

“Why be Baptized?”

The Old Testament sign of God’s covenant with His chosen people was circumcision (Gen. 17:10-12). The New Testament speaks of a circumcision made without hands not limited to males (Col. 2:11). This spiritual reality is the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11) with its’ corresponding physical sign, water baptism. The English word baptism is derived from the Greek noun *baptisma*. The Greek verb *baptizo* literally means to immerse or make fully wet.

The prominence of baptism is found in all four gospel accounts, beginning with John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-20; John 1:19-28). John preached a baptism of repentance and his baptism was only in water but he prophesied of One who would come and baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matt. 3:11). Jesus was also baptized to fulfill all righteousness (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34). Jesus’ disciples also baptized although Jesus himself did not (John 3:22-4:2).

The simple answer to the question of “Why be baptized?” is that Jesus commanded it (Matt. 28:18-20). He said that if you love Me, keep my commandments (John 14:15). That the early church followed through with the Master’s command is evidenced in the Book of Acts. On the day of Pentecost about three thousand souls received the apostles’ word concerning Christ, repented of their sins and were baptized (Acts 2:38-41). This pattern of baptism following confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and repentance of sin is consistent in the scriptural record (Acts 8:12, 36, 9:18, 10:47-48, 16:15, 33, 18:8, 19:5). Believers should be baptized in obedience to the clear command of our Lord. The scriptures indicate baptism followed confession time wise with some immediacy.

In addition to being a public proclamation of faith in Christ, baptism identifies one with our Lord’s death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-8). Immersion symbolizes death to our former life. The water pictures the washing of the Spirit (1Cor. 6:11). Coming out of the water symbolizes our new life in Christ (2Cor. 5:17). The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the **gift** of the Spirit, eternal life (Acts 2:38, 11:16-17). It is not a work that we do but a **gift** to be received (Eph. 2:8-9). It occurs at the moment of conversion when we are regenerated (1Cor. 6:11). The invisible baptism of the Spirit

(Eph. 4:5) is proclaimed outwardly by water baptism as we obey His command.