

# Q&A: The Issue of Water Baptism

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## **Question: Could you please explain why water baptism is not to be applied today?**

One of the things I run into with a question like this is trying to ascertain the motive behind it. Some might ask your question with a goal of immediate refute upon reply. Some might ask it in honest curiosity. I'm having a bit of a tough time knowing your motive behind the question, so instead of going into lengthy detail and time, let me offer a tidbit of how I view the answer.

You asked: Could you please explain why water baptism is not to be applied today

This implies to me that you already know of the standard "position" that extreme dispensationalists take. So you've either never had this question addressed before or you've had it answered and didn't like the response. Hopefully my response will be some new insight (though brief as it will be).

First of all, our salvation is defined most explicitly in Ephesians through various messages scattered in the text. One of those messages is the following:

"There is one body and one spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." Ephesians 4:4-6

When I consider baptism as a standard believer in Christ, I have to admit that there are several versions of baptism being administered today. There is one in which one man "dunks" another man into water. There is one in which one man "sprinkles" another man with water. There is one in which one man "oils" a newborn baby as a parental introduction to the church. Then there's one that pastors (grace and non-grace alike) preach all the time about the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." So with all these in mind, I have to logically conclude by the passage of Scripture that they cannot all be proper in the eyes of God. Certainly if the Word of God makes it clear that there is one, then we must discern WHAT that one is. Wouldn't you agree?

Take a look at the following:

"For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 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." Colossians 2:9-12

The first thing to note in this passage with regard to your question is the issue of circumcision. According to Mosaic Law, it was required of Israel that their males be circumcised as a method of both cleanliness and showing themselves faithful to Christ in the removal of a piece of their flesh. As Gentiles began entering into the message of salvation, some of the Jews were beginning to push them to ALSO get circumcised. And in the midst of it...

"...not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised."  
Galatians 2:3

Paul was serving the cause of Christ with Gentiles and those with him did not feel compelled to follow through with a custom Mosaic Law. Why could Titus act like that when this was exactly what Mary and Joseph did with Jesus and he claimed to be a follower of Christ? Certainly there had to be a reason, right? The reason is because of Paul's teaching...

"For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love." Galatians 5:6

According to Paul, it didn't matter. And Titus took that to heart. It didn't matter that the Jews WANTED Titus to get circumcised... he didn't feel compelled to be, so he didn't do it. And ultimately, it made no difference.

So here's the question. If Paul didn't believe that it mattered, how could he then say in Colossians that you (his audience) was circumcised in Christ?

I believe there's a deep and mysterious truth behind this, though I'm not sure if you've ever considered it. First of all, if we are IN Christ, when did we BECOME in Christ? Was it when we believed? Or when we believed, were we realizing that He has always known us in Himself? I believe He has always known us within His being. In which case, our being "in Christ" means that we have ALWAYS been in Christ. Taking that point to mind, look at the following...

"And when eight days were completed before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb." Luke 2:21

Christ was circumcised in the flesh. When this took place, though He was just an infant, where were we? Were we non-existent? No. We were already IN Him. So when Christ was circumcised, what does that mean happened to His Body? His Body was then circumcised logically as well. It wasn't a matter of Christ being circumcised and then everyone after that needing to proceed in His actions. Many to most of His actions were done to the glory of His Body so that His Body would NOT have to do what He did.

For example, we both know that Christ was crucified, but there is a tremendous reason WHY He was crucified. Because He didn't desire for us to endure it ourselves. He took the payment upon the cross Himself so we wouldn't have to. With me so far?

Here is a small list of things that Christ did that you and I would no doubt agree are not our responsibility...

1. Circumcision: Christ received it physically... we receive it spiritually.
2. Death: Christ received it physically... we receive it spiritually.
3. Burial: Christ received it physically... we receive it spiritually.
4. Resurrection: Christ received it physically... we receive it spiritually.

I'm sure you wouldn't be of the belief that we must "crucify ourselves" physically in order to follow Christ, right? Surely you would say that we should "spiritually" crucify our flesh, though Christ has already done the grunt work.

If we take all these various pieces of what Christ received physically, and we equally consider the context of Colossians when it says that the "circumcision" was one done without hands, we must draw a pretty fair conclusion that baptism has also become a similar concept.

Were we to take a water baptism at this stage in our understanding of God's grace, it wouldn't make much sense in terms of our spiritual baptism, would it? For if we take water baptism at this point, what we're suggesting is that there is something more we must do before we can be considered complete in Christ. Paul makes a common thread of truth in his messages wherein Body believers are completely in Christ upon believing... and believing only. Is there a truth to striving toward righteousness and purity in our journey and walk? Sure there is. But water baptism doesn't play a role of significance in that anymore.

I consider it great joy to be blessed with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. For it is through the Spirit that I am sealed toward my inheritance in Christ. May you find the same joy and blessing in your walk of life.