

# “Be Baptized” (Acts 2:38)

## I. What is Baptism?

*“And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you – not the removal of dirt from the body but a pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 3:21)*

### A. “Baptism now saves you...”

### B. “—not the removal of dirt from the body...”

### C. “but the pledge...”

1. The word “pledge” (New International Version) or “appeal” (New American Standard Bible) is *eperotema*. The Greeks used this particular word for the formal questions and consent that sealed a legal business contract. This word was also used to describe the activity of a Roman soldier when he pledged himself to serve Caesar. In baptism we pledge (i.e., covenant) with God and He pledges (covenants) to us. *Baptism is our salvation covenant contract with God.*
2. The act of baptism cannot be understood apart from this covenant framework. In the Old Testament God made covenants with people and nations through covenant ceremonies. (For some examples see Genesis 17:3-14; Exodus 24:4-8; Joshua 24:1-27.) These ceremonies were legal contracts between God and His people. The ceremonies were usually audio-visual in nature. In the ceremony, the promises and blessings that God offered were clearly stated and sometimes visually demonstrated. Then the people would respond through both a verbal and physical action to show that they accepted the contract.
3. Likewise in baptism God offers certain promises and blessings to us. These promises and blessings are stated mainly in symbolic form: God promises to wash us, pour out the Holy Spirit, rename us, etc. We then respond to His offer through submitting to the washing of our bodies and verbally pledging our life to the Lord.

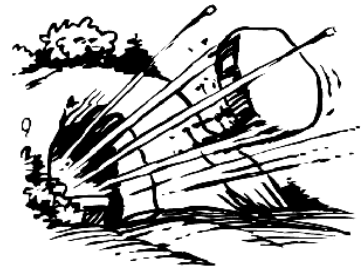


### D. “[the pledge] of a good conscience toward God.”

The pledge must be made from the heart, not just the mouth. In Biblical terms the heart is not merely the seat of the emotions and affections, but also of the intellect and will. The pledge of your life to the Lord must come from the heart or it means nothing. Romans 10:9 agrees, “*If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*” Giving the proper responses to questions that the pastor asks does not seal the covenant between you and God. When you pledge your life to Jesus, you must mean it in the deepest part of your being.

### E. “It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ”

This is where the power of salvation in baptism actually comes from. Our part of the covenant act of baptism is to “pledge.” But the pledge would be meaningless if God had not already done His part in Jesus Christ. God offers salvation to us through baptism by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The very power of Jesus’ resurrection life is presented in baptism!



II. **Water Baptism and the Covenants** – In order to fully grasp the significance of water baptism, it must be seen by placing baptism in the setting of the covenant. The teachings of the New Testament show the significance of water baptism by demonstrating how it parallels with three of the great Old Testament covenants.

A. **Parallels Between Water Baptism and God’s Covenant with Noah**

*For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. (1 Peter 3:18-22)*

B. **Parallels Between Water Baptism and God’s Covenant with Abraham**

*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. (Colossians 2:9-14)*

C. **Parallels Between Water Baptism and the Covenant with the Israelites under Moses**

*“For I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)*

III. **Christ and Your Baptism**

*Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:13-17)*

What is the meaning of “it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness”?