

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND



God saved a people from judgment through water in Noah's ark.

"In the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to [*antitupos*] this, now saves you" (1 Pet. 3:20–21).



God's people escaped slavery by crossing through the waters of the Red Sea.

"All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. 10:2; cf. Gal. 3:27, "baptized into Christ").



The Spirit hovered over the waters of creation bringing order out of chaos.



God's people were ceremonially cleansed in the laver and by undergoing ritual washings.



God's people passed through the waters of the Jordan River into their promised inheritance.



Naaman was cleansed of leprosy by dipping seven times in the Jordan.



Ezekiel foretold that God's people would be sprinkled with water, given new hearts, and receive God's Spirit.

PRECURSORS



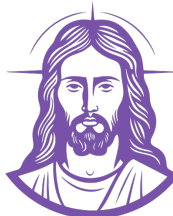
In the years leading up to Christ's coming, the Jews not only circumcised proselytes (Gentile converts), but began giving their households (men, women, and infants) a ritual bath/baptism.



John the Baptist called Jews to be baptized as a sign of repentance to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. Jesus received this baptism.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

Jesus instituted baptism in the name of the Triune God as a Christian ordinance and authorized the apostles to administer it.



"Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19).

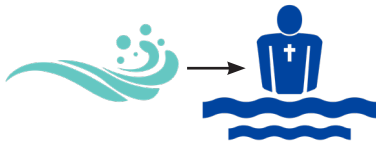
The apostles commanded all people to be baptized as a sign of "the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).



"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). "And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16). "Baptism now saves you as an appeal to God for a good conscience" (1 Pet. 3:21; cf. Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:11–13).

SIGN AND REALITY

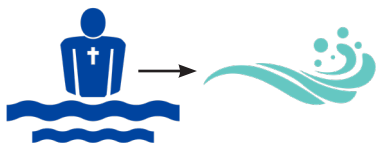
The sign (baptism) and the thing signified (regeneration) may, but do not always, occur together in time.



Cornelius's household received the Holy Spirit *before* their water baptism (Acts 10:44–48).



The ordinary expectation of the New Testament, where baptism is held closely with initial conversion, is that people will receive the Holy Spirit and be saved *at* their baptism (Acts 2:38; Col. 2:11–13).

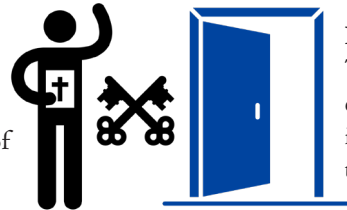


Simon the Magician was baptized but still bound in sin; since it is possible to be baptized with water but resist the Spirit and not be saved, some need to be regenerated *after* their baptism (Acts 10:16, 23).

RITE OF ENTRANCE

Christ gave the Church the keys of the kingdom to represent him in extending or withholding forgiveness by receiving or excluding people from the Church's membership (Jn. 20:23; Mt. 16:19; 18:16–17; 1 Cor. 5:2). Baptism is the action by which the Church exercises the office of the keys to receive members (Acts 2:38, 41–47). No one should ever be baptized without being added to the church's membership "list" and held accountable thereafter.

The Church:
The steward of the keys.



Baptism:
The rite of entrance/initiation into the Church.

The Church can err and God is the final judge, but it is disobedience to Christ to refuse to be baptized and submit to the Church which he authorized to represent him.

EFFECTUAL SIGN

Baptism is not a bare sign (symbol) but an effectual sign (sacrament): it gives what it signifies—not automatically or mechanically (the water is not magic), but as the Spirit uses the beautiful gospel sign to enliven faith in Christ for cleansing and to regenerate through baptism as a means or channel.

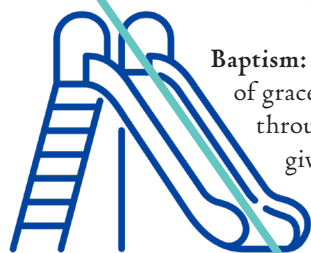
"The grace promised in baptism is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Spirit."
(WCF 28.6).

"As by an instrument, those who receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church"
(39 AOR, 27).

Salvation: God's free gift of the Holy Spirit, union with Christ, and forgiveness of sins.



The Holy Spirit:
The divine person whose power freely works through baptism.



Baptism: A means of grace or channel through which God gives his gift.

Faith: The hands that are drawn open by the gospel sign of baptism to receive his gift.



SEAL OR TITLE

God has ordained for baptism to provide vital assurance of salvation like the title to a car or the seal on an official document. For those already born again, baptism is like a coronation, presidential inauguration, or diploma—important even if someone was already made king, elected as president, or completed their education.



Salvation:
God's gift, if already received, now more deeply assured or increased (e.g., sins committed since initial justification forgiven and more spiritual life imparted).



Faith:
Strengthened and confirmed by God's seal.

The Church:
The divinely authorized steward of God's seal.

