

Baptism – from *Baptizo* or *Baptizein* – to plunge, immerse, sink
Not to be confused with *bapto*. The clearest example that shows the meaning of *baptizo* is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. His recipe for pickles was to *bapto* the vegetable in water (temporary) and then *baptizo* the vegetable in vinegar. It's this second part that causes a complete and permanent change in the vegetable.

Baptism is not a rite of initiation by which one joins a holy club. Nor is it a magical method of salvation and redemption – people are not saved into the kingdom of God by the act of baptism. Baptism must take place in the context of faith and repentance.

Baptism is much like circumcision, which never saved anyone in the Old Testament times; nonetheless, it was not optional for one who wanted to be a part of the covenant with Abraham and a part of the Israelite community.

Baptism is not a requirement for salvation. Rather, baptism is to faith what words are to ideas. You can have an idea without putting it into words, but you won't convey your internal idea to anyone else without the external words. In the same way, you may have faith without baptism, but this will have no significance to anyone else.

Repentance and baptism are always linked in the scripture. See Matt 3 where John will not baptize without repentance first.

Acts 2:37-38 – Peter's words convicted them deeply, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

Peter replied, "Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

"For" (as used in Acts 2:38 "for the forgiveness...") could have two meanings. If you saw a "Help Wanted" sign and it said "Wanted: someone for painting house", your first thought would probably be that someone wants their house painted and is looking for someone to do the work. If you saw a poster saying "Wanted: Jesse James for robbery", would you think that someone is looking to commit a robbery and is looking for Jesse James? No..."for" could mean Jesse is wanted so he can commit a robbery, or is wanted because he has committed a robbery. The latter sense is the correct one. So, too, in this passage, the word "for" signifies an action in the past. Otherwise, it would violate the NT teaching on salvation by grace and not by works.

Mark 16:16 – "Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned." There are seemingly two conditions here and one conclusion. The usual thinking would be to attribute equal weight to the two conditions – i.e. you must believe and you must be baptized.

However, this may not be the case here. For example, if I were to say “Anyone who jumps in the pool and gets wet will need to change into dry clothes”, it would be easy to say that everyone needs to get into dry clothes if they both, jumped in the pool and got wet. But the better way of understanding this particular statement is that everyone who jumped into the pool got wet as a result and thus the second “condition” is not actually a condition but a “result” of the first condition. In the same way, in Mark 16:16, it would make a lot more sense if we recognize that Jesus is not saying that being baptized is a condition of being saved, but is a result of believing (the first condition). If this were the case here, it would make a lot more sense why the next sentence simply says that solely the lack of belief leads to condemnation and does not mention baptism.

There are 3 types of baptisms in the NT – John’s, Jesus’s and the Apostles/Church (after the resurrection)

It would not be incorrect to recognize that being baptized more than once was not uncommon. We know that when Paul met the Ephesians in Chapter 19, they were baptized by John, but he baptized them again. We don’t believe that Paul thinks that the baptism of John was worthless or incorrect, do we? No! But yet, Paul sees fit to rebaptize people who had already had a valid baptism.

How about the people at Pentecost? Acts 2:37-38,41 There were 3000 baptized on that day. Were none of them already baptized by either John or Jesus? We don’t know, but I tend to believe that there can be a case made that at least one of them were.

The Jews were accustomed to multiple washings. The concept of multiple baptisms probably would not have been considered incorrect.

Infant baptism is more like an infant dedication, which we would perform here. We are not baptizing the infant because we believe that baptism is the outward evidence of the internal condition. An infant is in no state to neither express outward evidence nor recognize an internal condition. Does baptism in itself bring salvation? No – only God’s grace brings salvation. More proper would be the dedication of the infant. Samuel was dedicated by his mother, and this was pleasing to God and God blessed them. So we recognize that dedication of a child is worthwhile and useful and pleasing to God. However, this dedication is not the same as a baptism, which John and Jesus gave us as signs of our repentance.

People who are baptized but have not repented are no different than those who John would not baptize in the first place. There is no magic in baptism that brings salvation. Baptism simply shows that one has given one’s heart to Christ and has repented of their sins – sins which include making themselves above God by insisting that they decide what is right and wrong and that they can

decide to run their own lives – and instead make Jesus their Lord, the one who rules their life and makes these decisions for them.

The first Christians declared their faith in Christ at baptism by saying, "Jesus is Lord."