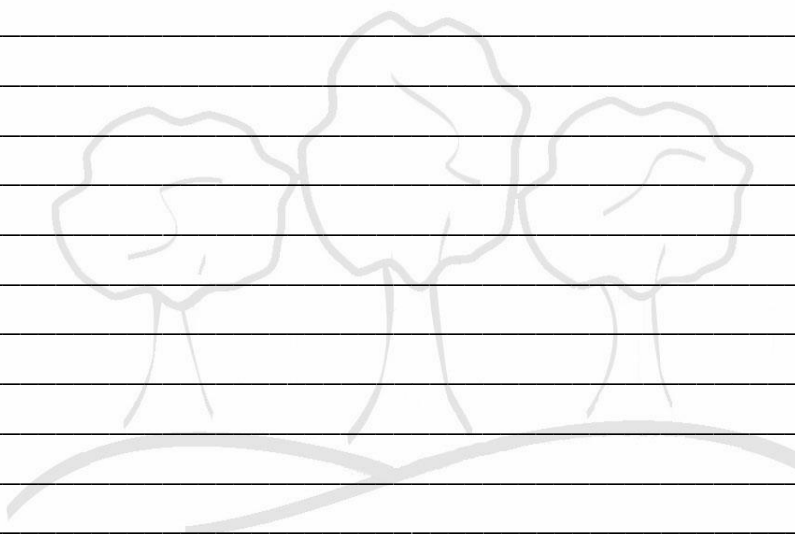
Don't forget your towel, you might want to bring a plastic bag to put all your wet clothes and towel in.

Remember, your entire head will be wet at the end of the baptism, so bring whatever you think you will need to recover from this. (hair-dryer, make up, hairbrush etc.) This is going to be a day of celebration, you do not want to complicate it.

4. Think!

Think about what your responses to the questions I will ask you. People often freeze up, get nervous, and loose their words in front of others. You don't want this to happen and then distract you from the importance of what you are doing. Make sure you have thought about what you will say.

NOTES



Maple Community Church Application for Baptism

(Please detach, complete and submit to the Administrative Office or to a Pastor)

Contact Information:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Date of Birth: (M)____ (D)____ (Y)____

Email: _____

Your Story:

Using the questions below as a guide, share how God has been working in your life to bring you into a relationship with Jesus and the changes He has been making in you as you trust and follow Him.

1. What and who did God use to bring you into a relationship with Jesus? How did the people or ministries of MCC impact your journey to Jesus?

2. How is your life different now that you are a Christian (change in your attitudes, lifestyle, perspective, etc.)? What are you especially thankful to God for that He has done in your life?

3. What does it mean to you to be baptized? Why is this significant for you? (Please go through the self-study guide “The Meaning of Baptism” first, and then summarize your thoughts here.)

4. Is there anything else you would like to share—perhaps a verse from the Bible that is especially meaningful to you, or someone you want to thank as you think about your journey toward Jesus

Spiritual Commitment:

1. Have you confessed and repented from your sins, received God’s forgiveness and accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord?
YES NO Decision Date (approximately) _____
2. Do you acknowledge and profess the Christian faith as taught in the Bible?
YES NO
3. Are you determined by the grace of God to live the Christian life?
YES NO

Connection @ MCC:

1. Do you understand the basics of the Christian faith? YES NO

If not, would you like someone to meet with you one-on-one to help you establish a foundation for your faith in Jesus? YES NO

2. In what other ways are you connected at MCC (attending an age-specific ministry, serving as a volunteer, etc.)?

3. Which leader/pastor are you most connected with?

If you are interested in being baptized in a Sunday Service, please sign below:

I give permission for Maple Community Church to make an audio, video or photographic record of my baptism and to show the recording of my baptism:

(a) as part of any public worship service, and

(b) in any audio, video or printed material sold or distributed by Maple Community Church.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____