

Why We Baptize By Immersion

In the church around the world baptism is performed in different ways. Some sprinkle the head with water, some pour water over the head and some immerse the entire person under water. Those who prefer to sprinkle may point to a few texts that mention being sprinkled with water. (Ezekiel 36:25; Hebrews 9:13-14; 10:22) Those who prefer pouring may point to how the Spirit is poured out on believers. (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18; 33; 10:45; Romans 5:5; Titus 3:5-6)

While those are important scriptures about God's blessings, they are not talking about baptism. At Valley Brook we believe that the Bible clearly teaches that baptism is by immersion for individuals who are mature enough to profess their faith in Jesus Christ. It is the only method associated with baptism in the Bible and it is the only mode that that lines up with the teaching of scripture.

1. The New Testament teaches that baptism identifies the believer with Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Only immersion accurately shows Jesus' death and descent into burial, followed by emersion out of the water into resurrection.
See Romans 6:1-10; Colossians 2:11-12. *
2. The Greek word used for baptism in the New Testament means to plunge, dip, or immerse in water. In secular ancient Greek, this word was used to explain such things as the sinking of ships that had been submerged in water. ... The early translators of the Bible into English ran into the dilemma that translating baptize in as "immerse" would confuse people. So rather than translating the word, they merely transliterated it, changing the Greek characters into Roman letters. *
3. According to the Gospels John the Baptizer immersed people in the river. John also selected the Jordan River as the place for conducting his baptisms because "*water was plentiful there.*" (John 3:23, ESV) *
4. When Jesus was baptized it seems he was immersed in water since he came out of the water as the dove descended on him. (Matthew 3:13-16; Mark 1:9-10) *
5. Philip took the Ethiopian eunuch down into the water to baptize him, indicating it was by immersing him in water. (Acts 8:38-39) *
6. When someone who was not racially Jewish converted to Judaism in the Old Testament (and in the present day), they underwent a Jewish proselyte baptism to show that God had cleansed them from their sin. The mode of this baptism was (and is) immersion. *

7. The Bible does speak of our salvation in terms of being cleansed from sin, sprinkled by Jesus, and having the Holy Spirit poured out upon us. However, it is important to note that none of the occurrences of sprinkling or pouring in the Bible are in any way related to baptism.*

* (Mark Driscoll & Gerry Breshears, *Vintage Church: Timeless Truths and Timely Methods*, Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, ©2008, pp.120-121)