

Should You Be Baptized?

Rod Reynolds

Why do you exist? Do you know? Would you like to know? Is there a real God? Is there hope beyond this life? Should you be baptized?

The lives of most people are consumed with trivial, transitory pursuits which have little lasting meaning, if any worthwhile meaning at all. Few give much thought to **how** human beings came to exist in the first place (they did not evolve from apes), **why** they exist, and **what if any destiny lies beyond the grave.**

The answers to these questions have been made available on a large scale for thousands of years. Yet a relative few have been willing to open their eyes to see. Most have remained blinded by false traditions and their own lusts and indifference to the truth.

Human beings are made of the dust of the earth, and will face death at some point, as confirmed by common observation, and by Scripture. "...it is appointed for men to die once..." (Hebrews 9:27).

But the same Scripture goes on to affirm: "...but after this the judgment."

While many reject the notion, the Bible confirms that there is a God in heaven - the same God who created mankind and the Universe - who will judge all mankind. That same God, who is Eternal and is the author of life, offers salvation to those willing to accept his terms.

The salvation God offers is the only remedy available for death. God has communicated to us the means by which we may attain eternal life in a book scorned by many in today's God defying world.

What about you? Will you scorn and reject the only means by which you may be saved from death? Will you passively ignore what the Bible says about this vital matter? Or will you be willing to consider the matter deeply, and come to terms with your own helplessness and hopeless condition?

Jesus, after he was crucified and resurrected, before he ascended to

heaven to sit down at the right hand of the Father in heaven, said to his apostles, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. **He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned**" (Mark 16:15-16). What this means is that ultimately, to have salvation, one must come to believe the gospel, the message of salvation, which in its largest sense includes the entirety of God's word.

The purpose of this ministry is to help you become familiar with the true gospel message, as found in Scripture and explained in our literature and other media. As you learn what the message is, eventually you may face the question: "Should I be baptized?"

This article is intended to help you answer that question. In it is discussed baptism, its history, its meaning, and what is required for a valid baptism. This review may prove helpful to those who already have received a valid baptism, but it is especially intended to help others find the correct answer to the question, "Should I be baptized?"

Salvation Requires Faith

In the Bible God reveals his plan for mankind. Most people down through history, and even today, reject God's revelation.

But if your mind is open to receiving instruction from God's word, you may have considered the question of baptism. One of the fundamental teachings of Scripture is that God offers salvation to those who believe in him and the message of his word, that is, those who have saving faith.

The salvation that God offers is eternal life in the Kingdom of God, as sons in the Divine family of God.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be

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saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:14-18).

The apostle John wrote of Jesus: “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13).

Many incidents of people being healed miraculously by Jesus are recorded in the Scriptures. Multitudes were attracted to Jesus as word spread of these phenomena. “Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Great multitudes followed Him – from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan” (Matthew 4:24-25).

Later during his ministry, a friend named Lazarus died. When Jesus arrived at the scene Lazarus had been in a tomb for four days. Jesus said to Lazarus sister, Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die” (John 11:25-26).

Arriving at the tomb, which was in a cave, Jesus commanded the stone sealing the entrance to be removed, and, “... He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!' And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Loose him, and let him go' “ (John 11:43-44).

Later, Jesus himself was put to death by the Romans, after he had been condemned by the Sanhedrin, the ruling council among the Jews at the time. But, according to Scripture, he was resurrected after three days (Matthew 27:63; 28:5-6). Before he ascended into heaven whence he came, he was seen alive following his resurrection by those whom he had chosen to be apostles, and by more than five hundred others (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

Many millions have believed, to one extent or another, the testimony of Scripture that Jesus was resurrected. Many others refuse to believe. But salvation requires faith in the testimony of Scripture regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame'" (Romans 10:8-11).

We see then that **faith in Jesus Christ** is the key to being granted eternal life in the kingdom of God. Faith is belief. In the King James and other English translations of the New Testament the words *faith*, *believe*, or *belief* are usually translated from the Greek word, πίστις (*pistis*), or its cognates.

What Kind of Faith Is Required For Salvation?

But what kind of faith is required? Is it a mere acknowledgment that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? Or mouthing the words, "Jesus is Lord"?

Scripture makes it clear that mere lip service is not enough. A superficial acceptance of the claims of the Bible alone does not reach the standard necessary for salvation.

The faith that leads to salvation must be a deeply held belief that motivates one to yield to God's will; which includes submitting to the righteous requirements of God's commandments.

As Jesus taught among the Jews of his day, "...many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, '**If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed**. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' They answered Him, 'We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, "You will be made free"?' Jesus answered them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed'"

(John 8:30-36). The Greek word translated “commits sin” in verse 34 is in the present active participle (ποιων, *poion*), and implies sinning as a continuing habit or practice, not a single act of sin (A.T. Robertson comments on this further in *Word Pictures in the New Testament*). Abiding in God's word requires resisting sin and striving diligently to put it out of one's life.

A saving belief in Jesus is one that manifests itself in keeping his word, no longer living as a slave to sin. A genuine belief in Christ, the kind of faith required for salvation, is accompanied by repentance. Repentance, in Biblical terms, means to **quit sinning**, and instead **begin obeying God's commandments**.

If you really deeply believe that Jesus Christ is God, that he is Lord, you will want to obey him, which means obeying his laws, his commandments, his word. That means you must forsake beliefs, traditions, modes of behavior that are not consistent with his word, that violate his commandments. Thus Paul spoke in Romans 16:26 of “obedience to the faith.”

Repentance Required

Repenting of sin, forsaking sin, being motivated by godly faith, is necessary to salvation, and is a prerequisite for baptism.

Sin is defined in the Bible as the transgression of God's commandments. “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4; KJV).

The most common term for repentance in the Old Testament is *shob*. It means essentially to turn, or return, in other words, to turn from sin, to obedience to God. “Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit” (Ezekiel 18:30-31). This is the essence of what genuine repentance is.

Real repentance is not just being sorry for what you have done, but, with God's help changing how you think and how you behave. It is a conversion of heart and mind from one of ignoring or rejecting God's

laws, and God, to truly seeking God. One must repent not only of what he has done, but what he (or she) is. It involves a lasting change in what you are, and how you think, and how you live your life. With genuine repentance you must begin overcoming the fleshly nature driven by lusts, with God's help.

John the Baptist, who was sent to prepare the way for Jesus Christ, the Messiah, "...came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4).

When John saw religious leaders coming to him for baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore **bear fruits worthy of repentance**, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore **every tree which does not bear good fruit** is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:7-10).

Peter said to a crowd he was preaching to on the Feast of Pentecost, "**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Jesus' commission to the apostles, and by extension to the Church of God, is: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Baptism goes hand-in-hand with believing God's word, having faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, along with repentance and observing God's commandments.

A Sham Baptism

A baptism which does not include these elements is worthless and is a sham. This is illustrated in the case of a man named Simon Magus. He

was baptized, but his behavior afterward demonstrated that he had not actually repented of sin, showing baptism itself apart from repentance does not guarantee salvation.

“But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, 'This man is the great power of God.' And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done” (Acts 8:9-13).

But when Simon sought to buy an office in the ministry with money the apostle Peter said: "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity" (Acts 8:20-23).

Simon Magus had come to a certain level of belief, and he was baptized, but he had not surrendered to God. Genuine saving faith and repentance were missing, thus his baptism was useless for the purpose of salvation.

Paul wrote, as did other writers in the New Testament such as Peter and Jude, about “false brethren” among the faithful, people who were not really converted, though they may have been baptized (2 Corinthians 11:26; Galatians 2:4).

Is Baptism Necessary for Salvation?

This brings us to the question, is baptism necessary for salvation?

We've already read the Scripture where Jesus commanded his apostles: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every

creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16).

Baptism, if done properly, is the outward manifestation of your faith, your commitment to Christ, your willingness to submit to him as Lord and Savior. If you attest that you have faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but you refuse baptism, what does that say about the genuineness of your faith?

Jesus himself, as he began his ministry, was baptized by John the Baptist: "Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:13-17).

Note that John said he had a need to be baptized by Jesus Christ. Jesus said it was fitting "to fulfill all righteousness" by being baptized, even though Jesus was the Messiah and had no sin.

If John said he needed to be baptized, and Jesus submitted to baptism to "fulfill all righteousness," how much more is it necessary that anyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior submit to baptism?

When Jesus struck down Paul, and revealed to him that he had chosen him for a very special mission, he told him to go to Damascus, where he would be told what to do. God sent a man named Ananias to deliver a message to Paul, whose name was Saul at the time:

"The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins,

calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:14-16).

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

The phrase “born of water” is almost certainly a reference to baptism.

Peter wrote: “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom [properly: which] also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved **through water**. There is also an **antitype which now saves us - baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ**, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him” (1 Peter 3:18-22).

While baptism by water alone does not save us, it is one of the requirements set forth as among God's terms for salvation. Since the time Jesus Christ instituted baptism as an ordinance pertaining to faith in him for salvation, it is necessary for anyone who desires to be saved to be baptized, in accordance with the command of God's word.

Now some will no doubt raise the objection, what if one is physically unable to be baptized by immersion in water, though he might have faith and desire to be baptized? If that applies to you, God knows your heart, and he will judge accordingly. But such a circumstance would be highly exceptional, and would affect very few people.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

John the Baptist said of Jesus Christ: "I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8). Men have the authority to baptize with water, but only God can baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Both baptisms are necessary to enter God's Kingdom.

Jesus, after his resurrection, gave instructions to his disciples, "And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'" (Acts 1:4-5).

On the Feast of Pentecost following, the Holy Spirit was manifested in a spectacular way as it was poured out on the disciples of Christ.

Peter explained, "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

Peter told the crowd he was preaching to: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Usually, but not always, the receiving of the Holy Spirit follows water baptism, and the laying on of hands. Philip (a deacon who became an evangelist) had gone to Samaria preaching the gospel. "But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized" (Acts 8:12).

Afterward, "Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He [properly: it] had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:14-17).

Here we see that the Holy Spirit was given only after baptism and the "laying on of hands" with prayer.

In some unusual cases, the Holy Spirit is given before a person is baptized by immersion in water. Peter, preaching to a group of Gentiles, said: "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.' While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, 'Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days'" (Acts 10:42-48).

Later, in recounting this episode, Peter said, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:15-17).

In this case, the Holy Spirit was given to a group of Gentile believers prior to water baptism, to teach Peter and the New Testament Church that God is no respecter of persons, and anyone willing to believe and obey God can be a part of his Church and his family.

What Does Baptism Symbolize?

The practice of baptizing and associating baptism with cleansing from sin did not originate during New Testament times. In the ceremonial laws given to ancient Israel in connection with temple services, ritual washings were prescribed as part of the cleansing process when someone had become ceremonially defiled.

The understanding and practice of the Jews concerning the ritual bathing prescribed under the law was that it required complete

immersion in a *mikvah*, which is a body of water of enough volume in which a person could be completely immersed.

During the period of the second temple, the Greek word *baptmos* was used to refer to the required ritual washings among Hellenistic Jews ("History of Baptism," *Wikipedia.com*). The Greek word βαπτίζω (*baptizo*), translated baptize, means to immerse. It's from the Greek word βάπτω (*bapto*), which also means to immerse.

In and around Jerusalem there were many large pools in which people could immerse themselves to fulfill the required ritual washings. John the Baptist often baptized people in the Jordan river.

"Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:5). And we read also, "Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, **because there was much water there**. And they came and were baptized" (John 3:23).

Gentiles converting to the Jewish religion were required by Pharisaic tradition to do several things: Offer sacrifice, undergo circumcision, be "baptized," that is, be immersed in a ritual bath, forsake idolatrous practices, and begin obeying the commandments.

All of these requirements, **in altered application**, apply to anyone converting to genuine Christianity.

The **blood of Christ** has been offered as the **preeminent sacrifice** once for all to pay for our sins. "But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the

first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Hebrews 9:11-15).

We also, must offer ourselves as “living sacrifices,” and undergo the **circumcision of the heart** which accompanies repentance and receiving of the Holy Spirit : “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a **living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1-2).

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and **circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit**, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God. (Romans 2:28-29).

Baptism is an outward symbol of the inward cleansing and purification which accompanies repentance: “Since you have **purified your souls** in **obeying the truth** through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a **pure heart**, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Peter 1:22-23).

The baptism of the convert in Jewish practice was likened to entering into a new life, to being born anew, and becoming as pure as a newborn child (“Baptism,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*).

“Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, **unless you are converted and become as little children**, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven'" (Matthew 18:2-3).

The Greek word for “child” here is παιδίον (*paidion*), which properly means an infant. Christian baptism symbolizes a forsaking of sin, being cleansed of sin through the blood of Christ, and entering into a newness of life.

Baptism for the proselyte in Jewish tradition also symbolized being

cleansed from the defilement of idolatry (“Baptism,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*), from which converts were to separate themselves. The ancient Israelites, when God led them out of Egypt, “were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Corinthians 10:2).

The requirements of baptism and separating one's self from idolatry and other sins applies as well to Christians. In Acts 15 the Church recognized that new converts were not required to be physically circumcised, but they were required to separate themselves from unclean practices associated with idolatry. “Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:19-20).

Peter wrote: “Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has **ceased from sin**, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles – when we walked in **lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries**” (1 Peter 4:1-3).

Baptism pictures us symbolically sharing in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It represents a metaphor of those experiences, and at the same time, points to the fulfillment of the promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of God through the resurrection of the dead in Christ.

Note how the ideas of circumcision of the heart, forsaking sin, and entering into the newness of life in Christ are combined in the following: “For in Him [Jesus Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. In Him you were also **circumcised** with the circumcision made without hands, by **putting off the body of the sins** of the flesh, by the **circumcision** of Christ, **buried with Him in baptism**, in which you also were **raised** with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has **made**

alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses” (Colossians 2:9-13).

Paul explains the symbolism of baptism: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:1-5).

He goes on to admonish us, after having been baptized, to continue to strive against the fleshly lusts, and put sin out of our lives: “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Romans 6:5-13).

Paul's letter to Titus also expresses the ideas of forsaking sin, receiving forgiveness of sin, being purified and cleansed, entering into a new life through baptism and receiving of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of eternal life: “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, **through the washing of regeneration and**

renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom [which] He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the **hope of eternal life**” (Titus 3:3-6).

Being baptized in the Biblical sense does not mean being baptized into a sectarian organization of men. But it does mean being baptized into Christ.

Through baptism we become children of God, and we enter into an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, as disciples, students and imitators of Christ. Christ lives in us through his Spirit. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27).

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

You are also baptized into the body of Christ, which is his Church. The true Church of God is a spiritual body, and is not identical with any sect or organization of men. “For by one Spirit we were all **baptized into one body** – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to **drink into one Spirit**. For in fact the body is not one member but many” (1 Corinthians 12:13-14).

All who have been given the Holy Spirit and retain it are a part of the body of Christ.

As implied in many of the Scriptures we've covered, baptism implies a profound and permanent change in how you think and how you live. Once entering onto the path of salvation, God requires you to continue faithfully, living a life of overcoming through the word and Spirit of God. Baptism is not for infants, nor for those lacking the maturity of mind necessary to make the kind of lifelong commitment baptism implies.

Overcoming sin is a lifelong process, a spiritual battle that involves

striving against our own sinful fleshly nature on a daily basis. When a person who is converted sins through the weakness of the flesh, he must repent before God, and strive all the more with God's help to overcome. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).

The apostle John wrote: "... if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:7-10).

"He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

God promises: "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son" (Revelation 21:7).

If you are prepared to believe the true message of the gospel, commit your life to God, forsake your sins and receive the gift of eternal life through the Spirit of God, you need to be baptized.

If you would like more information or counseling concerning baptism, you may contact us by writing to the Messenger Church of God, PO Box 542, Peculiar, MO 64078. Or you can contact us by e-mail: contact@cogmessenger.org.

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Should You Be Baptized?

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Messenger Church of God
PO Box 542
Peculiar, MO 64078
USA