

Baptism

Taiwo Olokun

Baptism (from Greek) simply means IMMERSION: immersion into Christ is different from immersion into water. Water baptism is only a symbol, it's a public ceremony (physical) that speaks of something which has occurred in a person's life (spiritual). Scriptures such as Romans 6:3-7 and Galatians 3:27 speak of immersion into Christ, separate from the ceremony (symbolic). The ceremony of water immersion isn't how people are baptized into Christ. The only way people are baptized into Christ is in the **Preaching and Teaching of Christ** which is not confined to the beginning of Christian life; it happens throughout one's Christian life.

Physical baptism is **not** Salvation. It is a symbol that speaks of a spiritual reality. There are many groups who claim to be Christian (e.g., Protestants, Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and many others) and they disagree with what i just said. They believe that Salvation is given to people through physical baptism. Here in Southern California, there is a church named *International Church of Christ*. Whenever i talk with them, i often give them the following scenario, and ask them if God will accept that person into Heaven or not?

The Scenario:

Let's say someone heard you preaching the good news, and as most who were listening rejected it, this person accepted the good news. Then you tell him that he now needs to be baptized, and his response was "Yes, tomorrow afternoon i will be at the river so i can be baptized", but let's say he died hours before the scheduled baptism. Will God accept that person into Heaven or not?

They always respond by saying: "No, God cannot accept that person into Heaven because that person was not baptized". They say Acts 2:38 is their basis for saying so.

Acts 2:38 says "...**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." However, consider 10:44-48 "While Peter was still speaking these words, **the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the Word**. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, 'Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. ..." They received the Holy Spirit **before water immersion (baptism)**.

The instructions in Acts 2:38 begin with "Repent". The truth is this: Physical baptism without repentance, is empty. True repentance occurs as someone receives the good news and that's the important thing. 3:18-19 "... those things which God foretold by

the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. **Repent therefore** and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord”. **I hope you noticed that baptism was not even mentioned in 3:18-19**

Mark 16:15-16 “And Jesus said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, **but he who does not believe** will be condemned.” There are many who have been baptized but do not believe or **Understand** the good news. Physical baptism without a cleansen of the soul/spirit can make someone think he/she is saved when in-fact the person is still under God’s wrath which can only be removed by the Good News which God provided.

Acts 8:35-38 “Then Philip beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’ Then Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.” I hope you noticed that Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch went down into the water (i.e., Christian baptism is not by sprinkling, but by immersion).

1Corinthians 1:16-17 “Yes, i also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, i do not know whether i baptized any other. **For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel**, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.” The word “Gospel” is a Greek word; it means Good News.

In Luke 12:49-51, Jesus said “I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! Do you think I came to give peace on earth? Not at all, but rather division.” The baptism Jesus was talking about in verse 50 is the fact that He was going to be immersed under God’s Total Wrath (on the cross) on our behalf.

The early church was mostly comprised of Jews. As time went on, they yielded to God’s Will and began taking the Good News to the Gentiles (non-Jews). The early church had to contend against those who were regarding ceremonies/symbols as more important than spiritual reality in the heart/soul. Colossians 2:11-17 “In Christ you were also circumcised with the circumcision **made without hands**, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, **having forgiven you all trespasses** ... So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a [Jewish] holy-day or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, **but the substance is of Christ**”. Not symbols or ceremonies.

In Acts 22:16, Ananias said to Saul of Tarsus (Paul) “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, **calling on the name of the Lord.**” Sins are washed away by **trusting in the Lord**, not by physical baptism. Calling upon the name of the Lord means: A continual trust in who Jesus is, and a continual trust in His finished sacrifice. That finished sacrifice is what washes away a person’s sin. The baptism that saves is **not** outward/physical; it’s in the conscience and spirit: 1Peter 3:21-22 “There is also an antitype which now saves us--baptism (**not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God**), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into Heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.”

John 3:5-6 “Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’” In the preceding quote, “water” is the Word of God. Ephesians 5:25-26 “... just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by **The Word**”, 6:17“... and the **Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God**”.

In true Salvation, there is a real change of a person’s life; however, no one can be good enough for the Holy God. Salvation is found in God’s finished sacrifice for our sins. Titus 3:3-7 “Because we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, **not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us**, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

In the following Scriptures, note that there’s no mention of water baptism, only true faith in Christ is spoken of. Faith comes by receiving the Word of God (the Scriptures), **not** by physical washings or water: Romans 1:16 “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” 15:13“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and **peace in believing**, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” John 3:35-36 “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. Whoever believes in the Son has everlasting life, and whoever does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Realize/understand that, it’s possible you have been believing some false things (false hopes) because those who you consider spiritual leaders told you those things. In the end, those false hopes will disappoint you. Also, they can lead to mental dangers. It’s very crucial that you make sure every message you receive is true to the Scriptures. Church-goers need to become like those godly Jews in Berea (Acts 17:10-11), if not, they are at the mercy of preachers who appear like sheep but are really wolves. 17:10-11“Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.

When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and **searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.**”

What takes place in the heart is the important thing. Ceremonies and Symbols do **not** help a person’s spiritual condition. In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist said “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than i, whose sandals i am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and Fire.” In this case, “Fire” means the zeal of the LORD.

GraceTruth7.org <http://www.gracetruth7.org>