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Why Do We Baptize?

Acts 22:16: (KJV) *And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

Baptism - it is one of the central themes of Christianity and is held as sacred by all denominations. Now, you would think that with such widespread agreement, that Christianity would be in agreement, but alas we are not! Here are the areas of concern - who should be baptized, what does baptism actually mean, when (at what age) should baptism take place, why should we be baptized and how - how is baptism properly administered? So, let's see what baptism is all about!

Does baptism change you, or is it a symbol of what changes within you? How many kinds of baptisms are discussed in the New Testament? **One kind of baptism discussed was that of John the Baptist. His mission was to baptize into repentance:** Mark 1:1-5: (KJV) ¹*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;* ²*As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.* ³*The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.* ⁴*John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of **repentance <3341>** for the **remission** of sins.* ⁵*And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.*

Repentance: Strongs #3341 metanoia (met-an'-oy-ah); (subjectively) compunction (for guilt, including reformation); by implication reversal (of [another's] decision):

Repentance in Mark 1:4 means "a changing of my ways." But how could John baptize for the remission of sins? Wasn't that what Jesus was for? Let's look closer. Acts 13:24: *When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of **repentance <3341>** to all the people of Israel. ...no mention of remission of sins here...Hebrews 6:1: *Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again **the foundation of repentance <3341>** from dead works, and of faith toward God,* Here repentance is a very beginning stage of reversing one's self away from sin. John's baptism was about "setting the stage." The remission of sins comes *after* the repentance stage and is accomplished through the sacrifice of Jesus. John's baptism only symbolized the repentance - Stage 1.*

Remission: Strongs #859 aphasis (af'-es-is); freedom; (figuratively) pardon

Luke 4:18: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach **deliverance <859>** to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at **liberty <859>** them that are bruised, Luke 24:47: *And that repentance and **remission <859>** of sins should be preached in his (Jesus') name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**

So, John's baptism described in Mark 1:1-5 was for the purpose of repentance in order to get ready for the coming remission of sins by Jesus. If we add a comma, it makes perfect sense: ⁴*John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of **repentance <3341>**, for the (future) **remission** of sins (which would come from Jesus later).* Acts 11:16: *Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed **baptized <907>** with water; but ye shall be **baptized <907>** with the Holy Spirit.* Here there is a baptism not only of water, but also of the Holy Spirit, referring to Pentecost.



Observations: John's baptism was only linked to repentance - never anything more - to get ready for the coming remission of sins. John only baptized the Jews, God's chosen people who had drifted away and were coming back. John refocused the people on Jesus. Step 1: You have to get your heart right so that Step 2: Jesus can change your life. Jesus' baptism was linked to repentance, *forgiveness* and the Holy Spirit. Jesus' baptism *replaced* John's - it covered the repentance and added much more. John's baptism was a temporary baptism to get the hearts of the Jewish nation ready for the coming of Jesus who would come six months after.

How many times was Jesus baptized? We know that he was baptized at Jordan: Matthew 3:13-17: This was not for repentance or the remission of sins, as Jesus was not sinful. This was the beginning of something new... **Much later in his ministry, Jesus speaks of yet another baptism:** Luke 12:50: So, was one baptism "real" and the other "symbolism" or do they both symbolize something?



Israel saved by baptism from Egypt, *Why Baptism?* www.YouTube.com

- *God sends Moses to leave. He put his hands outstretched over the waters of the Red Sea and the waters literally part as the people of Israel walk through on dry ground. Now Pharaoh's armies think they can get to them, so they pursue them, except as they enter the Red Sea, the waters come back and swallow all of them up. All of a sudden you are Israel and have been saved twice already. You are standing on dry ground. You come up out of the water.*

This was an illustration or symbol of baptism. The Israelites were saved by this act. Also please see this confirmed by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2. **Jesus not only had this path before him, he also placed it before his followers:** Mark 10:35-39: So, here it was near the very end of Jesus' ministry and two of his closest followers ask him for position. He emphatically warns them that position comes with a price, and they would have yet to be baptized with "his" baptism. What was the price? **Let's look at the preceding verses:** Mark 10:32-34: Let's go back for a moment. We have the disciples who follow Jesus and see that wherever he goes he heals people, he preaches the good news of the kingdom of heaven, he always gives answers to the challenges from the scribes and Pharisees, he always gives praise to the Heavenly Father, and he puts things in a perspective that no one has ever heard. He is like a magnet, drawing people to him. This sounds like a great deal to be with this man who not only heals the sick, can provide food when necessary, and has the most profound truths! He can even calm the stormy seas!

But here Jesus prophesies that he is going to die in a horrible way. This was the baptism he was to be baptized with. So when in the next verses, James and John ask to be elevated with him, he knows that they did not understand what they were asking. Could they go through the experience of sacrifice and death? That is what his baptism truly was. **This is the true baptism of Jesus!** Romans 8:17: It takes a life of sacrifice in order to become an heir and be glorified with him. Some denominations see baptism as an initiation into a membership of their church. But does that have anything to do with suffering? No. But Jesus here talks about the truest baptism being focused on suffering and even death. Some denominations believe it is to cancel out original sin, and therefore every baby born is born in sin and needs baptism to have a road to heaven paved. But is that what this baptism is talking about? Are we left to our own denominational understandings or can we find the answers in the Scriptures?



Baptism frees, Sacraments 101 Baptism, *bustedhalo.com*

- *(Catholic perspective) Not only is baptism an initiation into the faith community; it also frees us from (original) sin. See, all of us are born with what we call the "stain of original sin," and baptism cleanses us from that stain, sort of like a Windex for the soul. So it isn't just kind of a big deal, it is a very big deal. Because all of us, no matter our age, are in need of salvation. God offers us this completely free gift in the grace of baptism. Children also have need of the new birth in baptism, to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all people are called.*

We believe baptism to be a symbol of a life-changing dedication to Christ: 2 Corinthians 5:17-19 1 Peter 3:18-21: Baptism isn't a physical cleansing here, but it shows an appeal to God for a good conscience, using the illustration of Noah in the ark, surrounded by water. **Symbol:** Put to death in the flesh then made alive in the Spirit; picture of being immersed in the water then being raised up to life. **Symbol:** Our baptism is an appeal to God for a good conscience.

Here are some manifestations of the internal change that baptism represents: Ephesians 4:1-6: (NASB) ¹Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to *walk in a manner worthy of the calling* with which you have been called, ²*with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love*, ³*being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. ⁴*There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling*; ⁵*one Lord, one faith, one baptism*, ⁶*one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all*.

Here we have they symbol of baptism coming to life: Romans 12:1-2: (NASB) ¹Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, (We present ourselves into the hands of our baptizer - trusting him with our very lives) acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (We are only acceptable through Christ and his ransom price paying for our sins, shown as we lay down our lives in the immersion process) ²*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the*

renewing of your mind, (Not conformed, but transformed or metamorphosed. Our minds are renovated by the begetting of the Holy Spirit, shown in being pulled up out of the water cleansed) so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. This is so we can live differently than before! There is magnificent dedication required in order to be a true footsteps follower of Jesus. Water baptism is a symbol of living a “baptized life” - a life focused on and dedicated to the following of Jesus, the service of God through Christ, and putting aside our own will and way of thinking. We take on the thinking of Christ so that we can be transformed individuals, lowered down into the water and brought back up.

 **Circumcision Old Testament, Baptism New Testament, vaticancatholic.com**

- *Infants were circumcised in the Old Testament. If baptism is the new circumcision, it follows that infants are to be baptized in the New Testament. If not, then God would have been more generous, more universal, more inclusive in the inferior Old Covenant than He is in the New, but this is not the case. The salvation which is made available through Jesus is open to all people, Jews and Gentiles. It is unthinkable that Jesus would not establish a means to incorporate children into his spiritual kingdom and to give them his blessings and salvation.*


It is said that circumcision was to the Jews as baptism is to the Christian. If true, this would be significant as this interpretation would lend itself towards infant baptism. **Remember this pre-dates Judaism. Circumcision was indeed an important act to being identified as one of God’s chosen people: Genesis 17:1-14: (NRSV)** (selected verses) Abram’s name changed, he was given the promise of being a blessing nation, and was given the promise of land. Not only are big things happening, but the rite of circumcision is established. It was a very significant inclusion. Without circumcision, you were not one of God’s chosen people.



Observations about circumcision: Circumcision was a symbol. It was a physical transformation, all inclusive, and given in the context of a name change and a land inheritance.

In the context of Christian baptism, it is a symbol of *spiritual* transformation. It is inclusive of all the called-out ones who have decided to take the name of Christ and live a Christ-like life. It is not just that you live, but that you decide to live in Christ. There are parallels between circumcision and baptism, but where the Old Testament focused on children, the New Testament proclamations regarding infants and children are actually all referring to adults.

1 Peter 2:1-2: Newborn Christians must be babies! We need to learn the fundamentals before learning the deeper things. There is way more to this than just saying, “I love Jesus and I want to be saved.” Jesus himself said, *are you able to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?* We propose that only an adult capable of making the conscious decision could decide to put their will aside and take on the will of Christ. Even though you make that mature decision, you start out as a figurative baby. **Hebrews 5:12-14:** We are required to grow up! **Ephesians 4:11-15: (NASB)** We see Christian baptism as being a circumcision of the heart. When you decide to follow Christ as an adult, you are actually just a baby in Christ. You “grow up” and sacrifice your life’s desires for God’s will.

 **Old enough to profess faith, [Mars Hill](#)**

- *But we will baptize children who are old enough to have a profession of faith. And we set this up with their parents...you are first pastors; you’re raising your kids. If they love Jesus and want to get baptized, I don’t want you to push your kids to make a profession. I don’t want you to push them to communion. I don’t want you to push them to baptism, but if and when they’re ready and their hearts open up to Jesus, we are glad to baptize them. It was really great seeing at Easter when by the grace of God, we baptized 724 people. Some of them were children and mothers and fathers were assisting with the baptism. That’s what we believe!*

So far we have reviewed three basic schools of thought on baptism of children:

1. You should be baptized as an infant in order to have original sin canceled out in your life so you can be welcome into the church;
2. If you are old enough to profess faith, you are old enough to be baptized; and
3. It is a baptism that symbolizes sacrifice. You need to be old enough to make the conscious decision to live a life of sacrifice in Jesus’ footsteps.

Acts 10:1-8: Peter and company arrive at his home...Acts 10:30-33: Peter preaching to the first Gentile convert, Cornelius: Acts 10:44-48: There is no place in Scripture where individual

children were baptized, but there is the phrase *he and his household*. This was the case with Cornelius. The argument presumes that children are in a household, so therefore they were baptized. But here those in the household spoke in tongues, were given the Holy Spirit and exalted God. There is no example of any small child doing any of these things or receiving such gifts. Let’s look at other “households.” (Please see CQ Rewind Bonus Material for more.)

Stephanas’ household: 1 Corinthians 1:14-17 So does household here mean small children?

Let’s read further in the book: 1 Corinthians 16:13-16: Notice that the *household* who had been baptized in 1 Corinthians 1 was devoted for the ministry of the saints. In 1 Corinthians 16:16 they are spoken of as *strong men*. All were about the ministry of the Gospel.

One more interesting point on this...do you remember when Jesus fed the multitudes? He first fed the 5,000 and then later fed the 4,000. Matthew 14:21 Matthew 15:38 There were many more fed, but these miracles focused on the count of the men. That is the way society counted in those days. To understand the teaching, we have to look at it in the context of the thinking in those days. When we see baptizing of households, it is those who are capable of making the decision of following Jesus. Being a true follower is more than just a profession of faith.

Romans 8:14-17: Is a toddler capable of suffering with Christ? We believe baptism is a symbol of great significance, a path actively chosen by the person baptized. It shows they are willing to walk after Jesus and live a sacrificial life unto death.

(See CQ Rewind Bonus Material for a more exhaustive word study.)

Baptize: Strongs #907 baptizo (bap-tid'-zo); to immerse, submerge; to make overwhelmed (i.e. fully wet); used only (in the New Testament) of ceremonial ablution, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian baptism: KJV-- Baptist, baptize, wash.

Matthew 3:6: For the Pharisees to properly wash, they had to submerge their hands up to their elbows in water. That was part of the Law. It definitely showed submersion.

The root word for Strongs #907 is *never* used for baptism in New Testament:

Baptize: Strongs #911 bapto (bap'-to); a primary verb; to overwhelm, i.e. cover wholly with a fluid; in the New Testament only in a qualified or specially, sense, i.e. (literally) to moisten (a part of one's person), or (by implication) to stain (as with dye).

A couple of uses: Luke 16:24: Even the concept here is not to sprinkle but to submerge.

Here is a commentary that confirms that the actual Greek word *does* mean to immerse:

(Source: Bible Study Magazine, James Montgomery Boice, May 1989) Not to be confused with 911, bapto. The clearest example that shows the meaning of baptizo is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be 'dipped' (bapto) into boiling water and then 'baptized' (baptizo) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptizing the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to our union and identification with Christ than to our water baptism. e.g. #Mark 16:16. 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.' Christ is saying that mere intellectual assent is not enough. There must be a union with him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle!

BE THE PICKLE! True baptism symbolizes the fact that you have changed from a cucumber to a pickle! It is a literal change at how we look at our lives. We no longer live for ourselves, we live for Christ. We have changed direction! The faithful are those who are willing to walk the walk of Jesus, to deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow him. For everyone else, there is the grace and mercy of Jesus’ ransom, which is a story for a different Sunday. What about those who do not take this step of baptism?

Genesis 22:18: But who is Abraham’s seed that blesses all these nations? Galatians 3:16: Jesus is the spoken seed of Abraham in the promise. God gives the promise that all the families of the earth will be blessed through Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:27-29: Here is the answer! If you have been baptized into Christ - into his death and not just as a profession of faith - you have clothed yourself with Christ, living a new life you go down to death (of this worldly life) and arise anew. You are different than you used to be, following a different pattern for every thought and action in your life. Be the pickle!

*So, why do we baptize?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!*