



Steve Singleton

by Steve Singleton



Before we begin our study...

Check all that apply:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have never been baptized. | My baptism was for: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was sprinkled as an adult. | <input type="checkbox"/> Showing I was already saved |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was immersed as a child. | <input type="checkbox"/> Joining a church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was immersed as an adult. | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgiveness of sins |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was sprinkled as an infant. | <input type="checkbox"/> Uniting with Christ's death |



*A Study-It-Yourself
Workbook*

by Steve Singleton



The Meaning of Baptism

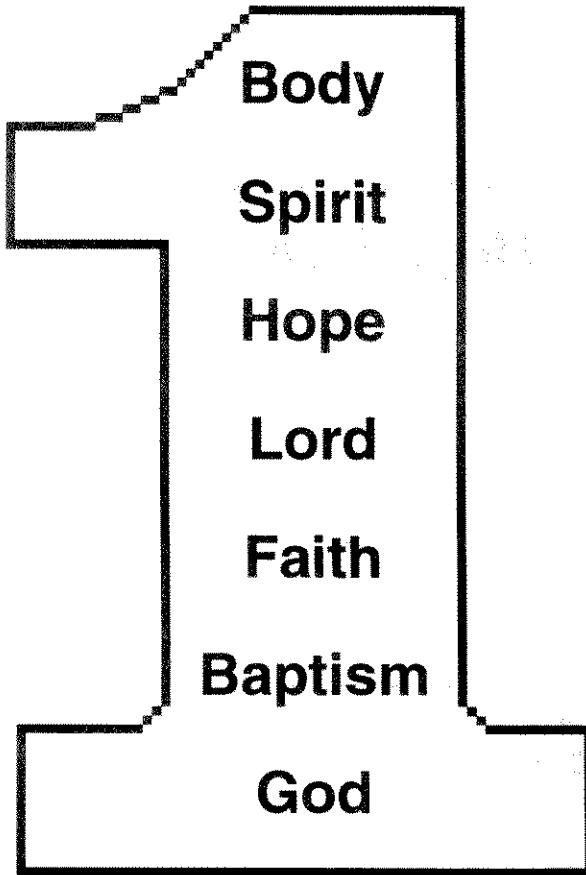
Sincere believers disagree over the meaning of baptism. Some say that it pictures what God has already accomplished inwardly. Others claim that it has saving power in itself whether or not the person being baptized has faith in the Lord.

Clearly we should not rely on human authority to settle just what is the meaning of baptism. We should go to the Scriptures and listen to what God says through them.

God has provided a way to save men by allowing His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for their sins through His death on the cross. Making provision for forgiveness, God then calls on people to respond to the gospel of His grace.

In responding to God's call, people must have a total commitment to Christ as their personal Savior. This commitment in all of its parts, including a turning away from sin, a commitment to trust Jesus as Savior and to follow Him as Lord, and a declaration to others of that decision, we know as saving faith. Here is the question we seek to answer: Is baptism also a part of saving faith, or does it rightfully come after a person is saved?

The answer is in the New Testament passages that tell us about the purposes of baptism. In each opening of this booklet you will find a scripture written out on the left and a brief explanation on the right. A few questions will help you summarize the significance of each passage. Please regard what you are about to read as an honest attempt to present what the New Testament teaches about baptism. Consider it with an open mind and an open heart.



Eph. 4:1-6

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

How Many Baptisms Are There?

Some people say there are seven baptisms. Others say two. Yet in Eph. 4:5 Paul says there is only one baptism. Why is there so much disagreement?

Here is the reason: the Greek word *baptizo* has a general and a specific meaning. The general meaning of *baptizo* is to dip into something. The specific meaning is a ceremony in which a person is dipped in water. The New Testament knows nothing of baptism by sprinkling, a practice introduced centuries later.

When the New Testament uses the general meaning of *baptizo*, the word refers to a number of different things. John said that Jesus would baptize people in the Spirit and in fire. Jesus said that He had to undergo a baptism, meaning He was about to be plunged into suffering and death. All of these are 'baptism' in the general sense. But it is no less true that there is only one baptism in the specific sense of the word.

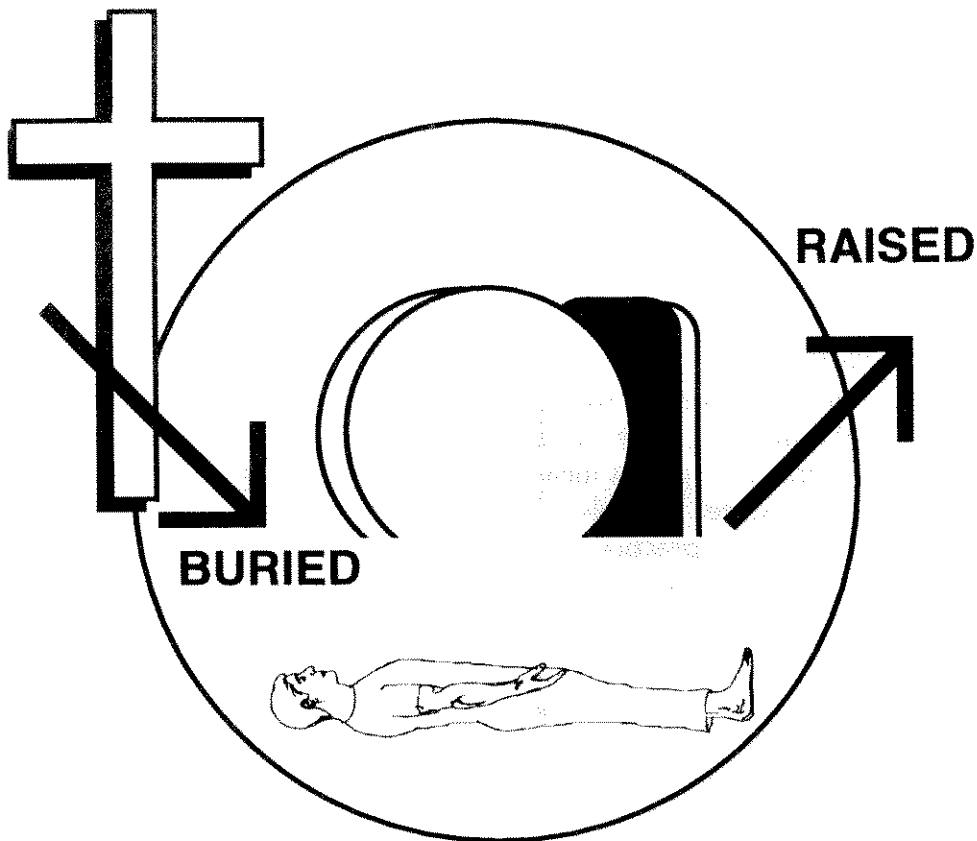
Only one baptism was involved in the conversion of every Christian of the first century. The Book of Acts describes this baptism:

See, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized? ... Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. ... they came up out of the water.... (Acts 8:36, 38)

Can anyone deny water so that these may be baptized...? (Acts 10:47)

Questions

1. In the specific sense of the term, how many baptisms are there?
 One Two Three Seven
2. Biblical baptism involves doing what?
 Dipping Sprinkling Splashing Pouring
3. Biblical baptism consists of dipping a person in what?
 Water Olive oil Suffering Rose petals



Rom. 6:3-7

Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

United with Christ's Death

Many people find it very hard to understand why the New Testament puts such a great emphasis on baptism as being essential to salvation if we are saved by Christ's blood. Paul explains the connection between the two in this passage.

Christ's blood has the power to pay the penalty for the sins of every man and woman who has ever lived. But not all will be saved. And God does not save people in groups, but one at a time. Each person who is willing is brought to the cross through baptism so that his or her sins may be transferred to Christ, and Christ's righteousness may be transferred to the believer.

Note the three purpose clauses in this passage: *We were buried with him through baptism into death IN ORDER THAT, just as Christ was raised... we too may live a new life. We know that our old self was crucified with him... SO THAT the body of sin might be rendered powerless, THAT we should no longer be slaves of sin.* Paul says the purposes of baptism are: (1) to live a new life; (2) to render the body of sin powerless; and (3) to escape from the slavery of sin.

Questions

1. How am I united with Christ in His death?
 - By praying and asking Christ to come into my heart.
 - By turning away from my sins in repentance.
 - By joining Christ at the cross through baptism
 - Everyone is united with Christ's death automatically.
2. What are the purposes of baptism?
 - To live a new life.
 - To render the body of sin powerless.
 - To become free of sin's slavery.
 - All three of these are purposes of biblical baptism.
3. Can these purposes be met if I am not baptized?
 - Yes No



Gal. 3:26-27

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.

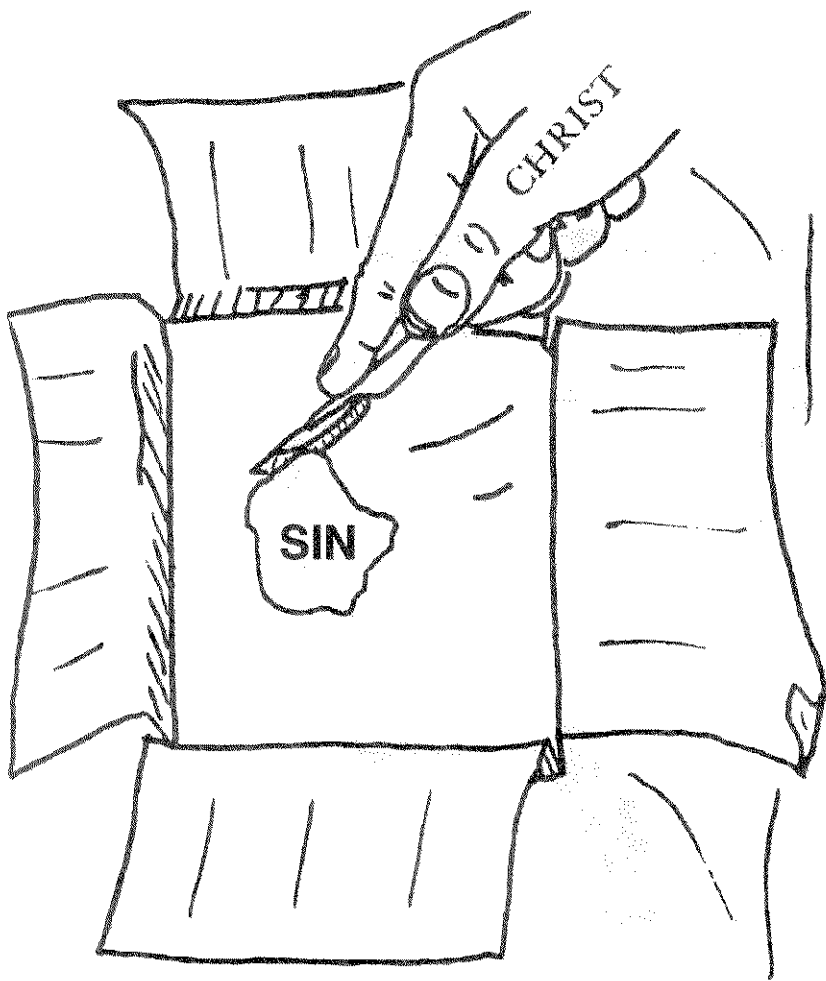
Clothed with Christ

Isaiah says, "...all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). David adds, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered" (Ps. 32:1). When someone becomes a Christian he or she puts on Christ. Christ's blood covers the believer's sins, and that filthy-rags righteousness God exchanges for the perfect righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).

Paul tells us in this passage when the exchange takes place. He says that we "put on Christ" when we are baptized. Then, wearing robes washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14), we become pleasing to God.

Questions

1. How does the Bible say a person becomes clothed with Christ?
 - By being baptized into Christ, the believer puts on Christ.
 - By asking Jesus into one's heart, the believer puts on Christ.
 - All human beings are clothed with Christ.
 - By being sprinkled as an infant, and then completing confirmation studies, the believer puts on Christ.
2. What happens if you are not clothed with Christ?
 - You are still wearing your own "filthy-rags" righteousness.
 - You are not wearing a robe washed in the blood of the Lamb.
 - You displease God by refusing what He has offered.
 - All of these things are true.
3. Do you want to wear the rags of your own righteousness or to wear the rich robes of the righteousness of Christ?
 - I want to wear my own "filthy-rags" righteousness.
 - I want to wear the rich robes of the righteousness of Christ.



Col. 2:11-13

In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the flesh, 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.

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins....

Christ as Surgeon

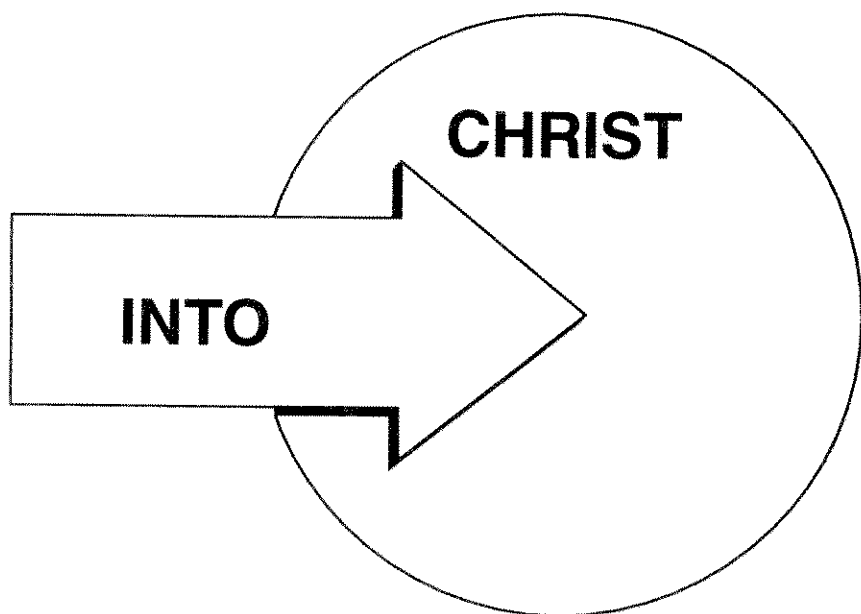
In the first century, when a man was converted from paganism to Judaism, an operation called circumcision was performed on him to show that he would now be a Jew instead of a pagan. A part of his body was cut off.

Paul says that Christ performs a spiritual cutting-off of sin. No human can do this spiritual circumcision, Paul reminds us. Only Christ can do it. But when does Christ cut off the sin?

Paul explains that it happens when a person is baptized. Before I am baptized, Paul says, I am spiritually uncircumcised. But then along comes Christ to cut off my sins, and God forgives me, making me alive with Christ.

Questions

1. Can I be saved before Christ cuts off my sins?
 - Yes. Salvation does not mean freedom from sin.
 - No. Salvation does mean freedom from sin.
2. When does Christ do this spiritual surgery?
 - When I ask Jesus into my heart.
 - When I repent of my sins.
 - When I am united with Christ in baptism.
3. This operation Christ performs on us prompts God to do what?
 - Forgive my sins.
 - Give me new spiritual life.
 - God does both of these things for me.
 - God does neither of them for me.



Rom. 6:3-4

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Gal. 3:27

All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Out of Sin, Into Christ

The New Testament teaches that by sinning all people become lost, helpless to get out of this condition on their own power. But God comes to the rescue, offering salvation through His Son.

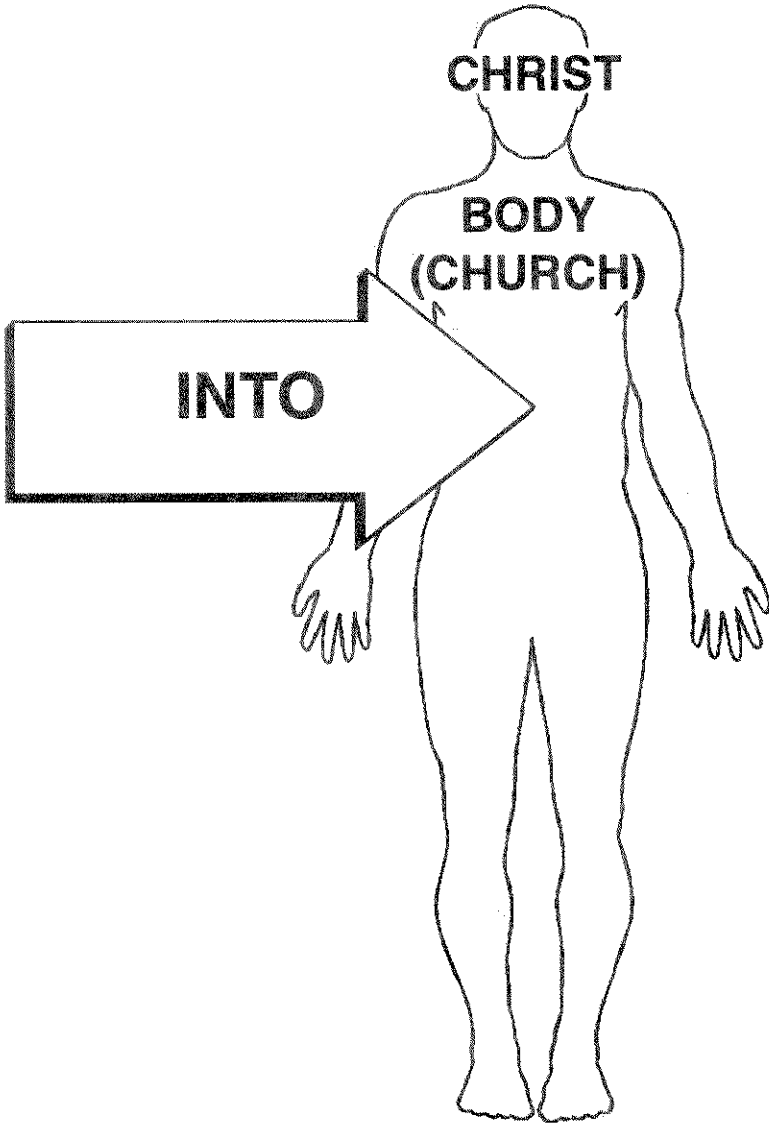
These two passages reveal the point at which we leave sin and enter into Christ. The transition occurs when we trust Christ enough to be baptized. At that point, all the spiritual blessings available to those who are in Christ come to the one who has left sin behind and has come into Christ.

Blessing:
All spiritual blessings
Brought near to God
Not condemned now
New creation
Grace
Salvation
Eternal life

Passage:
Eph. 1:3
Eph. 2:13
Rom. 8:1
2 Cor. 5:17
2 Tim. 2:1
2 Tim. 2:10
1 John 5:11-12

Questions

1. Can I be saved without being in Christ?
 Yes. Salvation does not depend on being in Christ.
 No. Salvation is only found by those who are in Christ.
2. Are Christ's blessings available to anyone not in Christ?
 Yes. It doesn't matter whether you are in Christ or not.
 No. These blessings are only for those who are in Christ.
3. How do I get into Christ?
 The change-point is when you ask Jesus into your heart.
 The change-point is when you repent of your sins.
 The change-point is when you are baptized into Christ.
4. Did Christians in Galatia or Rome get into Christ any other way?
 No. "All of us" means this is the way all Christians experience.
 Yes. Some of them probably got into Christ some other way.
5. Had Paul himself entered into Christ by some other way?
 No. Paul was baptized to wash his sins away (Acts 22:16).
 Yes. He received Jesus on the road, 3 days before his baptism.



1 Cor. 12:13

For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Out of the World and Into Christ's Body

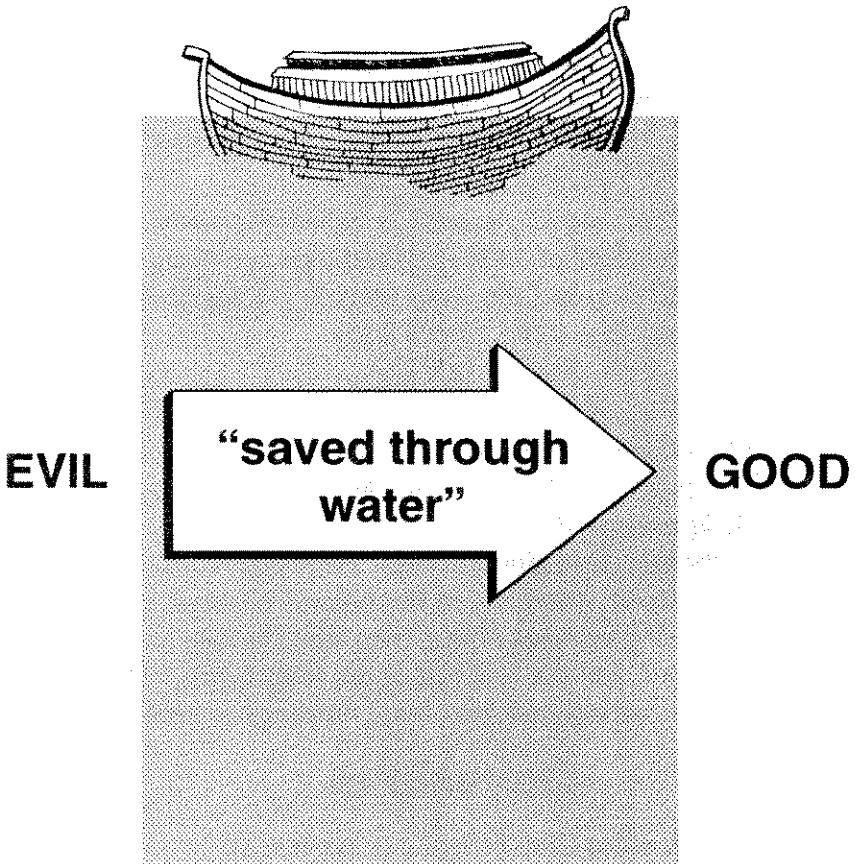
The New Testament teaches that all saved persons are in union with the Father, with His Son, Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). The Lord Himself adds new Christians to their number (Acts 2:47).

This group of all saved persons is called the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:23; Col. 1:18; etc.), or the church (Eph. 5:23; Acts 9:31; etc.). God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit work together to bring us—through baptism—into Christ's Body.

But perhaps you are wondering whether this is a different kind of baptism, one that is not in water. Remember our first passage (Eph. 4:5)? There is only one baptism. Consider also two passages: Acts 2:38-47 and Titus 3:5-7. In the first, Peter tells the people to repent and be baptized, promising that they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. When the people respond to Peter's message, God adds them to the group of Jesus' disciples. In the second passage, Paul links baptism to the renewing work of the Spirit when he calls baptism the "washing of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit." The Spirit participates in the one baptism, involving dipping someone in water.

Questions

1. How do I enter into Christ's Body (His church)?
 - I have to be voted in by the members of a local church.
 - The Lord Himself adds me when I am baptized into Christ.
 - I apply for membership and go through months of instruction.
2. Where am I if I am not in that Body?
 - It is not important because people of all religions believe and practice basically the same things.
 - If I am not in the Body of Christ (His church), then I miss all of the blessings of being in the Body.
3. If the Body of Christ is composed of the saved, what is the world (everyone not in the Body of Christ) composed of?
 - The lost. The saved, for no one is really lost.



1 Peter 3:20-22

...God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

Saved from Wickedness

The Apostle Peter explains that the way God saved Noah from the wickedness of his day corresponds to the way He uses baptism to save us. Peter does not focus on how the ark saved Noah from the flood, but on how the water saved Noah from the wickedness of his world. That is why he says that Noah was “saved through water.”

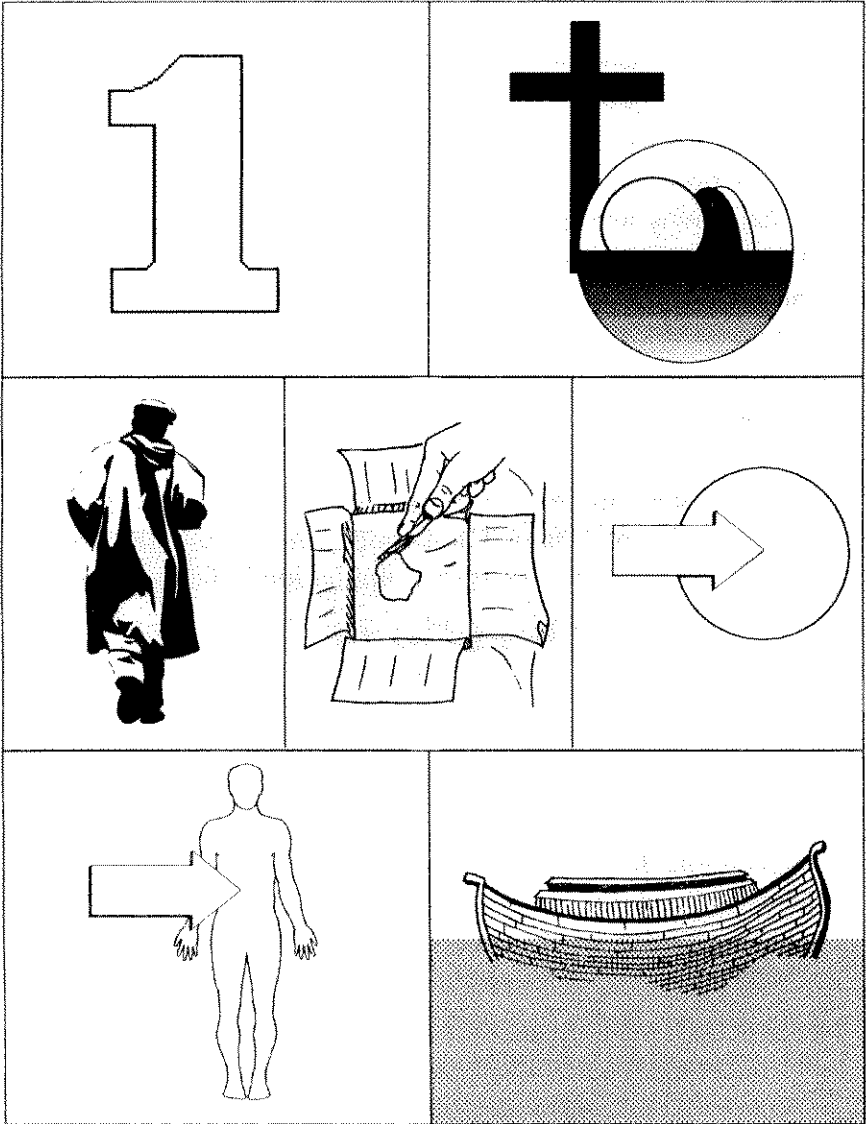
God washed away all ungodliness, cleansing the globe of evil. In the same way, when we submit to baptism, God cleanses us of our transgressions.

Like Paul, Peter ties baptism to what Jesus has done for us. His resurrection corresponds to when we are raised from the water of baptism.

As Noah stepped out of the ark, he met a world washed clean of the terrible evil that had stained it. As you come up from the water, you can see in your own conscience a similar kind of cleansing.

Questions

1. How does God use baptism to save me?
 - It has saving power in and of itself.
 - It saves because of its close connection with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
2. Which people did God save, those who drowned in the flood or those who lived through the flood?
 - Those who drowned in the flood.
 - Those who lived through the flood.
3. Which people will God save today, those willing to come to Him in faith through baptism, or those who refuse to be baptized?
 - Those willing to come to God in faith through baptism.
 - Those who refuse to be baptized.



Should I Be Baptized?

This is a review of all the passages we have considered. Circle each correct answer, according to what each scripture really says.

1. Eph. 4:1-5 states that there is only one (two, three, seven) baptism. Other New Testament passages tell us that people were baptized by being dipped in (water, olive oil, suffering, rose petals).
2. Rom. 6:3 and Gal. 3:27 say that when I am baptized, I get out of (life, sin, control) and into (sin, death, Christ).
3. Gal. 3:26-27 says that when I am baptized, I become (acquainted, associated, clothed) with Christ.
4. Col. 2:11-13 teaches that when in faith I am baptized, Christ (proves that He has already saved me, cuts off my sin, considers whether He will save me).
5. Paul says in Rom. 6:3-7 that when I am baptized, God joins me to the (death, teachings, reputation) of Christ. He says that I decide to be baptized for two reasons: first, so that, like Christ was raised, I can walk in (oldness, newness) of life; second, if I have (become alive, become dead) to sin through baptism, I have been (set free from, deceived by, introduced to) sin.
6. Peter says in 1 Peter 3:18-22, I am saved by (prayer, faith, baptism) because I am asking God to give me a (guilty, cleansed) conscience.
7. Paul says that the Holy (Spirit, Church) is involved in baptism, putting me into the one (Body, denomination, sect) of Christ.
8. According to the Bible, trusting God to unite me with Christ in baptism is a (very important, somewhat important, unimportant) decision I must make.

My decision is...

Check which one applies to your situation:

- I have already been immersed for the purposes we have studied (that is, I have already been scripturally baptized).
- I have not been scripturally baptized, but I would like to be baptized as soon as possible.
- I have not been scripturally baptized, but I want to wait, for the following reason:
 - I am not convinced that this is the biblical teaching regarding baptism.
 - I am not ready to make a life-long commitment to serve and follow Jesus Christ.
 - I am not aware that I have done anything wrong.
 - I want to be baptized, but submitting to it would condemn my unbaptized friends or relatives.
 - _____
 - _____

Scripture quotations are from the New International Version (Eph. 4:1-6; Acts 8:36, 38; Acts 10:47; Isa. 64:6; Ps. 32:1; Rom. 6:3-7; Gal. 3:26-27); New American Standard Version (Col. 2:11-13); American Standard Version (1 Cor. 12:13); and Revised Standard Version (1 Peter 3:20-22).

Want to learn more?

Here are some other passages in the New Testament concerning the vital importance of baptism in conversion. As you read each passage, ask yourself, does this scripture fit in with the others I have studied, making baptism essential for salvation? I am confident that you will find the New Testament witness amazingly consistent.

Matt. 28:19-20 Baptism is into the name of (that is, the ownership of) the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

It is part of what is involved in making disciples.

Mark 1:4 Even John's baptism was for forgiveness of sins.

Mark 16:16 Those who believe and are baptized will be saved. Unbelievers will be condemned (whether they are baptized or not).

Acts 2:38 Peter commands Christ's murderers to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and promises those who do so will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:35-36 Preaching the gospel includes teaching about baptism.

Acts 8:38-39 Both Philip and the Ethiopian go down into the water, he baptizes him, and then they come up out of the water. (This shows baptism is by immersion.)

Acts 16:30-34 The jailer is told to believe on Jesus. He washes the stripes of Paul and Silas, is baptized, and then rejoices, "having believed." (This shows baptism is part of saving faith.)

Acts 19:1-7 People who are baptized for the wrong reason have to be baptized again for the right reason.

Acts 22:16 Paul is baptized to wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord.