

CatClub: Question 45



1. Recap: This week we explore further the subject of baptism. We have already seen that the sacraments are visible signs and seals that we are bound together as God's chosen covenant people by faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. Throughout the Bible we see that God has made promises to his people – i.e. promises which we call a covenant, or agreement, that God will be faithful to us if we remain faithful to him. Therefore, in baptism the individual is declared as belonging to God's covenant people, the Church.

In Old Testament times before Jesus, Hebrew boys were circumcised as a sign of their belonging to God's covenant people, Israel. However, since Jesus' day both the sons and daughters of Christians are baptised as a sign of their belonging to God's covenant people, the Church. Adults who have never been baptised and who come to faith later in life are baptised at that point.

Q45 asks: Is baptism with water the washing away of sin itself? **Answer:** **No, only the blood of Christ and the renewal of the Holy Spirit can cleanse us from sin.**

2. Investigation - please look up:

1. (In the New Testament) Luke chapter 3, verse 16. Here John the Baptist tells us that, although in the ceremony of baptism we are baptised with water, in reality we are baptised with God the Holy Spirit: only he can renew us by cleansing us from sin. **The water points to the work of the Holy Spirit.**

2. (In the New Testament) Romans chapter 6, verses 3-4. As we saw last week, these verses talk about the reality to which baptism points and which God promises to bring to fruition in our lives. **However we can only claim this promise as ours if we learn about and experience for ourselves the reality to which baptism points.**

Additional explanation: Baptism with water is therefore a sign of a greater reality. It is also a **seal** of that reality. A seal is a **pledge** (=a promise) that what has already been done by someone else (i.e. Jesus, by dying on the cross for our sins) is true. However, that seal doesn't work magically or automatically: **it is a promise that the person baptised, when he/she comes to faith in Jesus for him/herself, will be accepted by God on the basis of what Jesus has done.**

It is important to understand that baptism does not automatically or magically confer the inner reality of salvation upon the person being baptised. **That is the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit.** For baptism to mean anything, the individual must come to faith for him/herself – and in this the role of God's covenant people, the Church, in teaching and bringing up the person in the faith is absolutely vital.

>>>Next week's question: What is the Lord's Supper?

This week's songs: 1. 'Washed away' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5JeGY81kZo>
2. 'Nothing but the blood of Jesus' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYjhGeAIG6k>

Luke 3:16

¹⁶ John (the Baptist) answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Romans 6:3-4

³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.