

Uncommon things commonly believed among us

The New Testament clearly gives importance to baptism. While most Christian groups recognize its significance, they do not all agree on its purpose. Our belief about baptism's relationship to salvation, for example, differs from what many other churches believe – we believe that baptism is necessary for salvation. Considering the baptism's place in the New Testament and the differences between what we believe and what others believe, we will explore our uncommon view.

We believe that baptism is necessary for salvation (Romans 6:1-4)

Some Clarification about our baptism beliefs

- We do not believe that baptism earns salvation (*Romans 4:1-9; 3:27*).
- We believe that baptism saves as a response of faith that accesses God's grace.
 - Baptism by itself does not save (*Acts 19:1-7*).
 - But baptism, as a response to our belief in the gospel, plays an essential part in accessing God's grace (*John 3:16; 1 Peter 3:21*).
 - The New Testament clearly teaches that belief must result in actions (*John 6:28-29; James 2:14-26*).
 - But the fact that God requires a response from us does not take away from His grace (*Romans 6:23*).
 - Naaman's story in II Kings illustrates how baptism can be an inadequate act to save while being the act that accesses God's grace (*II Kings 5:1-14; 1 Peter 3:21*).
 - If God's grace required no human response, then all people would be saved, a conclusion that plainly disagrees with Jesus' teachings (*Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23; 25:31-46*).
- We believe that baptism requires immersion in water, which Paul described as a reenactment of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (*Romans 6:4-6*).

Looking at the Bible for evidence – if baptism isn't for the forgiveness of sins...

- Why did Simon Peter answer those looking to be forgiven by telling them to, "repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..." (*Acts 2:36-38*).
- Why did the Eunuch request baptism after having Jesus preached to him, even though he was on a lonely road? Why did he rejoice after baptism rather than belief (*Acts 8:35-39*)?

- Why was the jailer “immediately” baptized at midnight with only his family present (*Acts 16:32-33*)?
- Why was the repentant believer Paul told to “arise and be baptized, and wash away your sin calling on His name” (*Acts 22:16*)?
- Why do we never find baptism deliberately delayed in the New Testament?
- Why were the Roman Christians asked to recall their baptism as the time when they had been raised to “...walk in newness of life” (*Romans 6:3-4*)?
- Why were those in the churches of Galatia told that they were sons of God through faith “For as many of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (*Galatians 3:26-27*)?
- Why, when mentioned together, is baptism never put after salvation in a verse, but always before?
- Why is a “washing” or “water” often associated with salvation (*Acts 22:16; Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5; John 3:5; I Peter 3:20-21; I Corinthians 6:11*)?
- Why did Peter say, “...baptism now saves you” (*I Peter 3:21*)?
- Why do almost all conversions in Acts mention baptism while many of those accounts do not even mention belief?
- Why does the Bible say that we are saved “...not by faith alone” (*James 2:24*)?
- Why are we never told to “believe into Christ”, but we are told to be “baptized into Christ” (*Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 6:3-4*)?
- Why did Jesus say, “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved...” (*Mark 16:16*).

Some conclusions

- We believe the evidence is overwhelming – God requires baptism for the forgiveness of sins (*Acts 2:38*).
- But we must never forget that baptism is only an act that can never save by itself; its power comes from Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection (*I Peter 3:21*).
- The access baptism gives us to Jesus’ saving blood places a great expectation upon our lives – we have to stop sinning and live godly lives (*Romans 6:3-13*).

We believe the New Testament plainly and repeatedly teaches that we must be baptized to have our sins forgiven. But we understand that God’s grace through Jesus’ life makes that salvation possible. We understand too that baptism places a great responsibility upon us because of the great blessing of God’s grace. We must therefore ask ourselves, “Have I accessed God’s gracious forgiveness of my sins through baptism and, if I have, do I do my best to live a sinless life for God?”