

There is nothing special about the water.  
There's nothing magical about the act. We can go to heaven without being baptized.

But Jesus asks us to do it as a testimony of what we believe...a symbol of our relationship with Him...a demonstration that we've left a former way of life to live a new life as children of God.

Baptism was Jesus' Idea

At a special time, in a special place, Jesus made it clear that Christian baptism was to be a part of the life of His Church. The time was just before returning to heaven. The place was the Mount of Olives.

Jesus commanded His followers to share the Gospel and nurture those who believe, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

His followers were obedient. The day the Church was born Peter preached, people repented and 3,000 were baptized (Acts 2:41)!

Since then, it has happened over and over. The Word is preached, people believe and there is baptism.

Grace Brethren believe that since the very word "baptism" literally means "to dip" or "to immerse," that is what we should do. We believe that only baptism by immersion communicates precisely what Jesus meant baptism to symbolize.

Baptism is a Testimony

Baptism is a public declaration concerning your attitude toward Christ. Your baptism tells the world - or at least those who watch or hear

about it - that you love Jesus Christ and trust Him as the Lord and Savior of your life.

It is saying, "Watch me, I am being obedient to Christ in this and I want to be in all else, too."

A person can be a "secret believer" of sorts, but public baptism in the church brings him out in the open for Christ where he should be all the time.

If you have received Christ into your life by faith, trusting Him as Savior and Lord, declare it in an open and beautiful way in the waters of baptism (Acts 8:35-38).

We believe this testimony and symbolism is for all who are sure of their faith in Christ. It doesn't mean you know everything there is to know about Jesus or your new life. It simply means you are publicly declaring that you have personally received Jesus as Lord. In the Bible, baptism happened immediately or shortly after salvation (Acts 16:30-33).

Children are often baptized, but only after they know for sure Jesus is their Savior and that they are trusting Him for eternal life. There is no special age when they should be baptized, as long as they understand what it means.

Baptism is a Symbol

Many important things happen in the courts of heaven and on the books of eternity when you receive Christ into your life. Water baptism symbolizes some of them in a physical way.

**Baptism symbolizes death and life - yours!**

When you receive Christ, you start over (2 Corinthians 5:17). You die to self and are born again in Him (John 3:3). You are crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20).

Being immersed in water represents a burial for your old life (Romans 6:3-4). Coming up out of the water represents resurrection (Romans 6:4). It reminds you and tells

others that you're starting a new life.

**Baptism symbolizes a bath - a thorough cleansing.**

When you became a Christian, God washed the sins from your life and gave you a pardon (Titus 3:5-6). Jesus made that possible.

Peter mentioned that and explains that it is not the water that saves you or makes you clean (1 Peter 3:21). The water is the symbol of the clean conscience and heart God gives you when you take His grace.

Being clean feels good! And baptism is Christ's visual aid of the cleansing already accomplished in the life of a Christian.

**Baptism symbolizes the Holy Spirit's work of placing you in Christ.**

The Holy Spirit came into your life when you came to Christ - not a moment later (Romans 8:9). The Bible teaches that it is the Spirit who baptized or "immersed" us into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Baptism is a mysterious, beautiful action God sees and you understand only as you believe Him. This Spirit-life in you makes you a member of the body of Christ in the world and ties you together with Christ and all the other believers in Christ.

Just as the Holy Spirit baptizes you into the body of Christ, the pastor symbolizes that by immersing you into the body of water. And you are often then recognized as being in the body of local believers, as a member of the church (Acts 2:41).

Baptism always should follow believing in and receiving Christ. It's simply a symbol of what has already happened - the unseen work of the Spirit

bringing you into the body of Christ. That's why we don't baptize children who are too young to believe.

### **Baptism symbolizes the Trinity.**

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all involved in the miracle of salvation in your life. The mystery of the Trinity does not keep us from believing the miracle.

When Jesus sent His followers around the world with the Gospel, He told them to baptize people, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

It's one reason why we dip people into the water three times, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." It is one baptism, but three times into the water.

Baptism is thus a three-in-one act of gratitude for God's triune involvement in our salvation.

### *Baptism is For You*

Baptism is a declaration of your faith in Christ and a meaningful symbol of what He was done for you. It is a special privilege for every believer. When baptized, you are doing what Jesus did (Matthew 3:13-17) and obeying what He commanded.

You are following the example of millions of believers throughout time who have been immersed as a symbol of their faith and love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

You are saying, without embarrassment, "I am with Him. I'll tell the world."

**Baptism is for you a symbol of all that has already happened, a proclamation of your new life in Christ and a special source of joy as other Christians join you in the celebration of your confession.**

## *Biblical Teaching on Baptism*

1. Command to baptize all believers - Matthew 28:19-20
2. Command to be baptized - Acts 2:38
3. Symbolism of baptism: Burial (death) and new life (resurrection) - Romans 6:3 - 4  
A clean conscience - 1 Peter 3:21  
  
Spiritual baptism into the body of Christ - 1 Corinthians 12:13  
  
The Trinity and their work in our salvation - Matthew 28:19-20
4. Testimony of baptism:  
To show your trust in Christ - Acts 2:41  
  
To identify you with a local church - Acts 2:41
5. Qualification for baptism - Acts 8:37, 10:47; Mark 16:16
6. John the Baptist's baptism of repentance - Matthew 3:6; Luke 3:3
7. The baptism of Jesus - Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22
8. The baptism of Christians - Acts 2:41, 8:12, 38, 9:18, 10:47-48, 16:33, 19:5
9. The washing of the Spirit - John 3:5; Titus 3:5

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# What is Baptism?

