

Agape Baptism 101

Why Should I be Baptized?

Biblical baptism is an outward, public declaration of an inward spiritual transformation. It symbolizes a believer's union with Jesus Christ—dying to an old way of life and being raised to a new, resurrected life in Him.

Christians are baptized to follow Jesus' example, obey His direct commandment, and publicly profess their faith. It is a powerful spiritual symbol: going under the water represents dying to one's old way of life, and rising from the water signifies being resurrected into new life in Christ.

Core theological reasons include:

- Obedience to Christ: Jesus explicitly instructed His followers to baptize new believers in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).
- The early church baptized "In Jesus' name" according to numerous passages in Acts. Understanding that Jesus uses the singular form of "name" in Matthew 28:19 and according to Colossians 1:9 and 2:9, all the fulness of the Deity dwelled in Him. So when we baptize in The Name of The Father, Son and Spirit, we baptize in Jesus' name.
- Public Declaration: It serves as an outward, visible testimony of an inward transformation, officially marking a believer as a follower of Jesus.
- Union with Christ: The Apostle Paul explains that baptism symbolizes being united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4).
- Entrance into the Community: It acts as an initiation into the global Christian church and local community of believers.

The Biblical Support of Immersion

The word "baptize" is derived from the Greek verb *baptizo*, which means to plunge, dip, or immerse. Immersion is the consistent mode of baptism shown throughout the New Testament:

- The Example of Jesus: When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, the text notes He went down "into the water" and came up "out of the water".
- The Requirement of Water: John baptized in Aenon near Salim specifically "because there was much water there".

- The Symbolism of Burial: The Apostle Paul connects baptism explicitly to being buried with Christ. In Romans 6:4, Paul explains that we are "buried therefore with him by baptism into death," and subsequently raised to "walk in the newness of life". Submersion visually illustrates this burial, and rising from the water represents the resurrection.

Who Can Baptize?

The Bible does not provide a strict list of credentials, titles, or ordinations required to baptize another person. Instead, it highlights that any faithful disciple carries the authorization of Jesus.

- Philip the Evangelist: In Acts 8:36-38, Philip (who was originally chosen to distribute food to widows, not as an apostle) explains the scriptures to the Ethiopian eunuch and baptizes him.
- Ananias: When the Apostle Paul needed to be baptized, the task was given to Ananias, who is described simply as a "disciple".
- The Great Commission: In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commanded His followers to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...". This mandate applies broadly to the body of believers.

Because the efficacy of baptism rests on the Lord's atoning work and the believer's faith, any disciple of Jesus, baptized believer who leads another person to Christ has the biblical freedom and authority to baptize them. While local church traditions may require ordained clergy to officiate for order and accountability, Scripture places the primary focus on the heart of the one being baptized, not the one doing the baptizing

Does Baptism Take Away Sin?

There is a lot of confusion when it comes to baptism - what it does, what it doesn't do. Some people think they must be baptized in order to have their sins forgiven by God. If you believe this to be true, consider these words from the Apostle Paul. "I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name...For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel -- not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power." (1 Corinthians 1:14-15, 17)

The Apostle Paul was one of the greatest evangelists to have ever walked the earth. In his own words, he said he was not sent by Jesus to baptize people, but to preach the gospel. He spent his entire life sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with others all over the known world at that time. But he only baptized a few people. If there was even a remote possibility that you needed to be baptized to get your sins forgiven, Paul would have done it. But he did not.