

# Baptism

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# Baptism

## Introduction

The role that baptism plays in the life of a believer is much maligned in some Christian circles. In fact, the bible speaks of seven types of baptisms that we will examine here. Dispensationalists are the major problem in muddying the waters, so to speak, concerning baptisms. They wrongly carve up the Word of God to confuse many. They cherry pick Scripture to falsely claim that when Jesus spoke to Jews, it is not for us. All four gospels is Jesus speaking to the Jews. Gentiles were not presented with the gift of Salvation until *after* the Resurrection of Jesus. Nonetheless, let's examine the Scriptural teachings on the baptisms of the bible.

1. Old Covenant baptisms
2. The baptism of repentance: John's baptism
3. The baptism of Jesus
4. The baptism of fire
5. The baptism for the dead
6. The baptism of the Holy Spirit
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## Old Covenant Baptism

We will examine the many forms of baptism starting with the various forms that existed under Mosaic Law. Baptism, or ceremonial purification for the Levitical priests according to Mosaic Law required those serving God be ceremonially cleansed and consecrated for their ministry around the age of thirty.

Num 4:3

"from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting.

Exod 29:4-7

- 4 "And Aaron and his sons you shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall wash them with water.
- 5 "Then you shall take the garments, put the tunic on Aaron, and the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the intricately woven band of the ephod.
- 6 "You shall put the turban on his head, and put the holy crown on the turban.
- 7 "And you shall take the anointing oil, pour it on his head, and anoint him.

Lev 8:6, 10-12

- 6 Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water.
- 10 Then Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them.

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- 11 He sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times, anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the laver and its base, to consecrate them.
- 12 And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him.

Not only the priests and certain others were to be cleansed or baptized but also clothing, utensils, and articles of furniture. These were all prescribed under Mosaic Law.

## John's Baptism of Repentance

The baptism of John was a baptism of repentance. This baptism of John was a unique ministry for John was to prepare the way for Jesus.

Luke 3:3-4

- 3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,
- 4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.

John's baptism was not able to remove sins but was one of repentance for those who acknowledge the need for their sins to be removed. This was clearly in preparation for the coming Messiah and the forgiveness of sins by the Messiah, Jesus. Only God has the power to forgive sins. John's baptism was in no way the type of or model for Christian baptism we see in the New Testament and in practice today. Those who confessed and repented of their sins and were baptized by John were obedient to his prophesied ministry to prepare the way of the Lord.

Matt 3:3

For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.' "

Isa 40:3-5

- 3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway **for our God.**
- 4 Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth;
- 5 The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

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## The Baptism of Jesus

The baptism that Jesus received from John was unique in its significance and purpose. John's baptism of Jesus was *unlike* all other baptisms John administered to others. Jesus did not make confession, nor did he need repentance. Jesus led a perfect and sinless life as the Lamb of God without spot or blemish.

John 1:29-30, 34

- 29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
- 30 "This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'
- 34 "And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

1 Pet 1:18-20

- 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,
- 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.
- 20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you

Jesus himself declared the main purpose and meaning of this baptism in Matthew 3 ...

Matt 3:13-17

- 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.
- 14 And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"
- 15 But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.
- 16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.
- 17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Let us especially take note of the words of Jesus in verse 15, "... for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." This baptism was the act of ceremonial righteousness as commanded under Levitical law and appropriate to begin the public ministry of Jesus. Fulfilling all righteousness is the righteousness of obedience to the Mosaic law. Levitical law requires all priests to be consecrated when they began to be about 30 years of age. Jesus was about 30 years old when he was baptized by John and began in earnest his Messianic mission.

Luke 3:23

Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was

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supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli,

Jesus held a threefold office as Prophet, High Priest and King. The baptism of Jesus was suitable under Mosaic Law for his ministry as High Priest. It was this consecration to his redemptive priesthood that comes into clearest view in his baptism in the Jordan River by John. The essence of the redemptive work of Jesus lies in his consecration as our Great High Priest.

Heb 9:11-12

- 11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.
- 12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Heb 4:14

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

In this office of High Priest, Jesus offered not the blood of bulls and goats and calves but himself to put away sin.

Heb 9:24-26

- 24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;
- 25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another--
- 26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

The consecration of a priest under Levitical law was twofold - first comes the washing or baptism ...

Exod 29:4

"And Aaron and his sons you shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall wash them with water.

then the anointing ...

Exod 29:7

"And you shall take the anointing oil, pour it on his head, and anoint him.

When John on the banks of the Jordan baptized Jesus, the heavens were opened up and the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus.

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Matt 3:16

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

The Holy Spirit resting upon Jesus was the priestly anointing of "The One" who was not only a High Priest by divine appointment, but an eternal priest according to the order of Melchizedek, divinely consecrated for the work of redemption.

Ps 110:4

The LORD has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

Heb 5:5-6

5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You."

6 As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek";

So significant, holy and sacred was this consecration that it is evidenced by the full Triune. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit were all actively manifest for the anointing of Jesus as Messiah and High Priest. This event stands alone and is not to be confused as the model for Christian baptism.

## Baptism of Fire

The baptism of fire and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are the only two baptisms performed by God, not man.

Matthew 3:11

"As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Luke 3:16

John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

The context of the Scriptures make it clear that the baptism of fire is dealing with death or martyrdom. The dispensational view claims the baptism of fire to be that of judgement at the second coming of our Lord Jesus. They state the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the ushering in of the age of grace and that the baptism of fire is the ushering in of the Kingdom Age. Others like the Pentecostals and the charismatics tend to believe that the

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baptism of fire had to do with the appearance of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:3 as a tongue of fire. Upon examination of the Scriptural texts, I believe we will find that both the above positions to be false. This is neither an ushering in of judgement at the second coming nor is it representative of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Let's examine the context of this beginning with the words of Jesus.

Mark 10:38-39

38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

39 They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.

The words of Jesus are very clear here. The cup that Jesus refers to in verse 38 is that same cup He made reference to in His Garden prayer (Matthew 26:39) It is the cup of suffering, persecution and death. Jesus foretold of this in Matthew 20 verses 18 through 23. The baptism that Jesus refers to in verse 38 is the baptism of fire. There is no other baptism that He could possibly be referring to in this verse.

This cannot be referring to judgement because in the next verse Jesus tells His Apostles that they will indeed drink from His cup "and" be baptized with His baptism. At this time the only remaining baptism for Jesus is the baptism of fire and this can only be referring to Calvary. The Apostles will do both, drink from His cup and be baptized with His baptism of fire with the sole exception being John. We know the Apostles are saved and not subject to judgement, excepting for Judas. Therefore, the baptism of fire cannot be referring to final judgement nor can it be referring to a baptism that ushers in the Kingdom Age for His Apostles are saved in the Age of the Spirit and Jesus clearly says this is a baptism that they will undergo. This is clearly referring to the baptism of death through martyrdom. There is no plausible explanation for this baptism other than martyrdom.

Luke 12:49-50

49 "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!

50 "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!

In verse 49 of Luke 12, Jesus speaks of casting fire upon the earth. Looking at this verse out of context, one might lay claim that this is referring to the baptism of fire but the very next verse disqualifies that. Verse 49 is referring to the fire of Revelation that will be cast upon the earth by Jesus.

In verse 50 Jesus clearly states that He is to undergo an additional baptism. This baptism has Him distressed. This is the baptism of fire ... suffering, persecution and death. Some of the saints of God have been chosen for a baptism of fire and to walk in the footsteps of

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Jesus, the Apostles and other martyred saints. This does not appear to be a baptism we should be praying for, but to each his own.

### Baptism for the Dead

The baptism for the dead appears in one scripture verse, First Corinthians 15, verse 29.

1 Corinthians 15:29

Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?

The myriad of postulations presented to explain this scripture are indeed numerous. The context of this verse and chapter has at its core "**resurrection**." First and foremost the resurrection of Jesus and that His resurrection is the sure foundation for our resurrection, the resurrection of the saints. The focus is clearly upon resurrection, not baptism.

Scriptures clearly disclose that the salvation of God's people (both before the coming of our Lord as well as after) that have died is secure. New Testament writings clearly represent this practice to be a futile exercise and one that is completely unnecessary. There does, however, appear to be confusion among "some" in the early church, mainly composed of Jewish Christians, on the state of believers who died prior to Jesus and those believers who died prior to the coming of God's Holy Spirit. Paul does not necessarily endorse this custom, but appears to use that practice of some as a substantiation of the more important resurrection of the dead. The resurrection was a constant theme for Paul concerning our blessed hope and superseded any lesser practice, even if it appeared to be unsound.

There was a strong repudiation of the resurrection of Jesus by the Jews not accepting Jesus as the risen Messiah and still is today. Clearly the truth of the resurrection is our pillar and blessed hope of our faith in God through Jesus Christ.

### Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is God's guarantee and evidence to His people of their Salvation.

Titus 3:5

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

We are saved by the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit performs a special work "in every believer" from the moment the believer exercises saving faith in Christ. This special work is unique and personal to every believer (see

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article on faith.) The Holy Spirit regenerates and baptizes the believer into union with other believers in the Body of Christ - the universal church. This is the baptism of the Spirit and not water baptism.

1 Corinthians 12:13

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

This regeneration of the Holy Spirit is how a Christian is born from above (born again) and by doing so becomes one with other believers and in union with Christ Himself (Rom. 6:3-4). The Holy Spirit perpetually indwells in every believer (Jn. 14:17, Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19-20) and seals every believer until the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30).

The death, resurrection and ascension of Christ inaugurated the unique and distinctive ministry of God, The Holy Spirit. Christ prophetically announced - as His ascension gift - a drastic change in the Holy Spirit's ministry to one of regeneration, baptism, indwelling, sealing, and illumination of revelation. Jn. 7:38-39, 16:9; Ac. 10:45, 19:2; Ro. 8:14-16, 15:13; Eph. 1:13,17

Those who are saved in Christ Jesus are "new creations." We now have a new position "in grace" instead of "in Adam" (Rom. 5:12-17-21). By being baptized into Christ we have become "dead to sin but alive to God through Jesus Christ" (Rom. 6:1-14). Our knowledge of and faith in this new creation, our new "in Christ" position, is the key that makes salvation "real" in our everyday experience.

Rom. 8:1-2

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."

However, we must never confuse blessings and rewards for faithfully living our lives in Christ with our unforfeitable and unmerited salvation, "for God's gifts and His call are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29). We are saved by grace, not by merit. Grace obviates any obligation to gain merit. Belief (not water baptism) as a condition for the receipt or baptism of the Holy Spirit and belief in the Power and Divinity of the Holy Spirit

The Mosaic Law as a merit system is no longer applicable to the believer because those who have been saved by Christ are no longer under law but under grace. Jn. 1:16-17; Rom. 4:4,16, 6:14-15, 11:5-6; Gal. 1:6, 2:21, 5:4; Heb. 4:16, 13:9; 1Pet. 1:10

Romans 8:3

"For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weak through the flesh (man's sinful nature), God did by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (man), on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh."

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Christ fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law. When we live in Christ and He in us, the righteous requirements of the law are in us through Christ. In other words, our righteousness can never exceed the righteousness of Christ who is God in the flesh.

Col. 2:9-10

"For in Christ lives the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."

Jn. 1:1,14

1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

As a people who have been saved by grace in Jesus Christ, we should in turn show grace by living a life that is pleasing to God. We're to make our lives a "living sacrifice" to God in thankful appreciation for what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. That is our "gracious duty" as a saved people.

### Baptism of the Believer

Christian water baptism has been much maligned, debated and contested as to what it represents. There are generally three views of the rite of Christian water baptism.

**Baptismal Regeneration:** This view holds that water baptism is a sacrament that conveys grace to the individual and effects a transformation that brings the person being baptized from spiritual death to new life. They contend that water baptism is the means by which God brings or imparts His saving grace that results in the remission of sin. Most claim that vicarious faith is implicitly present except for Catholicism which holds to the doctrine of *ex opere operato*, that is, the sacrament of baptism works of itself. Nothing else needs be present for baptism to save a soul for, according to Catholicism, the act of baptism in and of itself has the power to save. That's why the doctrine of infant baptism, *limbus infantium*, is practiced by those who hold this view.

**Covenantal Baptism:** This is the view that baptism is a sacrament and the sign and seal of God's grace. Baptism is the visible sign and seal of an inward and invisible work of God. It is the means by which God signs and seals His covenant of grace with man. Baptism is the act of faith by which we are brought into that covenant and can now experience the benefits of God's promises. Believing adults and children are to be baptized as heirs to the Abrahamic covenant. They believe that baptism is to the new covenant what circumcision was to the old and in fact, has replaced circumcision as the sign and seal of God's covenant. For this reason, baptism is required for salvation.

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**Token Baptism:** This view holds that baptism is a token or outward symbol or indication of the inward change that has been effected in the believer. Those holding this view believe that baptism is a token of Salvation and should be properly understood as an ordinance rather than a sacrament. It's purpose is as confirmation of the believer's Salvation and a public affirmation or testimony of that regeneration to others and as an act of obedience to the command of Jesus in Matthew 28. Baptism in and of itself has no saving power but is only to be done by those who are already saved.

So, how is this issue of baptism to be resolved?

Like all things, whenever there is a dispute or dissension, we must take our case to the final court of arbitration ... the Holy Bible. What do the Scriptures say?

Mark 16:16

"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

This verse has been used as the key reference to establish water baptism as a sacrament.

Upon examination we begin to see the flaws of various interpretations. Mark is in the first part of the verse referring to our baptism of the Holy Spirit which is indeed required for Salvation. Unless one believes and is baptized in the Holy Spirit - has the Spirit of God indwelling them - they are not saved. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus - God in the flesh - that His substitutionary death and resurrection to life is sufficient and the only means for the gift of eternal life. We are saved by grace ... what God has done for us ... not by works ... what we do for God by faith (baptism) ... is key to understanding this verse. Our salvation is wholly the work of God.

The focus of Mark 16:16 is belief, not baptism. "He who believed and has been baptized (in the Holy Spirit) shall be saved." We have already discussed the baptism of the Holy Spirit, so it would be redundant to rehash it here.

John 3:5

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Those who claim baptismal regeneration stand on this verse as well. It is highly unlikely that Jesus would be speaking to Nicodemus about an ordinance that, as of His speaking, was not instituted yet. Indeed Jesus would be speaking to Nicodemus in terms that he would understand and relate to. So, how do the Jews understand the term being born of water and the Spirit? Remember, at this time the Holy Spirit was not yet made available to believers. That would not yet come till after the death and resurrection of Jesus on the Day of Pentecost.

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Ezekiel 16:4

"As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths.

Jeremiah 2:13

"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water.

Jeremiah 17:13

O LORD, the hope of Israel, All who forsake You will be put to shame. Those who turn away on earth will be written down, Because they have forsaken the fountain of living water, even the LORD.

I've given three scriptures from the Old Covenant that give an indication of how Nicodemus might have understood these passages. Water was used for cleansing or purification and living waters is understood as the fountain of God. Being born of water was probably understood in one or both of these contexts. Jesus may well have been telling Nicodemus that He is indeed the fountain of living water, the water that gives eternal life, much in the same manner as He spoke to others elsewhere in Scripture.

John 7:38

"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

Jesus spoke the words recorded in John 7 during the last great day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The references of this was Isaiah 44, 55 and 58.

Isaiah 44:3

'For I will pour out water on the thirsty [land] And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring And My blessing on your descendants;

Isaiah 55:1

"Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost.

Isaiah 58:11

"And the LORD will continually guide you, And satisfy your desire in scorched places, And give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.

I think Nicodemus understood quite clearly what Jesus was making reference to with the words "born of water and of the Spirit" ... that He is indeed the water of life, the

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prophesied Messiah to come. After all, Nicodemus did accept Jesus as his Messiah (John 7:50, 19:39) despite his initial protest to the contrary.

1 Peter 3:21

Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

The verse in First Peter is another verse that Baptismal Regeneration stand upon. The proponents only heed the words, “baptism now saves you” while ignoring the remainder of the verse, “not the removal of dirt from the flesh.” This clearly is rejecting the Jewish rite of ceremonial cleansing by water and Christian water baptism as the means of Salvation ... for the clear distinction in meaning is made between water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The verse continues with, “but an appeal to God for a good conscience (repentance) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The baptism that now saves you is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, not the water of cleansing or purification but through the Spirit by repentance and the work of God ... Jesus’ resurrection to life by the power of God The Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:11

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

1 Peter 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

The real basis of our Salvation is through the *resurrection* of Jesus, not water baptism.

1 Corinthians 15:17

and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

To link water baptism with Salvation *contradicts* Salvation by grace. The Book of Acts says much to link baptism with *repentance*.

Acts 2:38

Peter [said] to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 16:30-31

30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

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We see with the two scriptures referenced above the clear distinction that water baptism is linked with repentance and that belief in Jesus alone is the basis for our Salvation. Repentance has to do with the turning of our minds away from sin and toward our Lord. Repentance has to do with the death and burial of our former sinful self. Other Scriptures in Acts link water baptism with repentance Acts 3:17-26, 4:8-12.

Colossians 2:12

having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

All attempts to reconcile the concept of baptismal regeneration with that of Salvation by grace alone is wholly inadequate. Arguments presented for baptismal regeneration just do not hold water, no pun intended. Neither do the arguments for infant baptism. The view that baptismal regeneration is the means of imparting saving grace is untenable. Scriptures support no such belief.

To insist that water baptism is a requirement for Salvation is akin to the Judaizers insistence that circumcision was necessary for Salvation. Paul vigorously rejected this notion in Galatians 5:1-12. Jesus never included the subject of baptism in any of His sermons. In fact, the words of Jesus to the thief on the cross is evidence that one is saved without the need for baptism when He said, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise" as recorded by Luke 23:43.

The view that baptism is a replacement for circumcision is also unscriptural. The Scriptures do not teach that the Old Covenant practice of circumcision to identify God's people is replaced by the New Covenant practice of water baptism. What the New Testament does teach is that is that the entire framework of the Old Testament has been replaced by the New Testament's working of the Holy Spirit. Circumcision is not of the flesh but of the heart.

Romans 2:29

But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

The true Jew is one who is a Jew inwardly by the Spirit, not ethnically by the flesh. We become a Spiritual Jew through the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. If anything has taken the place of the outward sign of circumcision, it is the inward sign of circumcising the heart through the power and work of God, the Holy Spirit and not water baptism.