

kingdom of heaven is at hand" also ceased at this time (cf. Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:14–15).

8. Believer's baptism retains the symbolism of John's baptism. It pictures our unfitness for the Kingdom, cleansing from sin, and entrance as firstfruits into the Kingdom. This has archaeological support: An early baptistry in Nazareth contains a double row of mosaic tiles at the foot of the steps representing the Jordan River. Baptismal candidates descended the steps, crossed the mosaic river, were baptized in a depression in a far corner, returned across the mosaic river, and climbed up the steps to join the Christian community waiting above.

9. The symbolism of believers' baptism is more extensive than John's baptism. Disciples who were baptized by John were rebaptized by Paul "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:1–7). John's baptism did not portray Spirit baptism.

BELIEVERS' BAPTISM

1. Believers' baptism is commanded by Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19).
2. Believers' baptism commemorates Spirit baptism (Acts 10:47; cf. 11:16). Water baptism is a ritual and memorial; Spirit baptism is the reality. Both sacraments, communion and baptism, are memorial ceremonies.
3. There is only one real baptism in the Church Age (Eph. 4:4–5).
4. The mode of baptism is immersion (not pouring or sprinkling).
 - a. supported by archaeological and Mishnaic evidence: complete immersion was required in ritual immersion baths (called *miqva'ot*). Jews immersed themselves in a miqveh in front of witnesses for ritual purification (*Miqva'ot* 2:1,2; 7:6; *Yebamot* 46b).
 - b. supported by typology: water completely surrounds the particles of flour to form dough for the wave loaves offering (Lev. 23:17).
 - c. supported by the meaning and use of *baptizo*: 'to immerse, immerge, submerge, dip, plunge, inbathe, overwhelm.'
 - d. supported by analogy: unbelievers are totally immersed in Hades and in the Lake of Fire (compare Matt. 3:11–12 with 13:42 and Rev. 19:20).
5. The mode of baptism should fit the reality.
 - a. The choice is between immersion, affusion (pouring water from a container), and aspersion (sprinkling).
 - b. Water is often a symbol of the Holy Spirit.
 - c. In Bible times the baptizer may have stood on dry ground while believers immersed themselves in water (early painting; but compare Acts 8:38–39).
 - d. The Spirit does the work of cleansing and making you part of the body of Christ.
6. Water baptism represents the work of the Holy Spirit uniting believers

to the body of Christ (Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:13). The adjective *symphutos* in Romans 6:5 means 'grown together' or 'united,' as wounds or broken bones grow together to unite.

- a. It is a memorial of a past spiritual reality (like the Lord's Supper).
- b. It is an initiation rite or ceremony portraying entrance into the body of Christ.
- c. It is a visible reenactment of an invisible reality.
- d. It is a picture of positional truth—union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–11).
- e. It should take place only once in the life of every believer (no redunkings).
- f. It is valid only if preceded by Spirit baptism.
- g. It may take place immediately after salvation (Acts 8:26–39).
- h. It should follow salvation as soon as possible to help make unseen spiritual realities real for new converts.
- i. It may not be denied to true believers (Acts 10:47).

7. Water baptism reveals the mechanics of Spirit baptism (Rom. 6:3–11). The Holy Spirit does the work of cleansing us from sin (water) and uniting us with the death (submerge), burial (immersed), and resurrection (emerge) of Jesus Christ. The symbolism of Christian baptism is: (1) water pictures the cleansing ministry of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:26); (2) submersion pictures union with Christ in his death (being plunged and held under water long enough results in drowning and death); (3) immersion pictures union with Christ in his burial (drowning results in a watery tomb); and (4) emersion pictures union with Christ in his resurrection (rising from the water results in life). Water baptism, then, is a picture of how the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ. It pictures what takes place at the moment of salvation through Spirit baptism. We are united to the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) by being united with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–11). Now, being cleansed from sin and new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), we are ready to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4).

8. Water baptism is not necessary for salvation (Luke 23:39–43).

9. The baptismal formula indicates the authority by which water baptism is performed (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; cf. 1 Cor. 1:13, 15). The baptizer has delegated authority to baptize in Jesus' name.

10. Believers' baptism is the sign of the New Covenant (cf. Col. 2:11–12).



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WATER BAPTISM



There are seven baptisms in the Bible: Three are wet (or ritual) and four are dry (or real).

Real Baptisms

- (1) baptism into Moses (1 Cor. 10:2),
- (2) baptism with fire (Matt. 3:11–12; Luke 3:16–17),
- (3) baptism with the cross (Mark 10:38; Luke 12:50),
- (4) baptism with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 1 Cor. 12:13).

Ritual Baptisms

- (1) John's baptism (Matt. 3:5–11; Mark 1:4–8; Luke 3:3–17; John 1:25–34; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 19:1–7),
- (2) baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22),
- (3) believers' (Christian) baptism (Acts 8:36–39; 10:47–48).

JOHN'S BAPTISM

1. John preached and baptized at the fords of the Jordan River in the Judean wilderness.

a. John baptized "at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan" (John 1:28; cf. 3:26).

(1) The fords near Bethany are less than a mile north of the point where the Jordan empties into the Dead Sea. An early tradition (Origen, Commentary on John 1.28) says John baptized at the ford of hadshla, south-east of Jericho.

(2) Travelers going from Jerusalem to Perea crossed the Jordan at the fords above the Dead Sea. Travelers going from Jerusalem to Galilee also crossed at these fords. They followed the eastern bank of the river to bypass hostile Samaria, recrossing again near Scythopolis. These travelers provided a steady stream of listeners for John the Baptist.

b. John also preached and baptized at the ford of the Jabbok—"at Aenon near Salim" (John 3:23).

(1) The ford of the Jabbok is a few miles south of the more popular crossing near Sythopolis.

(2) Salim is modern Tel Shalem, a mile or two west of where the Jabbok River joins the Jordan. Many springs (aenon) are still present in the area.

2. John baptized at these fords because of their associations with the forming and reforming of God's people.

a. Jacob, now called Israel, entered the Promised Land with his family at the ford of the Jabbok (Gen. 32:22–32). Jacob wrestled with the angel of the LORD and received his new name on the eastern bank of the Jordan.

b. The children of Israel entered the Promised Land at the fords of the Jordan above the Dead Sea (Josh. 3:16).

c. A reforming of the people of God took place under the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. Jezebel had killed the prophets and reduced God's people to 7000 (1 Kings 18:4, 13, 22; 19:10, 14, 18; 2 Kings 9:7; Rom. 11:2–4).

(1) John baptized near the birthplaces of Elijah and Elisha. Elijah and Elisha were both born near the ford of the Jabbok. (The ford of the Jabbok and Aenon near Salim are half-way between Tishbe, the birthplace of Elijah, and Abel-Meholah, the birthplace of Elisha.)

(2) The fords of the Jordan above the Dead Sea were parted by Elijah and Elisha (comp. Josh. 4:19–20 with 2 Kings 2:4–15). They left the land together and Elisha reentered alone to continue reforming a people for God.

3. John's baptism was from God (Mark 11:29–33; Luke 7:30; John 1:33).

4. John's baptism was an initiatory rite of entrance into the Kingdom.

a. John's baptism was for the Jews, not for the Church.

b. Its mode was immersion in the Jordan River ("because there was

much water there" John 3:23).

c. It was administered by John. This was unique: John's was the first baptism administered by another. Ritual immersion and proselyte baptism were self-administered.

d. It mirrored his message. His baptism was "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3).

(1) He came to prepare a people for the Messiah (Luke 1:17). He prepared them to be gathered by the Messiah into his barn, i.e., into the Kingdom (Matt. 3:12). The alternative was to be gathered for judgment and to be baptized with fire in Gehenna (Matt. 3:12).

(2) He came to turn many sons of Israel back to God (Luke 1:16).

(3) He came to turn the people from disobedience to righteousness (Luke 1:17).

(4) He came "to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins" (Luke 1:77)

(5) He exhorted people to repent (Matt. 3:2, 11) and to confess their sins (Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5).

(6) He preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2).

(7) He preached "the gospel to the people" (Luke 3:18; cf. John 1:29; 3:36).

(8) He preached the imminence of world-wide judgment (Matt. 3:7–17).

(9) He exhorted people to treat one another right (Luke 3:10–14).

e. John's baptism was a reenactment of salvation: cleansing in water pictured the forgiveness of sins.

f. John's baptism was also a picture of entering the Kingdom of the Messiah.

(1) John encouraged people to repent, confess their sins, be saved, and be forgiven on the eastern bank of the Jordan River—outside the Promised Land. In submitting to John's baptism they admitted their unworthiness of the Kingdom.

(2) They were baptized immediately in the Jordan as a picture of their repentance, salvation, and forgiveness of sins. In symbol, their sins were washed down the Jordan and deposited at the lowest spot on earth—the Dead Sea.

(3) They came out of the water on the western bank of the Jordan inside the Promised Land—a picture of their future entrance into the Kingdom.

(4) John literally turned them back—a picture of repentance. They waded across the river to John, turned back to be baptized, and were led back into the Promised Land. The Hebrew word *shuv* means "turn back," "return," or "repent."

5. John baptized multitudes (Matt. 3:5, 7; Mark 1:5), including tax-collectors, police agents (soldiers who accompanied the tax-collectors), and

prostitutes (Matt. 21:31–32; Luke 3:12–14; 7:29). Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees came to be baptized, were offended by his message, and rejected his baptism (Matt. 3:7–12; Luke 7:30). The scribes, chief priests and elders of the people did not believe John's message (comp. Matt. 21:23 with 21:32; Mark 11:27–33; Luke 20:1–8).

6. Jesus submitted to John's baptism at Bethany beyond the Jordan (comp. John 1:28–29 with 3:26). The baptism of Jesus pictures his being made sin for us (going out of the land), being cleansed from the imputed sins of the world (immersion), and entering into the Kingdom as King (entering the land). Imputed sins made him unfit for the Kingdom; forgiveness made him fit.

a. Jesus was baptized after everyone else had been baptized (Luke 3:21).

b. John's baptism was for Jesus a picture of the coming baptism with the cross that resulted in spiritual and physical death (Mark 10:38–39; Luke 12:50). The sins of the world were imputed to Jesus on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21).

c. An anointing with the Spirit also took place at Jesus' baptism (Acts 10:38; cf. 4:26, 27). The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus like a dove (Luke 3:22; John 1:32–33) on dry ground while he was praying (Luke 3:21) after "coming up out of the water" (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10). This anointing immediately followed John's baptism. The baptism and anointing picture Jesus entering the Kingdom and being anointed by God as the King—the Messiah, the Anointed One.

d. Believers' baptism pictures our baptism with the Spirit into Christ and Jesus' baptism with the cross into death (comp. Mark 10:39 with Rom. 6:3–11 for the baptism with the cross; Acts 10:47–48; 11:15–17 for the baptism with the Spirit). At the moment of salvation we are baptized with the Spirit into one body (1 Cor. 12:13) and into Jesus' death (Rom. 6:3, 4) on the cross (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; 5:24). Jesus was baptized with the cross into death; we are baptized with the Spirit into Jesus' death. The following spiritual realities are reenacted in believers' baptism. We enter the water dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13); immersion represents cleansing from sin (1 Cor. 6:11; Heb. 10:22) and being united with Christ in his crucifixion (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; 5:24), death (Rom. 6:3, 4, 5, 8), and burial (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12); emerging from the water represents union with Christ in his resurrection (Rom. 6:5; Eph. 2:5–6; Col. 2:12–13), the coming and indwelling of the Spirit (Acts 10:47–48; 11:15–17), entrance into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), our call and empowerment for ministry (Acts 1:4–5, 8; 2:4), and walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). The Holy Spirit came to the disciples on the day of Pentecost to enter them into the body of Christ and empower them for ministry (as He came to Jesus at his baptism to call and empower him for ministry).

e. Jesus' baptism is the firstfruits of believers' baptism.

7. John's baptism was continued by Jesus' disciples (John 3:22–4:2). They baptized more disciples than John! Jesus did not baptize anyone (John 4:2) since his baptism was to be with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matt. 3:11). It seems the disciples quit baptizing when it became clear that the King had been rejected and the Kingdom postponed. The message "Repent; for the