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# Baptism

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## Introduction

The word "baptize" (from the Greek **baptidzo**) means "to identify" or "to be made one with". In early Greek, the word had both religious and secular meanings. In general, it refers to the act of identifying one thing with another thing in such a way that its nature or character is changed, or it represents the idea that a real change has already taken place.

As a reference to identification, "baptize" means *to place a person (or thing) into a new environment, or into union with some one or something else, so as to alter his (its) condition or relationship to the previous environment.*

There are seven types of baptism mentioned in the Bible. Four of these are real baptisms and three are ritual baptisms.

## Real Baptisms

- The Baptism of Moses
- The Baptism of the Cross (or Cup)
- The Baptism of the Holy Spirit
- The Baptism of Fire

## Ritual Baptisms

- The Baptism of John
- The Baptism of Jesus
- The Baptism of the Christian Believer

These seven baptisms are described in the sections below.

## Real Baptisms

A baptism is called "real" if it involves actually identifying a person with something or someone.

### The Baptism of Moses

The baptism of Moses was a double identification, the children of Israel are identified both with Moses and with the cloud (Jesus Christ) as they passed through the Red Sea. There was no water involved (remember, they went through the sea on dry land when the waters were parted). 1 Cor. 10:1,2.

## **The Baptism of the Cross (or Cup)**

Jesus Christ "drank" the Cup filled with our sins. Another way of expressing it is that all the sins of the world were put into one cup and poured out on Christ while He was on the Cross. God the Father judged our sins while they were on Christ. Christ was identified with our sin and He bore our sins on the cross. He was made sin for us. 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24.

In Matt. 20:22 Jesus speaks of the cup he is to drink as he makes a reply to the mother of Zebedee's children. In Matt. 26:39, He prays to the Father to "let this cup pass from me". Nevertheless, He determined to drink from the cup, as seen in John 18:11, "the cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink from it?"

## **The Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a real baptism. When a person accepts Christ as Saviour, he is placed into the body of Christ. He is identified as a believer. The mechanics are given in 1 Cor. 12:13.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit did not occur in Old Testament times. The first occurrence was on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit placed the new believers into the body of Christ.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the basis for Positional Truth. Believers are placed "in Christ", and in this position have access to many kinds of privileges and blessings. Ephesians 1 has a good description of what it means to have "all blessings in heavenly places in Him."

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was prophesied by John the Baptist, Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16. And it was prophesied by Jesus Christ, John 14:16,17; Acts 1:5.

The implications of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, for all believers in the family of God, are given in Gal. 3:26-28.

The principle of retroactive identification with Christ is brought out in Rom. 6:3,4 and Col. 2:12.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not an experience. It is *not* accompanied by speaking in tongues or any other kind of feeling or behavior. The things that happen to believers at the moment of salvation are accomplished by the Holy Spirit, *not by us*, and these things are not experiences.

See Topic: Salvation Doctrines.

## **The Baptism of Fire**

There is a judgment coming at the 2nd Coming of Christ when all nonbelievers are taken from the earth. They will join the rest of the unbelievers in Torments (Sheol-Hades-Hell) to wait for the Last Judgment (The Great White Throne Judgment of Rev. 20) at the end of the Millennium. This removal of unbelievers for judgment is the baptism of fire.

Fire is a symbol for judgment all throughout the Bible. Examples are the fire which burned the sacrifice on the Hebrew altar, and the fire from God which burned the watered down sacrifices of Elijah and the prophets of Baal.

The doctrine of the baptism of fire is stated in Matt. 3:11,12; Luke 3:16,17; and 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

The Lord Jesus taught several parables regarding the end times when believers and unbelievers will be separated. The believers are to go into the millennium, the unbelievers are "cast off" into fire.

These parables are analogies to the baptism of fire.

**Wheat and tares** - Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43.

**Good and bad fish** - Matt. 13:47-50.

**The wise and foolish virgins** - Matt. 25:1-13

**The sheep and the goats** - Matt. 25:31-46

### **Ritual Baptisms**

A baptism is called a ritual baptism, or a ceremonial baptism, when water is used as a symbol for something else. It is a representative identification. The individual is placed in the water, which means, symbolically, that he is identified with that which the water represents.

### **The Baptism of John - Matt. 3:6-11.**

Here the water is symbolic of the Kingdom of God which John was preaching. When a person was baptized by John, he was testifying to his faith in the Messiah and his identification with Christ's kingdom. The new believer was "identified" with the water, but the water represented a spiritual identification.

The phrase "Kingdom of God" is a general term referring to all believers from the time of Adam until the end of the Millennium. At the time of John the Baptist, all believers were pre-Church Age Christians, although many lived on into the Church Age (which began at the Day of Pentecost).

### **The Baptism of Jesus**

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist, the water was symbolic of God's will in salvation, namely that Jesus would go to the Cross.

This was a *unique baptism*. As He went into the water, he was saying, in effect, "I will die for the sins of the world." As he came out of the water He said, in effect, "I will rise again that believers might have resurrection bodies and victory over death and the grave."

This baptism was unique because Christ is unique and His work on the Cross is unique. No one ever "follows the Lord in baptism" When a Christian is baptized, it for an entirely different purpose. See the discussion below on believer's baptism.

### **The Baptism of Believers**

In believer's baptism the water represented the Lord Jesus Christ and symbolizes positional truth. The real baptism of the Holy Spirit places a believer into Christ. Water baptism is a ceremonial representation of that fact, a picture of Spirit baptism.

Christians have a *real identification* with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. See Romans 6. Water baptism is *symbolic identification* with the person and work of Christ.

As he goes into the water, the believer says, in effect, "I am identified with Him in His death and burial."

As he comes up out of the water, the believer says, in effect, "I am identified with Christ in His resurrection and victory over death and sin, as He is seated at the right hand of the Father."

Water baptism comes *after* salvation. It does not precede salvation. Water baptism which precedes salvation is only a religious practice, ritual without reality, therefore it is meaningless. Believer's baptism is not religion, but a indicates a relationship with Jesus Christ that lasts forever.

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