



FIRST STEPS

STUDIES TO BEGIN YOUR WALK WITH CHRIST
By Marlon Furtado

“Baptism Is Important”

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IS BAPTISM IMPORTANT?

After Jesus was resurrected, He spent over a month with His followers, telling them more about God. Just before He returned to heaven, He gave these final instructions in **Matthew 28:19-20**: *“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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Jesus said that one of the first steps in making disciples is for them to be baptized. Why? Because it is always a *public* declaration of your faith in Jesus.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

Some people put undo importance on baptism. They teach that in addition to personal faith in Jesus Christ, you **MUST** be baptized in water in order to be born again. But listen to this last conversation Jesus had with a thief who was hanging on a cross near Him. The man said, *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”* Jesus answered him, *“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”* (**Luke 23:42-43**). This condemned man had no way of being baptized, but he believed that Jesus was the long-awaited King, or Messiah. Jesus indicated that was sufficient and promised that that very day they would be together in paradise, or heaven. Though this man never had the opportunity to be baptized, most of us do.

THE PATTERN OF BAPTISM

You see the pattern in the book of Acts that baptism always followed salvation. It always was performed after a person placed faith in Jesus.

Here are a few examples:

Acts 2:41

“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”

Acts 8:12

“But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”

Acts 10:47-48

“‘Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.’ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.”

Acts 16:14-15

“One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. ‘If you consider me a believer in the Lord,’ she said, ‘come and stay at my house.’ And she persuaded us.”

Acts 16:30-33

“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 REASON WE IMMERSE PEOPLE UNDER THE WATER

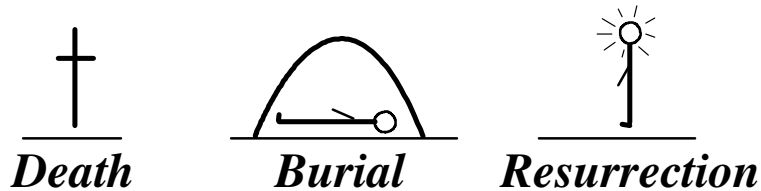
The original authors of the New Testament wrote in Greek. The word they used to describe baptism was βαπτίζω, pronounced *baptizo*. This Greek word means "to immerse" and was used to describe the process of dipping clothes in water to wash them or in a dye to color them.

THE SYMBOLISM OF BAPTISM

Baptism is important because it is a step of obedience to Jesus. It is also a public statement that you have placed your faith in Jesus. But it carries important symbolism as well.

- **It retells the story of Jesus**

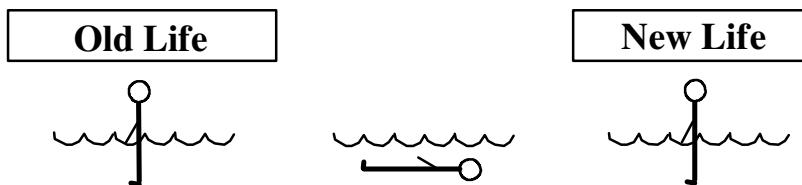
As you go under the surface of the water, it illustrates that Jesus died and was buried. And when you stand back up, it declares to them that Jesus was resurrected and that He is alive today. Your baptism tells people that Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection is the only means of salvation. This is why you'll want to invite your lost friends and family to come to your baptism.



1 Corinthians 15:3-5 *"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve."*

- **It pictures your new life as a Christian**

Baptism pictures that you have died to your old way of living and that you have an entirely new life in Christ. It is a public testimony that you intend to follow Jesus and live the rest of your life for Him.



Romans 6:4 *"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."*

Ephesians 4:22-24 *"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."*

- **It pictures the work of the Holy Spirit at the moment you were saved**

The Spirit of God takes every new believer and immerses him or her into Christ. It is a picture of the total security we have in our relationship with Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:13 *"For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body."*

WHAT IF YOU WERE BAPTIZED WHEN YOU WERE A BABY?

Baptism is commanded of all Jesus' followers **after** they have personally placed their faith and trust in Christ. If you were baptized as an infant, it was before you made your own decision to invite Christ into your life. In that case, you should be baptized again, this time as a follower of Jesus.

SUMMARY

We are born again, saved, justified, and sealed the moment we place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

A wedding ring is not necessary in order to get married. But when you are able to have one, it serves as a beautiful symbol of your commitment to be a faithful and loving spouse.

In a similar way, baptism is not a required activity to be saved. But it is a wonderful symbol through which you express to others your love for Jesus.

PREPARING FOR YOUR BAPTISM

We have a person read their personal testimony of salvation before we baptize them. Here are some questions to help you organize your thoughts. As soon as it is ready, you can reserve a time with your local church for baptism. Remember, it doesn't have to be long, only 60-90 seconds.

Part 1: Life Before Receiving Christ

How would you describe your life before coming to know Christ? What kind of religious background, if any, did you have?

Part 2: Receiving Christ

How did you hear the Gospel and recognize your need for Christ? When did you invite Him into your life?

Part 3: Life Since Receiving Christ

How has Jesus impacted your life since you received Him?