

# Coming to Christ

*A study of the Problem of Sin, Faith, Repentance,  
Confession, Baptism, Christian Living*



Lesson 4 --- Baptism

## Baptism

There is a great deal of discussion about baptism and the meaning of baptism in the religious world today. It is our goal as we discuss this subject to cut through any presuppositions that we might have to find what the Bible really says about this important subject.

In this lesson we will discuss the purpose of baptism, the mode of baptism, and who is suitable subject for baptism.

### 1. The Purpose of Baptism

To discover the purpose of baptism we wish for the Scripture to explain itself. We will look at a number of passages that explain the purpose of baptism.

1. *Read Acts 2:36-41 and answer the following questions.*

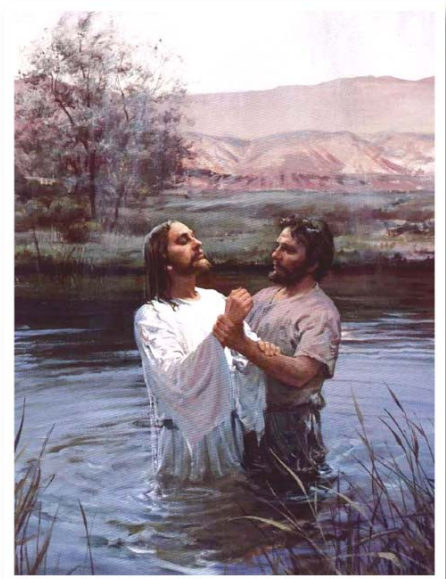
*A. What was the question the Jewish crowd asked Peter?*

*B. What two actions did Peter tell the crowd to take?*

*C. What two promises were made to those who took the steps mentioned above?*

*D. For what people were these actions and promises made valid?*

*E. According to verse 41, what other benefit came to those who took the actions outlined by Peter?*



Greek word for Baptism

Baptizo -- to immerse, plunge, submerge, or dip.

Greek word for "For"

eis -- to move toward something, signifies purpose or result.

2. *What does Colossians 2:11-14 say about the purpose of baptism?*

3. *What happens in baptism according to Acts 22:16?*

4. What does the following passages teach us about the purpose of baptism?

A. Galatians 3:27 --

B. 1 Peter 3:21 --

C. 1 Cor 12:13 --

In our previous lessons, we found that faith, repentance, and confession were conditions for salvation. We are saved by grace through faith (Eph 2:8) and that faith is evidenced by our repentance, confession of Jesus Christ as the resurrected Son of God, and our baptism into Christ.

When looking at the passages above, it seems clear that baptism brings the forgiveness of sin (or washes our sin away,) the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are made alive in Christ after having been dead in sin. At our baptism we are added to the church, the body of Christ and we put on Christ.

It is important for us to understand that for most of Christian history baptism has been understood to be one of the conditions of salvation; and in fact this did not change in any significant way for the first 1,500 years of church history, until the time of Zwingli.

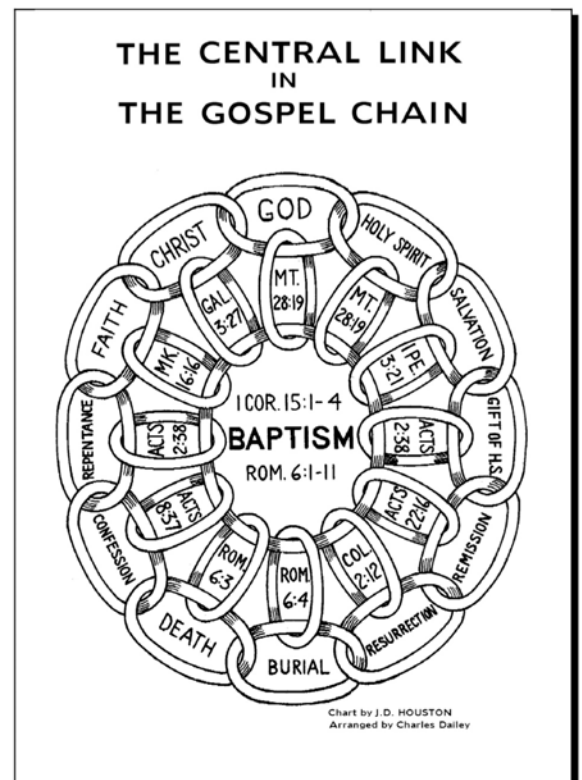
Justin Martyr said in the 2nd century: *We have learned from the apostles this reason for baptism, in order that we may obtain in water the forgiveness of sins.* (Justin Martyr, "Apology I; 183)

Martin Luther said (Sacrament 15, p. 38) *Both the forgiveness and driving out of sins are the work of baptism.* He also wrote (Large Catechism IV:41-42, pp. 441-442) *What baptism promises and brings is victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God's grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with His gifts.*

5. How would you respond to those who say that baptism is a work and we are saved by faith, not works?

## **2. The Mode of Baptism**

Religious groups have varied opinions about the *mode* of baptism, but there is good reason why we understand the mode of baptism to be immersion. First, linguistically the word means “to immerse.” The early English translators of the Bible chose not to translate the word *baptizo*, but rather to transliterate it (meaning to coin a new word from the original language.) We should note that historically the most common mode of baptism has been immersion.



We also remember that proper interpretation of any Bible passage must agree with what the first readers would have understood. The Bible does not change meaning through the centuries. The first readers would have understood baptism only as immersion.

Second, the mode of baptism is important for what it symbolises. Romans 6:4 says that “we were buried with him by baptism into death” and Colossians 2:12 agrees that we have “been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him.”

Baptism then serves as a vivid illustration of our identification with Christ. The death of Jesus was followed by his burial. Our death to sin is followed by our burial in water. Jesus did not remain in the grave, but rose again. We do not remain immersed in water, but also rise from the water to live a new life. It is at this time that we “put on Christ.”

#### Romans 6:3-4

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

#### Colossians 2:12

having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

### 3. Suitable Subjects for Baptism

Who can be or ought to be baptised is a question that is answered differently by various churches and individuals. Our desire is simply to see what the Bible says on this matter. We are especially interested in answering whether or not we should baptise infants.

- A. We have already learned that baptism is a condition of salvation. Those who have sinned are in need of salvation. Romans 7:7-11 shows that sin is transgression of the law. We know what sin is, and we commit sin, when we violate law. Infants are unaware of law and thus incapable of breaking the law. They are innocent of sin. Jesus says in Matthew 18:3, “*Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*”

*6. Read 2 Samuel 12:15-23. What does David say about his dead child and what does this tell us about a child's relationship to sin and salvation?*

- B. We can look through each instance of conversion in the New Testament. There are no examples of infants being baptised.
- C. Baptism is preceded by faith and repentance. For one to have faith they must be old enough to trust in God. To repent, they must be aware of their sin and desire to change their lives. (Acts 2:38, 22:16; Mark 16:16.)