

# Saying "I Do": Baptism In the Bible

What is baptism? .....	p. 2 - 6
Why should I get baptized if I'm already a Christian? .....	p. 7
How to prepare for your baptism .....	p. 7 - 8
What happens during an h2o baptism? .....	p. 8
Common questions	
Can't you just sprinkle people with water? Why immerse them? .....	p. 9 - 10
I was baptized as a baby. Should I get baptized again? .....	p. 10
Do I need to be baptized in order to be saved? .....	p. 11
What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit? .....	p. 11 - 13
What is the connection between speaking in tongues, water baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit? .....	p. 13 - 14
Why is there a difference between the way people are baptized in Acts versus in Matthew 28:19? .....	p. 14
What is the "one baptism" talked about in Ephesians 4:5? .....	p. 14
What was John's baptism all about? .....	p. 15
Why did Jesus get baptized by John? .....	p. 15 - 16
What is the connection between Old Testament circumcision and New Testament baptism? .....	p. 16 - 18
What about these other baptisms I read about in the Bible? .....	p. 18 - 20
what does it mean to be "born of water and the Spirit" in John 3:5? .....	p. 21

# Saying “I Do”: Baptism In the Bible

## What is baptism?

*Baptism (when it refers to water baptism) is a Christian ceremony commanded by Jesus where a person expresses their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and is immersed in water. It is not necessary for salvation, but is an outward picture of an inward reality, God cleansing us and giving us new life when we put our faith in Christ, and baptizing us with the Holy Spirit. It is an opportunity to honor Christ, to encourage the faith of Christians, and to help our nonChristian friends and family to understand the good news of Jesus Christ.*

## a brief background...

Many ancient Near Eastern cultures had water rituals, usually associated with purification. Some religious groups used ritual washings before their initiation rites. By Jesus’ day, the Jews were very concerned with being ritually pure according to the Law, and were often washing themselves. Some wealthy people in Jerusalem even had their own ritual immersion pools.

But there was also a special kind of washing that the Jews practiced. This was a baptism for non-Jews to convert to Judaism, to join with and become one of the people of Yahweh, the God of the Jews. The word “baptism” comes from a Greek word which means “immersion”, and this washing involved a complete immersion of the person wanting to convert. Water baptism, along with circumcision and a sincere heart, meant a person became a Jew, committing their life to keeping God’s Law. Such a person, after coming out of the water, was considered a “newborn child”, completely separated from his or her past. (See “baptism”, Dictionary of Biblical Imagery, Ryken)

## how was it practiced in the Bible?

In the Gospels (Matt. 3; Mark 1:1-11; Luke 3:1-22; Jn. 1:19-34, 3:23), we read of the Jewish prophet John baptizing people in the Jordan River. But instead of baptizing non-Jews, he was baptizing Jews. He taught that they needed to convert just as much as non-Jews! He taught that they were not right with God just because they were descendants of Abraham. They too needed to repent (ie. turn away from their sinful way of life and seek to live a life pleasing to God), confess their sins, and ask for God’s forgiveness.

After Jesus began His ministry, He also began baptizing people, although not personally. His disciples baptized the people (Jn. 3:22, 4:1-2). After

Jesus rose from the dead, but before returning to heaven, Jesus told His disciples:

*“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:18–20, NASB95)

Jesus told his disciples to make disciples of all the people of the world, both Jews and non-Jews, which involved baptizing them and teaching them, and in Acts, we see His disciples doing just that (Acts 2:41, 8:12, 8:38, 9:18, 10:48, 16:15, 16:33, 18:8, 19:5).

It is important to understand that baptism is not actually what made a person a Christian in Acts and in the rest of the New Testament. Look carefully at the stories in Acts listed above. Repentance towards God and faith in Christ made a person a Christian, confessing Jesus as Lord and calling on Him in faith to save (Acts 2:21, 2:44, 8:12, 11:17, 16:14, 16:30-31, 18:8, 19:4, 20:21, 22:16; Rom. 10:9-13). **Baptism was merely the ceremony which took place shortly after believing in Jesus, or during which a person believed in Jesus.** Acts 18:8 is a good example:

*“Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.”* (Acts 18:8, NASB95)

So what was baptism for? It is helpful to look at the few verses that actually describe examples of baptisms after Christ commissioned His disciples to baptize in Matthew 28:18-20.

- ▶ The person was immersed in water. (Acts 8:38-39, etc.)  
*“And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.”* (Acts 8:38–39, NASB95)
- ▶ The person was baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 19:1-5)  
*“Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”* (Acts 19:4–5, NASB95)

This meant they were calling on Jesus to save them, and joining themselves to Him, confessing Him as their Lord.

- ▶ The person was baptized under the authority of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:18-20)
- ▶ The person called on Jesus' name to wash away his or her sins. *“Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”* (Acts 22:16, NASB95)  
Note that baptism didn't wash away Paul's sins. Calling on Jesus' name is what did that. Baptism was just the ceremony in which Paul called on Jesus' name.
- ▶ The person appealed to God for a clean conscience. (1 Peter 3:21) *“Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,”* (1 Peter 3:21, NASB95)  
Again, note that the baptism ceremony (ie. immersion in water) is not the critical ingredient in salvation . It was the appeal to God for a good conscience based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- ▶ The person expressed faith in Christ. (Acts 19:1-5, see above)

Just like the prophet John and the other Jews of Jesus' time, the early Christians used baptism as a ceremony of conversion. But in this case, the conversion was to become a disciple of Jesus. It meant returning to God “in the name of Jesus Christ” by becoming a Christian, a disciple of Jesus, one who repents, who accepts Jesus Christ as Lord, and in faith who calls on the name of Jesus Christ to be forgiven by God.

A person who believed in Jesus with sincerity (Rom. 10:9-13) was baptized by Jesus with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Acts 2:38-39; Acts 11:15-17; Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Cor. 12:13), and thus was circumcised in the heart (Rom. 2:28-29; Col. 2:11-12), becoming one of God's people, a newborn child (Jn. 3:3-5), forgiven, washed clean and made new, joined to Him and set apart to serve Him (Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:26-27; Titus 3:5; Heb. 10:22; Rev. 7:14; Rev. 22:14).

**So the baptism we see in the New Testament after the gospels was a ceremony where, in faith, you confessed Jesus Christ as your Lord and called on the name of Jesus Christ to be saved. It was the expected form for conversion in NT times, although it was not necessary for conversion.**

what about today?

Baptism is no longer a part of the normal culture of our society, and so its significance is easily lost on us. Is there any ceremony which we commonly use today which is similar in significance, but that we can relate to? Yes there is. The baptism ceremony in Jesus' day is analogous to the wedding ceremony in our day and culture:

- ❖ Like a wedding ceremony, a baptism is a public declaration of commitment, trust and permanent joining between two people. Instead of it being between a man and a woman, it is between a person and Jesus Christ.
- ❖ In both, the participants are testifying to the work of God in their lives, honoring God and expressing their dependence on Him.
- ❖ Just as in a wedding ceremony, vows are made. In the case of baptism, they are to and from Christ (Matt. 28:20; Acts 2:38-39)
- ❖ Also, symbols are used to explain and highlight the ceremony. In baptism, immersion in water is **a picture of what happens when a person puts his or her faith in Christ:**
  - ▶ the Holy Spirit is poured out on her (Matt. 3:11; Acts 11:16; Eph. 1:13; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Cor. 12:13). She is baptized with the Holy Spirit.
  - ▶ his sins are washed away (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5; Heb. 10:22; Rev. 7:14; Rev. 22:14; John 13:5-10). As the water cleanses us of dirt, so the Spirit cleanses us of all sin through the blood of Christ.
  - ▶ she is saved from being washed away in judgment (1 Peter 3:20-21). The baptizer lifting her out of the water reminds us of Jesus' rescue.
  - ▶ he is baptized into the body of Christ, joining himself to Jesus Christ, including Jesus' death and resurrection, so that he dies to his old self and way of life, and is raised as a new creation, set free to live for Jesus (Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:3-4). The water is a picture of a tomb, and rising out of it is a picture of resurrection.
  - ▶ she is born again, a child of God, born of the Spirit (John 3:3-5; Titus 3:5). The water is a picture of a womb, and rising out of it is a picture of being born again.
  - ▶ in joining himself to Christ, he is also joining himself to all Christians everywhere for all time, which together form the body of Christ, the Church (1 Cor. 12:12-13). The person baptizing him and those witnessing the baptism represent Jesus' people who he is joining.

- ▶ she receives the promise that one day, she will be raised from the dead in a glorified new body (1 Cor. 15; John 6:40; Rom. 8:10-11). Coming up out of the water reminds us of that day.
- ❖ There is a person officiating the ceremony, authorized by a higher power to join the two people in marriage. In the case of baptism, that is the Christian baptizing the individual “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” as a representative of Jesus, who has “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18-19).
- ❖ As in a wedding ceremony, there are witnesses, who have gathered with joy to support the person getting baptized and to celebrate with them. They commit to help the person keep their vows to Christ, and help the person remember Christ’s vows to them (Acts 8:38; Acts 16:33; possibly 1 Tim. 6:12).
- ❖ Sometimes the wedding ceremony takes place after they were already married earlier in a private ceremony. The public ceremony then serves as an opportunity to publicly honor each other, to declare their love and commitment, and to include their friends and family in the celebration and support of their commitment. In the same way, baptism can take place after a person is already a Christian (ex. Acts 10-11). In fact, this is usually the case in our day, where people often repent and put their faith in Christ by themselves or with a friend praying with them.

so what’s the purpose of baptism? It is an opportunity...

- ❖ to convert and become a Christian if you are not already. However, **it is not necessary for conversion.** You can become a Christian without the ceremony of water baptism. **All that is required to become a Christian and be saved is repentance toward God and faith in Christ: confessing Jesus as Lord, and calling on Him in faith to save you.** (Acts 20:21; Rom. 10:9-13; Eph. 2:8-10) The ceremony with immersion in water is not the vital ingredient in salvation: the sincere confession of faith in Christ is. (1 Pet. 3:21)
- ❖ **if you are already a Christian, it’s an opportunity to publicly declare your repentance and faith in Christ, your commitment to Him as Lord and your reliance upon Him for your salvation, in obedience to Christ.**

so what is baptism? It is...

- ❖ **a ceremony of public repentance, commitment, supplication, faith, joining, obedience, witness and celebration.**
- ❖ **a powerful picture of salvation that stirs up in the participants and witnesses sober contemplation, thankful celebration, and faith in Christ.**

## Why should I get baptized if I'm already a Christian?

- ❖ To obey Jesus. (Matt. 28:18-20)
- ❖ To publicly honor Christ as a witness of His saving power and love, perhaps for the first time (Acts 1:8).
- ❖ To strengthen your confidence that you are saved. Remember His wonderful promise: if we confess Christ on earth, He will confess us as His own in heaven (Matt. 10:32)!
- ❖ To encourage and embolden your Christian brothers and sisters.
- ❖ To help your nonChristians friends and family see and hear the good news of Jesus Christ.
- ❖ The real question is, if you are already a Christian, why wouldn't you want to get baptized? Why wouldn't you want to publicly confess Him as your Lord and Savior? What is holding you back?

## How to prepare for your baptism...

- ❖ Let your small-group leader or someone on staff know that you want to get baptized.
- ❖ Look over the baptism vows you will be asked to make and make sure you agree with them ahead of time. If you have any questions, ask your small-group leader or a staff member. Here are the vows:
  - Do you believe that Jesus Christ is your savior, and do you trust in Him alone to save you from your sins through His death and resurrection?*
  - Do you confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and, in faith, do you desire to follow Him?*
- ❖ Choose a Christian to baptize you. Usually, people pick someone who has played an important role in helping you become a Christian or grow as a Christian.
- ❖ Write out your story of how you came to believe in Jesus and why you are getting baptized. Describe when and how you put your faith in Jesus. Focus on Jesus and what He was done for you, not just the people involved. You will be sharing this at your baptism.
  - ▶ Also mention who is baptizing you and why you asked them to baptize you.
  - ▶ It should be four minutes or less in length (1/2 page typed). Practice it a few times to make sure it is not too long, and so that you are comfortable saying it.
  - ▶ At least a week before the baptism, send it to a staff person or team leader to have them look it over to make sure it is an appropriate length and to give you feedback on the content.
  - ▶ You can read it at your baptism. You don't need to memorize it.

- ❖ Invite your friends and family. This is a great opportunity to help your nonChristian friends understand the gospel better and come a little closer to believing in Christ! It's also an easy ask: our nonChristians friends may not come to a church service or a Bible study, but they will come to special occasions like weddings, funerals, or baptisms.
- ❖ Come 30 minutes early to the baptism with the person baptizing you. Bring your testimony, a towel, what you will wear for the baptism, and clothes for after the baptism.
  - ▶ The person officiating the ceremony will give final instructions to all the people getting baptized and those baptizing them.
  - ▶ Then you will change into your bathing suit. Make sure to dress in a modest bathing suit: no speedos or bikinis please! Wear a T-shirt over your bathing suit that isn't see-through when wet.

## What happens during an h2o baptism?

1. People getting baptized come half an hour early, along with those who are baptizing them, and the person leading the ceremony.
2. Welcome.
3. Sing worship songs.
4. Short message about the meaning and purpose of baptism.
5. People getting baptized line up in the front before everyone and share their testimonies. (Remember to mention who is baptizing you and why!)
6. People getting baptized line up at the baptismal pool.
7. When it is your turn to get baptized, go into the water and stand beside the person who is baptizing you. Cross your arms over your chest.
8. You will then be asked the baptism vows. If you agree, after each question say, "I do."
9. Then the person baptizing you will put one hand behind your back, and one hand over your arms on your chest. Then he or she will say, "*[your name], because you have repented and have put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*"
10. Then he or she will lower you into the water. Bend your knees and let them lower you backwards into the water.
11. After you are completely immersed, he or she will help raise you back up out of the water till you are standing. Celebrate!
12. After everyone cheers, make your way out of the pool so the next person can be baptized.
13. After everyone has been baptized, everyone gathers together and prays for the people who just got baptized. Sometimes a closing worship song is sung.



## Common Questions...

- ❖ Can't you just sprinkle people with water? Why immerse them?

The procedure of water baptism is rarely described in the Bible, but when it is, it always involves immersion, so that is why we use immersion instead of sprinkling or pouring. For example:

*“John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized—”* (John 3:23, NASB95)

*“After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; ...”* (Matthew 3:16a, NASB95)

*“And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.”* (Acts 8:38–39, NASB95)

(See also: Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5, 9)

In addition, immersion provides a powerful picture of what happens when a person puts their faith in Christ, which sprinkling lacks. The person is joined into the body of Christ, and thus is buried with Him, and rises from the dead with Him. Also, the whole person is washed clean of sin, not just part of the person. For example:

*“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”* (Romans 6:3–4, NASB95)

*“let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”* (Hebrews 10:22, NASB95)

(See also: 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5; Rev. 7:14; Rev. 22:14; John 13:5-10)

In terms of imagery, pouring does capture an aspect of salvation which both immersion and sprinkling lack, namely the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the believer (ex. Acts 2:17-18, 33; Rom. 5:5), but since the practice of baptism seems to always have involved immersion, that is what we do as well.

In addition, the word “baptism” itself is a greek word which means “immersion”, and the practice of baptism in Jesus’ day among the Jews involved complete immersion.

- ❖ I was baptized as a baby. Should I get baptized again?

As we have seen, baptism as commanded by Jesus is a ceremony where a person declares their faith in Christ, calling on Him to save them and confessing Him as Lord. Did you do that as a baby?

Notice that all the examples we have of baptism in the Bible are of people choosing Jesus. There is never an infant being baptized without its consent or understanding. Some have referred to the use of the word “household” in some passages about baptism (Acts 11:14, Acts 16:15, 33; 1 Cor. 1:16) to imply that infants were baptized along with believers in those examples. However, notice these verses referring to those same stories (and Acts 18:8):

*“Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?”* (Acts 11:17, NASB95)

*“And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.”* (Acts 16:34, NASB95)

*“Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.”* (Acts 18:8, NASB95)

We see from these verses that when referring to a household being baptized, the Bible is talking about those who believed in Jesus, not infants.

Maybe you are concerned that you are not allowed to get baptized again? Maybe you have read Ephesians 4:5 which says there is only “one Lord, one faith, one baptism”? However, the “one baptism” this passage is referring to was not your infant baptism. This passage is saying that there is only “one Lord”, Jesus Christ, and there is only “one faith” that saves us, the faith in Him, and there is only one baptism ceremony that is valid: the one where a person confesses Jesus Christ as Lord in faith that He will save.

- ❖ Do I need to be baptized in order to be saved?

**No. All that is required to become a Christian and be saved is repentance toward God and faith in Christ: confessing Him as Lord, and calling on Him in faith to save you.** (Acts 20:21; Rom. 10:9-13; Eph. 2:8-10) The ceremony with immersion in water is not the vital ingredient in salvation: the sincere confession of faith in Christ is.

*“Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,”* (1 Peter 3:21, NASB95)

*“... if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;”* (Romans 10:9, NASB95)

*“for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.””* (Romans 10:13, NASB95)

- ❖ What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

John the Baptist taught the people that someone was coming who would do much more than help them repent by baptizing with water:

*““As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. “His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.””* (Matthew 3:11–12, NASB95)

This person would baptize people in a way that would actually change them forever. This person would baptize some people with fire, for judgment, and some with the Holy Spirit of God, for salvation. In saying this, John was making a powerful connection in the minds of his Jewish listeners, who would have recalled the many prophecies indicating that in the last days before the Day of God’s Judgment, God would pour out His Spirit on His people like water (Is. 44:3; Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28). This person was Jesus Christ.

And after His resurrection, but before returning to heaven, Jesus told His disciples that this baptism of the Holy Spirit was about to happen to them:

*“Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard*

*of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*” (Acts 1:4–5, NASB95)

This is what happened at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). After Pentecost, Peter declared that this gift of the Holy Spirit would be received when a person put their faith in Jesus Christ. Notice what he says in Acts 2:38-39, remembering that baptism was the ceremony of conversion, in which a person put their faith in Christ:

*“Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.””* (Acts 2:38–39, NASB95)

Apart from a special circumstance with the Samaritans in Acts 8, this is still the normal way in which the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs, even till today (Eph. 1:13). Notice what Peter says referring to how Cornelius and his family received the Holy Spirit:

*““And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. “And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ “Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?””* (Acts 11:15–17, NASB95)

And in Acts 19:1-5, Paul can tell that the men he encountered are not believers in Christ because they haven’t received the Holy Spirit, which is the sign of our salvation, and is received when a person believes in Christ:

*“It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said to him, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” And they said, “Into John’s baptism.” Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”* (Acts 19:1–5, NASB95)

Consider what it says in these verses:

*“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”* (Galatians 3:26–27, NASB95)

*“For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:12–13, NASB95)*

[Some say that it is the Spirit who is doing the baptizing in the above passage, not Christ. But remember the words of John, Jesus and Peter: it is Jesus who baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. In addition, in 1 Cor. 12:13, it says that we were made to drink of the Spirit, so the Spirit is analogous to the water in the context of this passage, not analogous to the baptizer.]

**So the baptism of the Holy Spirit is when a person receives the Holy Spirit upon faith in Christ. At that moment, Jesus baptizes the person with the Holy Spirit, and that person is joined to Christ, placed into His body forever.**

- ❖ What is the connection between speaking in tongues, water baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Some people teach that there is a connection between speaking in tongues, and water baptism, or that when a person receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, that person begins to speak in tongues. This is based on three passages in Acts — 2:4, 10:46 and 19:6. For example:

*“And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.” (Acts 19:6, NASB95)*

First of all, notice that in Acts 2:4, water baptism is not connected at all with the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. In Acts 10:46, water baptism occurs after believing in Jesus, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and speaking in tongues. And in Acts 19:6, water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ occurs first, which then results in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues.

Second, remember that in Acts, water baptism was the ceremony in which people put their faith in Christ. Remember also that the baptism of the Spirit occurs when a person puts their faith in Christ (apart from the special circumstance with the Samaritans in Acts 8). Therefore, if speaking in tongues happened in every instance in which a person was baptized in the Spirit when they put their faith in Christ as they were baptized in water, why isn't it mentioned at all in all of the rest of the passages in Acts where a person believes in Christ or is baptized? (See Acts 2:41, 8:12, 8:17, 8:36-39, 9:18, 16:15, 16:33)

In addition, 1 Corinthians 12 points out that not all Christians speak in tongues. In fact, speaking in tongues is only one possible manifestation of the Spirit in a person (1 Cor. 12:7). There are many possible manifestations of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:8-11), and He decides what manifestation to give a person according to the need of the church, for the common good. The body of Christ has many parts, and not each part plays the same role in the body.

*“All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?” (1 Corinthians 12:29–30, NASB95)*

- ❖ Why is there a difference between the way people are baptized in Acts versus in Matthew 28:19?

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands His disciples to baptize people “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”, but in all of Acts, people are baptized “in the name of Jesus”. We don’t read of anyone getting baptized “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”. What’s going on?

It’s still the same baptism ceremony, but from two different perspectives. Matthew 28:19 is from the perspective of the baptizer, while the accounts in Acts are from the perspective of the person being baptized.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus is authorizing His disciples to baptize people. That is part of His commission to them. First, He tells them that He has been given all authority in heaven and earth. Now, He is authorizing them, as His duly appointed representatives, to baptize people based on that authority. What is that authority? The authority of God: “the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”. When a Christian baptizes someone “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”, they are publicly declaring by what authority they are baptizing that person.

The accounts in Acts, on the other hand, are written from the perspective of the person being baptized. That person needs to confess the name of Jesus as their Lord, and call on the name of Jesus to save them. They are calling on God to forgive them and accept them based on the authority of the name of Jesus. That is what it means to be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ.” That is why Peter tells the people to “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...” (Acts 2:38)

- ❖ What is the “one baptism” talked about in Ephesians 4:5?

See the end of the answer above to the question about infant baptism.

❖ What was John's baptism all about?

In the beginning of each gospel account (Matt. 3; Mark 1:1-11; Luke 3:1-22; Jn. 1:19-34, 3:23), people were getting baptized by John to tell God they were sorry for their sins, and to declare their intention to live differently from now on, and to express their desire for God to forgive them. This baptism prepared people to receive Jesus, the One who could actually forgive their sins, and who would baptize them transformatively on the inside with the Holy Spirit, not just symbolically on the outside with water.

That is why, in Acts 19:1-7, the men that Paul encountered near Ephesus were not saved and had not yet received the Holy Spirit: they were disciples of John, not disciples of Christ. They had only been baptized with John's baptism, not with Christ's, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which occurs when a person puts their faith in Christ, which is what they did when they were water baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

*"It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 19:1-5, NASB95)*

❖ Why did Jesus get baptized by John?

Before Jesus began His public ministry, we read that He came for John to baptize Him:

*"Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."'" (Matthew 3:13-17, NASB95)*

Why did He do that? Remember that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, but Jesus had nothing to repent of. God

said that He was well-pleased with Jesus. So why get baptized? Jesus said it was fitting “to fulfill all righteousness”. In other words, it was the right thing to do.

First of all, it told everyone that Jesus agreed with John’s message. He approved of John as a prophet, and affirmed that everyone should heed John’s message. It was the right thing to do. Notice how Jesus tested the Pharisees in Matthew 21:

*“Jesus said to them, ‘I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ‘The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?’ And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’” (Matthew 21:24–25, NASB95)*

Second, it was right for Jesus to publicly submit to His Father and confess His desire to obey God. Being sinless did not lessen the rightness of this action. In fact, it was one more example of Jesus’ perfection. Notice God’s response to Jesus’ baptism.

- ❖ What is the connection between Old Testament circumcision and New Testament baptism?

In Genesis 17, we read how God commanded Abraham and his descendants to be circumcised as a sign that they were in a special covenant with God. Male infants were supposed to be circumcised on the 8th day.

Today, some say that water baptism is the analogous sign given to Christians that a person is in a special covenant with God. As a result, they baptize infants of Christian parents, thus supposedly bringing their children into the covenant community of the Church. In other words, if the Jews were supposed to circumcise their infant sons who had not chosen to be Jews, shouldn’t Christians also baptize their infants who haven’t chosen to be Christians?

But is this the correct analogy?

First of all, notice that Jesus established a new covenant for humanity with God, based on His sacrifice on the cross (Luke 22:20; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 7:22, 8:6-13, 9:15, 12:24).

*“And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.’” (Luke 22:20, NASB95)*

*“for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:28, NASB95)*



How do we enter into that covenant of forgiveness based on Jesus' blood? Through water baptism? Look at what it says in Romans 3:

*“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. ...”* (Romans 3:21–25a, NASB95)

**We enter into the covenant with Christ through faith.** In fact, as Romans 4 teaches, circumcision in the Old Testament was supposed to be a sign of the covenant Abraham had with God before he was circumcised, which was based on Abraham's faith (Rom. 4:11). **The Jewish people were circumcised as a sign based on Abraham's faith, but each was supposed to have the same kind of faith as Abraham (Rom. 4:12). Otherwise, they were not really a part of God's people.** That is why Stephen accused the unbelieving Jews of being uncircumcised of heart (Acts 7:51). And that is why it says in Romans 2:

*“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.”* (Romans 2:28–29, NASB95)

The circumcision that really matters in God's eyes is the circumcision of the heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 4; Gal. 5:6, 6:15; Eph. 2:11-18). Now, in the time since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit permanently being in a person is the sign of being in the new covenant (Rom. 8:9, 14), and it is through the baptism of the Holy Spirit that a person is put into the covenant community of the Church of Jesus Christ, which is His body (1 Cor. 12:13).

As it says in Colossians 2:

*“In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.”* (Colossians 2:11–12, NIV84)

In Colossians 2:11, the circumcision of the heart is done by Christ. In Romans 2:29, it is described as being done by the Holy Spirit. How can these both be true? Because it is Jesus Christ who baptizes with the Spirit (Matt. 3:11) when a

person puts their faith in Him (Acts 11:15-17; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:11-12; Eph. 1:13-14).

In summary, circumcision of the heart is done by Christ through the Holy Spirit. This happens when a person is baptized by Christ with the Holy Spirit. And that happens when a person puts faith in Christ.

**Therefore, the sign of the new covenant of the people of God is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who circumcises the heart when a person puts faith in Jesus Christ. Water baptism is a picture of that event. Thus it is a picture of the sign of the new covenant a person enters into with God through faith in Christ, but it is not the sign itself.**

And in any case, as was discussed earlier in this document, water baptism is not meant for infants, but for those who are confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior with faith in Him.

- ❖ What about these other baptisms I read about in the Bible?

#### Baptism for the dead

In 1 Corinthians 15 we read:

*“Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?” (1 Corinthians 15:29, NASB95)*

If baptism is a ceremony where a person confesses Christ and calls on Him, how can someone get baptized in the place of someone else? Is this a means of saving someone after they have already died, as Mormons believe?

No one knows for sure what this passage is referring to. As we have seen already, baptism is not necessary for salvation, and neither does it save anyone, apart from the person confessing and calling on Christ, so the Mormon position is unsupportable.

A reasonable possibility is that this is referring to martyrs, men and women who had been killed for their faith in Christ. Perhaps some of them had not yet been baptized. Their testimony of Christ, even in the face of death, was proof that they were sincere believers, but they had been killed before they had had a chance to get baptized.

Therefore, the members of their church had a baptism ceremony where someone stood in their place to represent them. This publicly declared that the members of that church believed the martyr to have been a Christian and there was hope, because they would see him or her again in heaven. The church was also

declaring that the martyr would have wanted to be baptized if they could have. It also honored the martyr and their sacrifice.

In our day, it would be like a friend or a brother or sister standing in for a high school student at their graduation ceremony because they had died in a car crash a few days before the ceremony.

### Baptism into Moses

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 we read:

*“For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;”* (1 Corinthians 10:1–2, NASB95)

This is a reference to the story in Exodus 13-14:

*“The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, ...”* (Exodus 13:21, NASB95)

*“The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.”* (Exodus 14:19–20, NASB95)

*“Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided. The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.”* (Exodus 14:21–22, NASB95)

Remember that baptism means “immersion”. It is also a ceremony of commitment and conversion and joining. So in this passage, Paul is reminding us that the Jews were joined to Moses, and committed themselves to His leadership under God’s authority, by agreeing to trust and follow Him through the parting of the Red Sea, and under the cloud that God gave to lead them by day.

### Baptism into Jesus’ suffering and death

In Mark 10, we read about how James and John asked Jesus for the privilege of sitting in the places of honor when Jesus established His kingdom.

*“But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” They said to Him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to*

*them, “The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. “But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.””* (Mark 10:38–40, NASB95)

What baptism was Jesus referring to? We get a clue from Jesus’ words in Luke:

*““But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!”* (Luke 12:50, NASB95)

Jesus was referring to His coming suffering and death, His torture and crucifixion. He was soon going to be immersed in suffering and death in humble obedience to His Father, so that many people would be saved. This was the path that led to the greatest honor in God’s kingdom (Phil. 2:9). And if the disciples wanted to receive the highest honors, they would have to suffer and die like Jesus did.

### Baptism with fire

In Matthew, John the Baptist says:

*““As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”* (Matthew 3:11, NASB95)

What does it mean that Jesus would baptize with fire? Notice also Jesus’ words in Luke 12:

*““I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!”* (Luke 12:49, NASB95)

Another clue comes from the Old Testament: “The Old Testament prophets had declared that in the end time the righteous would be endowed with the Holy Spirit and that the wicked would be burned with fire.”<sup>1</sup>

So Jesus was saying that He was the One who would fulfill the words of the Old Testament, the One who would be pouring out the wrath of God on the wicked on the Day of the Lord. The wicked will be immersed, or baptized, with fire.

---

<sup>1</sup> Craig S. Keener and InterVarsity Press, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary : New Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993). Lk 3:15.

- ❖ what does it mean to be “born of water and the Spirit” in John 3:5?

This is probably a reference to a passage in the Old Testament, in Ezekiel 36, which Nicodemus, as a teacher of the Old Testament, would have immediately understood:

*“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” (Ezekiel 36:25–27, NASB95)*

"born of water" therefore refers to being cleansed of sin. Jesus is saying that unless your sins are washed away (ie. born of water) and the Holy Spirit gives you a new life (ie. born of the Spirit), you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.