

Baptism in the New Testament

Starting with the Basics in New Testament Scripture

1. “Baptism is baptism”: When Scripture says Baptism, it normally means the water rite of Christian Baptism.
2. “The body of Christ is the body of Christ”: The historic, visible Church is the body of Christ written about in the NT and Baptism is the door to entry.
3. “Apostasy happens”. You cannot ‘fall away’ from something you do not belong to.
4. Therefore, “Baptism is efficacious”. Baptism does, actually, do something – namely unite you to Christ and the Church.

Jesus Baptism is the Foundation

Union with Christ is the central point of NT Baptism. When Jesus said to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, he was saying that we were to be united with him in his own Trinitarian baptism. We about Jesus’ baptism in Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, Matthew 3:16-17, and John 1:29-34.

Who is involved in the baptism of Jesus? God the Son (Jesus), God the Father (the voice from heaven), and God the Holy Spirit (the dove-like descent who remained on him).

Other References to Baptism in the NT

Using the Westminster Confession of Faith, here is what it says the sacrament of Baptism pertains to, which will be our guide for the NT references:

Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ,^a not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church,^b but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace,^c of his ingrafting into Christ,^d of regeneration,^e of remission of sins,^f and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life:^g which sacrament is, by Christ’s own appointment, to be continued in his Church until the end of the world.^h

a. [Mat 28:19](#). • b. [1 Cor 12:13](#). • c. [Rom 4:11](#) with [Col 2:11-12](#). • d. [Rom 6:5](#); [Gal 3:27](#).
• e. [Titus 3:5](#). • f. [Mark 1:4](#). • g. [Rom 6:3-4](#). • h. [Mat 28:19-20](#).

The Gift of the Spirit

The Spirit given at Baptism - Acts 2:37-41

The Spirit given after Baptism - Acts 8:1-8, 12-17

The Spirit given before Baptism - Acts 10:24-29, 44-48

So what is the common thread in all these passages from Acts?

It is **NORMATIVE** to expect someone to have received the Spirit when they are baptized. Not a single passage revokes or implies that we, as onlookers and fellow Christians, should expect anything other than the Spirit to be given at Baptism, just like Peter said in Acts 2:38. This is how it happened for Jesus at his baptism, so why would we expect any special treatment for us?

Sacramental Union and the Question of Efficacy

Calvin's doctrine of sacramental union was preserved very clearly in the WCF, chapter 27, sections 2 and 3, which read:

2. There is in every sacrament a spiritual relation or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified; whence it comes to pass that the names and the effects of the one are attributed to the other.^a

a. [Gen 17:10](#); [Mat 26:27-28](#); [Titus 3:5](#).

3. The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments, rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them; neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it,^a but upon the work of the Spirit,^b and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers.^c

a. [Rom 2:28-29](#); [1 Pet 3:21](#). • b. [Mat 3:11](#); [1 Cor 12:13](#). • c. [Mat 26:27-28](#).

In Conclusion

Tidying up the room after all the data has been presented, here are a few key questions and answers for you to remember...

- 1) Does Baptism do something? YES.
- 2) Does Baptism save? YES.
- 3) Should Baptism be repeated? NO.
- 4) Is this Reformed Theology? YES.

Questions?