

# What is Baptism?

“Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God’s command and combined with God’s word.” ~ Martin Luther

**JESUS SAID, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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.” (Matthew 28:18-20)**

- ❖ Is baptism a reward or a gift?
- ❖ Does baptism prove something about you or tell you about God?
- ❖ Is it for God’s benefit or yours?
- ❖ Is it a precondition or a promise?

Baptism is a gift from God and not something you earn or deserve. It’s not a reward for saying, “I believe in Jesus.”

Baptism does not prove you deserve to be saved. It tells you about God’s character—he is a God of grace and mercy, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, who always keeps his promises.

Baptism is for your benefit not God’s, so you know *who* you are and *whose* you are. God is not like Santa Claus who’s making a list and checking it twice, gonna find out who’s been baptized or not.

Baptism is not a precondition for salvation. It is a promise that God redeems you from death and the devil and he gives you the gifts of forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and the Holy Spirit. You are an heir to the Kingdom of God.

Clearly the water does not do such great things, but the word of God which is in and with the water does. The Bible likens baptism to adoption—you become a new person and a member of a new family with all the rights and responsibilities that go with it. Boldly proclaim, “I am baptized!” Baptism makes all the difference. Trust God’s promise.



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**BAPTISM**  
**A WAY** of life



# GOD'S PROMISES

In Baptism, you are “*born again by water and the Spirit*” (John 3:3-8) and God promises to:

... make you His child, for you are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; Galatians 3:26-29; John 1:12-13);

... forgive your sin (Acts 2:38-39; 22:16);

... give you the Holy Spirit, which enables you to call upon Jesus as Lord and makes you a joint heir of the Kingdom of God with Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:11; Titus 3:5; Acts 2:38-39; Romans 8:14-17);

... make you a member of the body of Christ—the Church (Romans 6:1-10);

... grant you eternal life (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21-22; Romans 6:3-7).



Remember your baptism daily. In the morning when you wake up, make the sign of the cross and say, “In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Say the Apostle’s Creed, Lord’s Prayer, and any other prayer you choose. Then go to work joyfully! Do the same in the evening, then go to sleep and in good cheer.

~ Martin Luther

**“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”** Acts 2:38-39

## REPENT ...

Repent simply means to turn around, change direction, change your mind—turn back to God and away from sinful desires. Think about how you receive a gift. You turn (repent) toward the person giving the gift and receive it with open hands trusting the giver (believe).

In baptism, the gift is God’s promises. You can’t add to the promises or take away from them. Just like children can’t add to their parents’ love or take away from their love. You simply receive the gift of baptism, which means you trust God and the promises that God makes.

## ... AND BE BAPTIZED

Baptism is always passive. In other words, you don’t baptize yourself. Someone else does it in God’s stead. Baptism isn’t about you professing faith. It is about God making and keeping promises.

## WHY BAPTIZE?

Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:13-15) and he commanded us to baptize (Matthew 28:18-20). Circumcision was the forerunner of baptism. Adult men were circumcised beginning with Abraham as were infants 8 days old, including Jesus (Luke 2:21). Why?

Because it wasn’t about them choosing God—it was about God choosing them so God could bless the world and draw us into a relationship with him. The same is true of baptism. God chooses us. We don’t choose God (Romans 8:29-30).

## WHO CAN BE BAPTIZED?

Early Christians baptized whole households—men and women, young and old, adults and children, servants and free, Jews and gentiles, including people who were sinners, ostracized, and unclean. The Bible offers no restrictions on age, sex, or ethnicity. (Galatians 3:27-28; Acts 16:11-15,

16:31-34, 18:5-11; 1 Corinthians 1:16 plus Acts 8:36-38 and 11:15-18).

## A WAY OF LIFE ...

Baptism is a gift offered to all ... infant, child, youth, adult! Baptism is not an end—it is the beginning of living as a disciple of Jesus. Live your life trusting in the promises of God given in baptism. Return to your baptism daily in moments of joy, love, temptation, faith, doubt, fear, hope, suffering, and death, remembering *who* you are and *whose* you are. Boldly proclaim, “I am baptized!” Baptism makes all the difference!

# YOUR PROMISES

After the Apostle Peter shared the Good News of Jesus, people asked, “What shall we do?” Peter replied, “*Repent and be baptized, every one of you. The promise is for you and your children and all who are far off*” (Acts 2:38-39).

Once you have been baptized, now what?

Baptism marks the beginning of your calling to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. A disciple is a learner and apprentice seeking to be like Jesus to all people through the work of the Holy Spirit in you and through you. In response to God’s promises in baptism, you promise to:

- ❖ **live** among God’s faithful people (the church),
- ❖ **hear** the Word of God,
- ❖ **share** in the Lord’s Supper,
- ❖ **proclaim** the Good News of God in Christ Jesus through word and deed,
- ❖ **serve** all people following the example of Jesus, and
- ❖ **strive** for justice and peace.

Will you keep your promise? No, you’re only human. So repent and remember your baptism daily, trusting in the promises of God in Christ!