

A guide to
BAPTISM



What is water baptism?



It is wonderful that you want to be baptised. Water baptism is a special occasion in the life of every believer – it speaks about the amazing reality of what Christ accomplished when he died and rose again, taking the punishment for our sin (spiritual death) and giving us a brand new start (eternal life). It is for that

reason that many people describe water baptism as ‘an outward sign of an inner grace’ - i.e. that it is a visible, outward picture of what Christ has already done in our hearts.

The English word ‘baptism’ comes from the Greek word ‘baptizo,’ which literally means to dip-into, immerse or submerge. The word baptise is used a number of times in the Bible for different things:

- **Baptism of suffering** - Mark 10:38
(being immersed into a time of suffering)
- **Baptism in the Holy Spirit** - Luke 3:16
(being immersed into the power & presence of the Spirit)
- **Baptism into the Body of Christ** - 1 Corinthians 12:13
(being immersed *by* the Holy Spirit *into* the universal Church family)
- **Baptism into Christ** - Galatians 3:27
(being immersed into the very life of Jesus – i.e. our salvation)

The importance of water baptism

Some people question whether baptism is necessary. Here are a couple of reasons why baptism is important:

- **Jesus was baptised** (to fulfil all righteousness) – Matt 3:13
- **The apostles taught it as normal practice for believers** – Acts 2:38; Acts 19:1-5

What does water baptism symbolise?

Baptism is deeply symbolic. Here are the three main realities that baptism represents:

1. **Being made clean (having a bath!)**
2. **The beginning of a new life (death & resurrection!)**
3. **Putting on new clothes (the new you!)**

1. Being made clean (having a bath!)



Nobody enjoys being dirty. When we have a bath, our bodies are washed from the sweat and dirt that builds up over the course of a day. If it is a hot day, or if we have been doing a job that makes us unusually dirty, we may have more than one bath a day!

In Acts 22:16, just after Saul had become a Christian, a man called Ananias said to him:

“...what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and **wash your sins away**, calling on his name.”

In other words, when a person calls on the name of Jesus for salvation, it means that their sins are washed away – that they are made clean on the inside. Baptism is therefore an outward washing that symbolises the inward washing.

2. The beginning of a new life (death & resurrection!)

This is perhaps the most powerful picture. In Romans 6:4, the Apostle Paul says this about baptism:

‘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**.’



In other words, just as Jesus died on the cross and was buried...and then was raised to life again, baptism symbolises the *end of our old life and the beginning of our new life in Christ*. In this way, baptism identifies us closely with our Lord and is a dramatic picture of new life.

Paul tells the Christians at Corinth that everyone who is a Christian is a 'new creation...the old has gone and the new has come.' (2 Cor 5:17)

That is what baptism so powerfully symbolises. **Death and Resurrection.**

3. Putting on new clothes (the new you!)

Finally, in Galatians 3:27, Paul speaks about baptism like this: '...all of you who were baptised into Christ have **clothed yourselves with Christ.**'

Although this reference to baptism could be referring to the moment of salvation, the imagery is powerful and still very relevant to when a person is baptised in water.



Imagine being so poor that you lived wearing rags for clothes – then one day someone gives you a cheque for a million pounds! Would you still walk around in rags? Of course not! That is the picture here. Paul is saying that baptism is like taking off your filthy sin-stained rags (the life you used to live away from God) and putting on Christ. It is a picture of being made new and living as a child of the King.

'You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to **put off your old self**, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to **put on the new self**, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.' (Ephesians 4:22-24)