

Six Basic Views of Water Baptism

Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox--Baptism with water is a sacrament whereby God regenerates the one baptized (baptismal regeneration). This means of grace need not be accompanied by the faith of the recipient. Recipients, including infants, are saved through baptism. Infants should be baptized.

Lutherans--Baptism with water is a sacrament whereby God regenerates the one baptized by the creative word preached (baptismal regeneration). This means of grace brings faith to the one baptized although that faith may not be exercised. Recipients, including infants, are saved through baptism. Infants should be baptized.

Churches of Christ/Christian Churches--Baptism with water is an act of obedient faith that is the occasion of one's salvation. Baptism is the instrument God uses to save those who believe and confess Christ. Infants are not to be baptized since they cannot believe and confess Christ.

Presbyterian--Baptism with water is the sign and seal of the covenant of grace in the New Covenant era, symbolizing God's promise to save all who believe. Infants of believing parents are New Covenant members that should receive the sign and be baptized into the visible church. For adults, baptism occurs after faith; for infants, baptism occurs before faith (if faith comes at all). Baptized infants who never believe are apostates who fall away from the covenant.

Anabaptist and Baptist--Baptism with water is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's prior salvation which was by God's grace through faith. Infants are not to be baptized since they cannot believe and confess Christ.

Salvation Army, The Religious Society of Friends, and hyper-dispensationalists--Baptism with water is not required of Christians.

This chart shows six basic views on baptism within Christendom. The following short study supports the Anabaptist/Baptist view.

A Short Study on Christian Baptism

- Christian baptism is about salvation by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1Pet 3:21; Col 2:12; Rom 6:3-4).
- Baptism is about sins being washed away (Acts 2:38; 22:16)
- Baptism is about oneness with Jesus and other believers (Eph 4:5; 1Cor 12:13; Gal 3:26-28; Jn 17:22).
- Baptism is about identification and participation with Jesus and his death, burial and resurrection (Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12). There is a dying to the old life of sin and a spiritual resurrection to walk in the new life of Christ (Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12). There is a putting off of the old life and the putting on of Christ (Col 2:11-12; Gal 3:27).

Jesus *spiritually* baptizes all believers by the Holy Spirit into His spiritual body which is the church (Mark 1:8; Acts 1:5; 1Cor 12:13; Eph 1:22-23). Spirit baptism occurs simultaneously to salvation and is automatically experienced by all believers when they believe (Gal 3:2; 3:26-28; Rom 8:9; 1Cor 12:3,7; Jn 7:37-39; Col 2:12; Acts 10:44-48 with Acts 11:1-14), making all believers one in Christ (1Cor 12:13; Gal 3:26-28; Rom 6:3; Jn 17:11, 22) and is not repeated thereafter. To signify this spiritual union with Christ, and the associated cleansing of sins, all believers have the privilege and responsibility to be *physically* baptized in water (Matt 28:19-20; 1Pet 3:21). The New Testament practice was to baptize people as soon as possible after they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 8:36; 9:18; 10:47; 16:30-33; 19:5). Water baptism is the answer of a good conscience toward God who commanded it (Matt 28:19-20; 1Pet 3:21; Acts 2:38).

God's gracious gift of salvation and associated blessings are received by faith. Through faith/believing, Christians are raised with Christ (Col 2:12), their hearts are purified (Acts 15:9), they have access into His grace (Rom 4:16; 5:2; Eph 2:8), they have His imputed righteousness (Rom 4:4,5,11,24; 10:10; Phil 3:9), they have life through His name (John 20:31), they have eternal life (John 3:15, 16, 36; 5:24; 6:47), Christ indwells their hearts (Eph 3:17), they have received the remission of sins (Acts 10:43), they received the Holy Spirit (John 7:39), they have been saved (Acts 16:31; Rom 10:9-10; Eph 2:8), they have been justified (Acts 13:39; Rom 3:28; 5:1; Gal 2:16), they have become His children (Jn 1:12; Gal 3:26), and have been sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption (Eph 1:13; 4:30). When sinners believe in Jesus Christ, they receive all these spiritual blessings and more.

Water baptism is a separate response which is to follow faith (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:37) and is therefore not normally the occasion of initial saving faith. A testimony of faith in Jesus Christ is the prerequisite for water baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:12, 13, 37; 10:47; 18:8; 19:4-5). Faith is a response of the mind and heart that does not require physical effort, water, or a human baptizer. Thus there is normally a time difference between initial faith and water baptism as recorded in Acts (Acts 8:13; 8:38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5). This is also evident by the fact that people exhibited faith before the New Covenant began, when water baptism was not commanded. There is no case recorded in scripture where unbelieving sinners are standing in water being baptized the exact moment they hear and initially believe the gospel.

If spiritual blessings are received by faith, and water baptism occurs some time after initial faith, then water baptism also follows some time after the spiritual blessings which were received by faith. Water baptism is therefore not what a person *must* do to *become* saved; rather it is what a person *should* do because he *is already* saved.