



Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The view of most evangelical Christian scholars is that salvation is by grace through faith alone. This is especially indicated by [Ephesians 2:8-9](#), [John 3:16](#), [1 John 5:1](#). It is important to understand that baptism is a result of salvation, not a cause.

The best way to understand the beautiful ordinance of baptism is to look at the whole of Scripture. When we do, we find that there is absolutely nothing we can do as humans to earn salvation. [Romans 6:23](#) tells us that salvation is a "free gift." Free means that there is nothing we can do to deserve it. On the other hand, baptism is something we choose to do. If baptism or any other human work or activity (such as going to church regularly, going on a pilgrimage or visiting a "holy site") contributed to our salvation, we could boast that we did something and contributed to our salvation. However, Scripture says that no one should boast before God [Ephesians 2:8-9](#).

***We come to Christ by grace through faith, and our public baptism brings glory and honor to God. Baptism is an act of obedience, not to obtain salvation, but because of salvation—because we love the Lord and want to obey Him. The motivation to pursue baptism should originate from a desire to show to the world an outward demonstration of the person's decision as well as the inward work of the Holy Spirit which has already begun in a Christian's life.*** An unsaved person would likely not want to be baptized, because he would not have the Holy Spirit indwelling him to prompt his desire to follow Christ in obedience. The fact that one even wants to be baptized (being assured that only faith alone in Jesus Christ saves) is evidence that the Holy Spirit already indwells that person, a result of being born of the Spirit by grace through faith alone.

In the book of Acts, baptism is typically the outward response of one coming to faith in Jesus Christ. It was seen as part of a process which includes: 1) hearing (or reading about) the gospel, 2) being convicted and led by the Holy Spirit to confess one's sins (Greek: *Homologeō* means "to agree with, to speak the same"), 3) coming to faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, 4) beginning the progress of growth (which includes repenting from known sin), 5) joining with a group of other believers in a church family, and 6) being baptized. The last two parts are where there are different opinions among believers or churches.

Where some churches differ with what has been stated above chiefly centers on whether a person is saved if they have not been baptized (or if they have not been baptized in a particular way). In our understanding (the historic, Baptist understanding) a person is saved when they put their faith in Jesus Christ alone as their personal Lord and Savior. Of course, we want every child of God to join a church which exalts Christ AND be baptized as a vivid symbol of what He has done in their heart and life.