

**The Doctrine of Water Baptism**

Passages: Tit 3:5; Jn 3:5; Rom 6

*Memory Verse*

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16)

<b>Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Work [Behavior]</b>
1. Understand the significance of water baptism. 2. Know the correct mode of water baptism.	God is our Savior.	1. Defend against misconceptions by rooting ourselves in God’s truth. 2. Learn to live a new life in Christ.

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. The Purposes of Water Baptism
- B. Water Baptism According to the Bible
- C. Requirements of the Baptist and Baptizand
- D. How Is John the Baptist’s Baptism Different from Water Baptism Today?
- E. Misconceptions About Water Baptism

**Life Application**

- 1. Defending the Truth
- 2. A New Life in Christ

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** After we are baptized, our sins are washed away, and we gain a new life in Christ. Through water baptism, our path to salvation is opened, and one day, we can hope to enter the kingdom of God.

## *Spiritual Teachings*

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### **Introduction**

Starting today, we'll be studying some of the basic doctrines of our church, beginning with water baptism. Baptism can be a difficult topic to discuss with other Christian believers because of the many different beliefs regarding how and why we ought to be baptized. Some Christian churches accept it as necessary for salvation, while others consider it merely a symbolic ritual. The methods also differ wildly from church to church. Some variations include sprinkling water, using bath or tap water, partial immersion, or facing upwards while baptizing. If we study the Bible closely, however, it clearly states to us how and why we ought to baptize.

### **A. The Purposes of Water Baptism**

#### **1. To have our sins washed away**

*"[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[.]"* (Tit 3:5)

The most important purpose of water baptism lies in how our sins are washed away, allowing us to receive God's precious salvation. It is a washing of regeneration and renewal, meaning that we are reborn and given a new life through water baptism. In Acts 22:16, Ananias tells Paul to "arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." From this verse, we can see the link between baptism and having our sins washed away, the main purpose of water baptism.

#### **2. To be reborn and receive a new status as a child of God**

*"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."* (Gal 3:26)

Water baptism allows us to be reborn again as a child of God. Our old selves are crucified on the cross with Jesus Christ, so that we are no longer slaves to sin. We have gained a new life in Jesus Christ. This is why we have a new status as a child of God after water baptism, and why we need to live a life that is free of sin.

#### **3. To enter His kingdom and be saved**

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

Jesus Christ told Nicodemus that he needed to be born of water and of the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God. Of Spirit, because God is Spirit, and so that we can enter His kingdom. Of water, so that we are reborn as citizens of God's kingdom and a part of the body of Christ. We are no longer under Satan's control and condemned to death! We have been saved and are now able to enter the kingdom of God.

### **B. Water Baptism According to the Bible**

#### **1. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ**

*"Then Peter said to them, '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; cf. 19:5; 8:16)

Jesus Christ has commanded us to baptize in His name, so before baptizing each individual, the

baptist must say, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 4:12 mentions how it is through His name that we are saved. There is no other name that has the power to give us eternal life.

**2. With head bowed**

*"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit." (Jn 19:30; cf. Rom 6:5; Ps 40:12)*

We are baptized in the likeness of Jesus' death. The Bible only records one thing that Jesus Christ did before He died on the cross: He bowed His head (Jn 19:30). This was a deliberate action that Jesus Christ performed right before He gave up His Spirit. Since we have been commanded to be baptized into the likeness of His death, then this means that we must bow our heads down when receiving water baptism.

**3. With full immersion**

*"So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him." (Acts 8:38; cf. Mt 3:16; Jn 3:23; Rom 6:4)*

Water baptism symbolizes the death and burial of Jesus Christ. During a burial, the whole body is buried; there is no part of the body that is left exposed. Also, the original Greek word for baptism, *baptize*, means "to immerse," or "to submerge." The Bible does not record that the disciples baptized through the sprinkling of water. They baptized using full immersion.

**4. In natural, living water, such as seas, rivers, or springs**

*"He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." (Mic 7:19)*

Living water refers to water that is found in nature, such as rivers, oceans, and lakes. Jesus Himself was baptized in the Jordan River. In John 3:23, John "was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there." Furthermore, the Bible does not record any instances of a baptism taking place in a man-made pool or water source. Therefore, when we perform water baptism today, we do so in oceans or rivers.

**C. Requirements of the Baptist and Baptizand**

**1. The baptist must have been baptized and cleansed in order to perform water baptism (Ex 29:4; Acts 22:16)**

In the Old Testament, Aaron and his sons first had to cleanse themselves before performing their priestly duties, such as offering sacrifices. And in the numerous examples of baptism in the Acts of the Apostles, the disciples were the only ones who baptized others in each instance. When God called Paul, Ananias was sent specifically to preach the gospel to and baptize him.

**2. The baptist must have received the Holy Spirit and be sent by the church to perform water baptism (Rom 10:15; Jn 20:21–23)**

The Holy Spirit must be present at the water baptism in order for it to be effective. Therefore, the baptist must have the Holy Spirit. Today, the person performing the baptism is usually a minister or elder who has been sent by the church.

**3. The baptizand must repent of their sins and believe that their sins will be washed away after water baptism (Acts 2:38)**

The person receiving baptism, known as the baptizand, has to believe that water baptism will wash away their sins. In Acts 2:38, Peter told the people that before receiving baptism, the first thing they must do is repent. This means that before we can be baptized, we must first have a repentant heart. It is also important that after baptism, we have the determination to live a holy life (Heb 6:4–8). We have been made new through the blood of Jesus Christ and should no longer continue sinning, as it would make the sacrifice of Jesus Christ vain.

#### **D. How Is John the Baptist’s Baptism Different from Water Baptism Today?**

Before Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross, John the Baptist was already baptizing people “in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3). In which case, wasn’t John’s baptism the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins?

Before we answer this question, let’s turn to Acts 19:4–5. “Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.’ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Through these verses, we know that the baptism of repentance refers to the baptism of John the Baptist. However, the Bible records that after the disciples learned that they had only been baptized in the baptism of repentance, they were baptized again in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Before Jesus Christ died on the cross, John’s baptism was effective for the remission of sins, similar to how the Israelites offered sacrifices to atone for their sins. However, after Jesus Christ died on the cross, God’s salvation plan was complete. We no longer require sacrifices or John’s baptism of repentance, but are saved through water baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. From this, we can see that there is a key difference between these two baptisms: it is the blood of Jesus Christ that saves us.

#### **E. Misconceptions About Water Baptism**

##### **1. “Water Baptism is only a symbol of our faith and isn’t necessary for salvation. We just need to believe to be saved!”**

It is important for us to remember that believing in Jesus Christ is only the first part. If we truly believe in Jesus Christ, then we will also obey His words and teachings in the Bible. It is true that by God’s grace, we are saved through our faith, but at the same time, a faith that has no deeds is dead. As a result, true faith and belief is followed by actions that demonstrate it. For example, Abraham believed in the words of God, and he demonstrated this belief by following God’s instructions to him. In the same way, water baptism is necessary for salvation because Jesus Christ commanded us to do it.

##### **2. “Babies don’t need to be baptized because they don’t know what it means to believe or to repent for their sins.”**

We were born in sin (Ps 51:5), so even babies need to receive water baptism. In the Old Testament, children were always included in God’s covenant with His people. For example, God commanded Abraham to circumcise all the males, including children, in his household as a symbol of their covenant. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ Himself called the little children to Him (Lk 18:16). Crossing the Red Sea prefigures water baptism, according to 1 Corinthians 10:1–2. Children were among the Israelites as they crossed the Red Sea and, in the same way, were able to be freed from slavery in Egypt.

Though children may be too young to make the conscious decision to receive water baptism, they are still able to receive the grace of God. There are many instances when children were

healed of their illness through the belief of their parents. Today, children need to be baptized so that they can have their sins washed away and be freed from the bondage of this world.

There are many other misconceptions that other Christians may have in regard to the mode of water baptism. Some believe that a person must be baptized with their head facing up. Others believe that water baptism can take place in a swimming pool or by the sprinkling of water. However, when we look in the Bible, we can see that the truth of water baptism is shown very clearly. Today, through studying the purpose and correct mode of water baptism, we are able to gain a deeper understanding of God’s grace and His salvation. May He continue to open our hearts and eyes to His truths and help us to be even more rooted in the doctrine of water baptism.

*Check for Understanding*

**1. What are the purposes of water baptism?**

- a. To have our sins washed away
- b. To be reborn and receive a new status as a child of God
- c. To enter His kingdom and be saved

**2. How is water baptism performed according to the Bible?**

- a. Baptize in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 19:5; 8:16)
- b. With the head of the baptizand bowed and facing downward (Rom 6:5; Jn 19:30; Ps 40:12)
- c. The baptizand is fully immersed (Mt 3:16; Jn 3:23; Acts 8:38; Rom 6:4)
- d. Water baptism is done in natural, living water, such as seas, rivers, or springs (Mic 7:19)

**3. What are the requirements of the person performing water baptism and the baptizand?**

- a. The baptist must have been baptized and cleansed in order to perform water baptism (Ex 29:4; Acts 22:16)
- b. The baptist must have received the Holy Spirit and been sent by the church to perform water baptism (Rom 10:15; Jn 20:21–23)
- c. The baptizand must repent of their sins and believe that their sins will be washed away after water baptism

**4. How is John the Baptist’s baptism different from water baptism today?**

Before Jesus Christ died on the cross, John’s baptism was effective for the remission of sins, just like how the Jews could offer sacrifices as a way to atone for their sins. However, after Jesus Christ died on the cross, the salvation plan was completed, and we are now saved through water baptism.

*Life Application*

**1. Defending the Truth**

Using the verses provided, come up with a defense against each argument. You can use additional verses as well.

<b>Argument</b>		
Jesus Christ commanded us to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19). How can you say we need to baptize “in the name of Jesus”? Shouldn’t we follow what Jesus Christ has commanded us?	Water baptism is only symbolic and not necessary for salvation.	Water baptism can be performed in a pool.
<b>Supporting Verses</b>		
Acts 2:38; Jn 16:13; Acts 4:12	Acts 22:16; Jn 3:5; Tit 3:5	Mic 7:19; Acts 8:38; Zech 13:1

<b>Possible Response</b>		
<p>When Jesus Christ said to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” He was not commanding us to use those exact words during water baptism. In the New Testament, the disciples would baptize in the name of Jesus Christ. The disciples understood that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were only titles and that the name of all three of these was Jesus Christ. There is only one name under heaven by which we are saved, and that name is Jesus Christ. His death on the cross opened the way of salvation for us, and His blood washes away our sins during water baptism.</p>	<p>Water baptism is not simply a way to show our belief in Jesus Christ; it is a way for us to be reborn and have our sins washed away. Though we are saved by God’s grace, true faith means obeying and living out God’s commandments, for faith without deeds is dead. Jesus Christ has commanded us to be baptized, and we must be baptized to enter the kingdom of heaven.</p>	<p>Water baptism must take place in natural, living water. In every biblical example, baptism was performed in natural water sources, such as rivers, seas, and oceans. During the time of the apostles, the disciples were baptized in rivers and other natural bodies of water. Jesus Christ Himself was baptized in the Jordan River. Micah 7:19 even mentions how God will cast our sins into the sea. From this, we can see that water baptism must take place where there is natural water.</p>

**2. A New Life in Christ**

Through water baptism, we have been made reborn in the Spirit and are alive in Christ. With this new change in status before God, we should live a life pleasing to Him. So how exactly can we live a new life in Christ?

**a. Be dead to sin (Rom 6:11–12)**

To have a new life in Christ means to become “dead to sin.” This means leaving our sinful habits behind us. Let’s take a moment to think about the bad habits that we can’t seem to let go of. Do we say words that we shouldn’t say? Or do we do have an unhealthy addiction to harmful media? Because we have found a new life in Christ, we have been given the freedom to no longer be bound, but we need to make the choice to leave these bad habits behind.

**b. Be an instrument of righteousness (Rom 6:13)**

Having a new life in Christ also means becoming an instrument that God can use for His good will. For example, we can serve other members at church. At home, we can help our parents with chores, and at school, we can share the gospel with our friends. There are many things that we can do to fulfill the will of God so that we can be an instrument of righteousness.

**c. Set our minds on the things above (Col 3:1–2)**

Because we have a new life in Christ, our life is not only limited to what we see before us in our daily lives. Rather, we have a higher calling and a hope of salvation in heaven. Because of this, we can also entrust our worries to our God in heaven and learn to give our burdens to Him. This means that when we face difficulties and challenges in our lives on earth, we can still experience peace knowing that God is taking care of us, and remain focused on what He wants to focus on: the spiritual, rather than the physical.

Having a new life in Christ is a blessing and a priceless gift that we have been given. It is so important that we cherish this new life that has been given to us and that we live a life that is pleasing before God and man.

### *Memory Verse*

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“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16)

### **Meaning**

Ananias said these words to Paul when God sent him to preach to Paul and call Paul to be a witness for God. We can see that before Paul could serve, he needed to have his sins washed away and gain a new status before God. This verse teaches us that water baptism washes away our sins. This is a key purpose of water baptism and one of the reasons why we need to receive water baptism.

### *Conclusion*

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Through studying the doctrine of water baptism, we are able to gain a deeper insight into the importance of water baptism. After we are baptized, our sins are washed away, and we gain a new life in Christ. Through water baptism, our path to salvation is opened, and one day, we can hope to enter the kingdom of God. This is a grace that we should not take for granted. As we continue on our spiritual journey, let us always remember the importance of water baptism and how it opens the way for us to become a child of God.

Lesson 6 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What aspect of water baptism is the memory verse evidence of?  
*It is evidence that water baptism is necessary to wash away our sins.*
2. Why must we be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ?  
*It is through His name that we are saved; there is no other name that has the power to give us eternal life.*
3. Why must the baptist have received the Holy Spirit?  
*The Holy Spirit must be present at the water baptism in order for it to be effective.*
4. What kind of life must we live after being baptized, and why?  
*We must have the determination to live a holy life (Heb 6:4–8). We have been made new through the blood of Jesus Christ and should no longer continue sinning, as it would make the sacrifice of Jesus Christ meaningless.*
5. A friend has just asked you what baptism is and why we need it. What would you say, in your own words?  
*Personal answers.*