

Water Baptism

In **Matthew 28:19-29**, Jesus taught his disciples to baptise new believers in water after they had come to faith.

‘Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’

If the significance of baptism could be reduced to one word it would be identification. The act of water baptism is principally a personal, public identification with Jesus Christ. It is a statement about the change that has happened to you through the most dramatic life changing event in history; the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul referred to these 3 events as *‘the things of first importance’*.

1 Corinthians 15:3

‘For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.’

Baptism doesn't save you—salvation comes by faith alone and your guilt before God is removed at the moment you trust in Christ.

Ephesians 2:8-9

‘For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast.’

How then might we view the act of water baptism?

1. It symbolises a turning from the former life of sin to a new life in Jesus Christ.
2. It symbolises publicly that we are identifying with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.
3. It symbolises openly that we are now a member of Jesus's church on earth.
4. The baptismal act is a physical way of publically declaring the gospel.
5. The baptismal act is a spiritual declaration of loyalty to God in the spiritual battle between good and evil.

The English word baptise is taken from the Greek word *‘baptizo’* meaning *‘to dip, to plunge, or to immerse’*. In the New Testament, baptism involved going under and rising up from the water. Going under signifies death to your old way of life and rising up out of the water signifies the beginning of a new life. In the early church, when a person was baptised they would take off their outer garment to symbolise the putting off of their old life of sin and corruption. Then they would go down into the water and be immersed in Jesus's name to symbolise that the old way of life was dead to them. When they rose up from the water they were given a new white garment to wear symbolising that they were now by faith clothed in a new nature and life given to them by Jesus. Then hands were laid on them in prayer and celebration of this new life and walk of faith.

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In the following story we see how an Ethiopian eunuch got baptised after responding to Philip's explanation of the gospel.

Acts 8:35-37

'The Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. 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 Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may."

If you are a new believer and have not been baptised in water, talk to another believer you know and trust to find out how to you can be baptised. When you are baptised, you are baptised into Jesus not into a church denomination.