

Baptism and the Salvation Walk

Foundational Question

Is baptism part of the salvation walk?

The biblical answer is **yes**. Baptism is consistently presented in Scripture as an important act of obedience that follows faith and repentance. Christians differ on whether baptism is a requirement for salvation itself, but there is broad agreement that baptism is a commanded response to faith and an essential part of discipleship.

1. Jesus Was Baptized

Matthew 3:13-17

Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized.

"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."

Though Jesus had no sin, He submitted to baptism.

Why was Jesus baptized?

- To fulfill righteousness
- To identify with humanity
- To inaugurate His public ministry
- To provide an example for believers

If the sinless Messiah submitted to baptism, it should not be viewed as optional for His followers.

Key Principle

Jesus modeled what He expected His disciples to follow.

2. Jesus Commanded Baptism

Matthew 28:19-20

Known as the Great Commission:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Notice the sequence:

1. Make disciples

2. Baptize them
3. Teach them

Baptism was not presented as a suggestion but as part of the disciple-making process.

Key Principle

Baptism is a command of Christ.

3. Peter Connected Baptism to Conversion

Acts 2:38

After Peter's sermon at Pentecost:

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."

The people asked:

"What shall we do?"

Peter's response included:

- Repentance
- Baptism

Acts 2:41

"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized."

Belief and baptism occurred together.

Key Principle

The early church expected new believers to be baptized immediately.

4. Baptism Identifies Us with Christ's Death and Resurrection

Romans 6:3-4

Paul teaches:

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?"

Baptism symbolizes:

- Death to the old life
- Burial of the old man
- Resurrection into new life

Picture of Baptism

Going into the water:

- Burial of the old self

Coming out of the water:

- Resurrection life in Christ

Key Principle

Baptism is an outward declaration of an inward transformation.

5. Paul Treated Baptism as Part of Conversion

Galatians 3:27

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Colossians 2:12

"Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through faith."

Notice baptism and faith are linked together.

Paul never presents baptism as a meaningless ritual.

Key Principle

Baptism publicly identifies the believer with Christ.

6. Peter's Strong Statement About Baptism

1 Peter 3:21

"There is also an antitype which now saves us, baptism..."

Peter immediately clarifies:

"not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God."

This is important.

Peter is not teaching that water itself saves.

Rather:

- Baptism is the believer's response to God
- It reflects faith and a cleansed conscience
- It points to the resurrection of Christ

Key Principle

The power is not in the water but in Christ.

7. The Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:35-38

Philip preached Jesus.

The eunuch responded:

"See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?"

After believing, he was baptized immediately.

Key Principle

Faith naturally produced a desire for baptism.

8. Saul (Paul) Was Baptized

Acts 22:16

Ananias told Saul:

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Immediately after his conversion experience, Paul was baptized.

Key Principle

The apostles viewed baptism as an immediate step of obedience.

9. What Baptism Does Not Do

Scripture teaches that salvation comes through God's grace.

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For by grace are ye saved through faith."

Titus 3:5

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done."

Therefore:

- Water itself does not save
- Baptism is not a work that earns salvation
- Salvation is by grace through faith

10. The Relationship Between Faith and Baptism

A balanced biblical view recognizes:

Faith Saves

- Romans 10:9
- Ephesians 2:8-9
- John 3:16

Baptism Obeys

- Matthew 28:19
- Acts 2:38
- Romans 6:3-4

Therefore

Baptism does not compete with faith.

Baptism is faith expressing itself in obedience.

Think of baptism as:

- A public confession
- An identification with Christ
- A covenant declaration
- The first act of discipleship

Common Question: What About the Thief on the Cross?

Luke 23:42-43

The thief was promised paradise without baptism.

Most scholars note:

- He had no opportunity to be baptized.
- Jesus had authority to forgive sins directly.
- This demonstrates salvation is by grace.

However, the exception does not cancel Christ's command regarding baptism for those who are able to obey.

A Practical Conclusion

The New Testament pattern is remarkably consistent:

1. Hear the Gospel.
2. Believe in Christ.
3. Repent.
4. Be baptized.
5. Continue walking as a disciple.

Baptism is not merely a church tradition. It is a biblical act of obedience commanded by Jesus, practiced by the apostles, and embraced by the early church. While Christians differ on exactly how baptism relates to salvation, Scripture clearly portrays baptism as an expected part of the believer's salvation journey and public identification with Jesus Christ.

Teaching Summary

Jesus was baptized.

Jesus commanded baptism.

The apostles practiced baptism.

Paul taught the spiritual significance of baptism.

Baptism does not replace faith, but it is the God-ordained response of faith and obedience in the life of a believer.

A simple statement you could use in teaching is:

"We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and baptism is the biblical act of obedience through which believers publicly identify with His death, burial, and resurrection."