

Do you have to be baptized? Is anything different after baptism?

The ritual of baptism does not save an individual; but it is nevertheless important. It is one's: first act of obedience after becoming a Christian (Ac 2:41, 18:8), evidence of his repentance (Ac 2:38, 41) and a demonstration of his spiritual unity in the body of Christ (1 Co 12:13; Ga 3:27, 28).

The Lord commanded his followers to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19)." He has all authority in heaven and on the earth (Mt 28:19–20a). The disciples were to reach and teach all the nations (28:19–20a). The early church, including Paul, practiced the rite of baptism (1 Cor. 1:14–17).

It is the baptism of the Holy Spirit which empowers the Christian (Ac 1:5). Every believer is indwelt with his spirit (Ro 8:9–11).

[Follow up question] I don't want to get baptized. Will I be punished? It seems like a 'get out of jail free' card.

God's plans for his bride are not to harm her but to prosper her and to give her hope and a future (Jer 29:11). One does not enter a newfound love relationship by arguing (Pr 25:24, 27:15).

Those who are called into fellowship with him (1 Cor. 1:9) share his convictions (1 Pe 3:8) because they are of his spirit (Phil 2:1). Christians trust the Lord and share their testimony to establish the gospel (Ac 10:42).

Believers witness in the world (Ac 1:8). They don't hide their light under a bushel basket (Mt 5:15-16). They don't call him *Lord Lord* and then not do the things which he says (Lk 6:46). Jesus said, "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed (Lk 9:26)."

He identified with us (Ps 8:5) so we should identify with him.

J. Vernon McGee wrote:

"We are buried with him by baptism [identification] into [His] death." Frankly, although I was reared a Presbyterian, I think that immersion is a more accurate type of this identification. I think the Spirit's baptism is the real baptism. Water is the ritual baptism, but I do think that immersion sets forth the great spiritual truth that is here. This is the reason a child of God should be baptized in water in our day. It is a testimony that he is joined to the living Christ. That is all important.

What did Peter mean when he said in 1 Peter 3:21, "... baptism doth also now save us ..."? How does it save us? Well, in the preceding verse he talks about eight souls who were saved in the ark. They went through the waters of judgment inside the ark. The folk in the water were those who were outside the ark, and they were drowned. The eight people in the ark didn't get wet at all—yet Peter says they were saved by baptism. Obviously the word baptism has nothing to do with water in this instance; rather it means identification. They were identified with the ark. They had believed God, and they had gotten into the ark. God saw that little boat floating on the surface of the water. Now today God sees Christ; He doesn't see Vernon McGee because I am in Christ. He is my ark today. Christ went down into the waters of death, and we are in Christ. And

we are raised with Him. We are joined to Him. This is important. Don't miss it. If you do, you will miss one of the greatest truths of the Christian life.¹

There are no 'get out of jail free' cards. The Lord's sacrifice cost him everything (Ro 5:8). Christians remember this (Ro 1:21).

When one knows to do good; but fails to do it, to him it is sin (Jas 4:17). All that God does and asks us to do is good (Ps 31:19).

The unbeliever is punished whereas the believer is chastened. Should God choose to chasten an individual it is a sign of sonship (Pr 3:11, 12) and of his love (Deut 8:5). Chastisement is designed to: correct (Jer. 24:5, 6), prevent sin (2 Cor. 12:7–9) and to bless Christians (Ps. 94:12, 13).

¹ McGee, J. V. (1991). *Thru the Bible commentary: The Epistles (Romans 1-8)* (electronic ed., Vol. 42, pp. 108–109). Thomas Nelson.