

Baptism

Mode: Baptism is transliterated from the Greek word βαπτίζω. It means to immerse, especially underwater. It sometimes refers to washing clothes or bathing. In 2 Kings 5:14 the Septuagint translates the word dipped as immersed. Naaman went down into the water seven times and when he came up he was healed.

Purpose: Historically it was a public demonstration of allegiance to a teaching or teacher. Romans 6:3-6 shows that the Christian aligned with Christ and attested to belief in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Also see Colossians 2:12 and 1 Peter 3:21.

Baptism does not wash away sins, or save, or provide special grace to be saved. It is a public demonstration of what has happened in the heart of the believer. See 1 Corinthians 1:12-17, where the Apostle Paul declares that he was sent to preach, not to baptize. Note also that in John 4:1-2 Jesus did not baptize.

Timing: People were baptized after they professed faith in Jesus as the sacrificial substitute for personal sin. Acts 2:38-41 is often misread as the event that washes away sin. However, to be “baptized in the name of Jesus Christ,” means the individual has aligned with the teaching of Jesus Christ. His teaching is that He came to die for our sin. Note verse 41, the timing is received the word, then baptized.

Other examples can be seen in the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:35-39. He asked what would keep him from being baptized. Note in some translations verse 37 is missing, but the context is still clear.

The Apostle Paul in Acts 9:17-18 had seen Christ and responded to Him. Then God sent Ananias to heal him and to baptize him.

Cornelius in Acts 10:44-48 called for Peter to help him know God. Verse 47 shows they had received the Holy Spirit prior to baptism.

In each case belief came prior to baptism. It is not a requirement for salvation. Baptism is a testimony of salvation.