

# New Life through Baptism

From [Gn 3:15](#) onward, Scripture contains promises, prophecies, and types of Christ and His gracious work on our behalf (see p [1245](#)). Because Holy Baptism plays such an important part in delivering Christ's work of redemption personally to us, the Bible foreshadows and prophesies the "washing of regeneration" ([Ti 3:5](#)) that God gives us through His Son.

Christian Baptism is more than a ceremony representing what God did for us in Christ, and being baptized is more than just obeying God's command with no personal benefit. **Baptism is not an afterthought, as if God decided to add a subplot with no real significance or connection to the main story about Jesus.** The Bible records that from the very beginning, God intended to join water to His Word to create new life.

## Creating Life

Compare [Gn 1](#) with [Jn 1](#). Note that the first three words of both chapters are the same ("In the beginning"). Moses records that while the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters ([Gn 1:2](#)), God created our world and everything in it by speaking His Word ([Gn 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26](#); cf [Ps 33:6, 9](#); [148:5](#); [Heb 11:3](#)). John writes about God's Word, the Son of God: "All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made" ([Jn 1:3](#)). By looking at [Gn 1](#) and [Jn 1](#) together, we see the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—**bringing forth new life in connection with water.**

Notice that God did not recite a fancy incantation or wave a magic wand. Instead, He spoke His Word, and the water and the air teemed with life. It is the same way with Baptism, which is not a magical ceremony. In Baptism, just as at creation, God speaks His Word and brings forth abundant life, received through saving faith. As the Spirit of God hovered over the waters at creation, so too the Spirit is present at our Baptism (cf [Mt 3:16](#); [Ac 2:38–39](#)).

Other examples of this Old Testament foundation for Holy Baptism appear below.

## All That We Need

From its opening chapters, the Bible points to the main plot in God's great salvation story: the coming of His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to live, to die, and to rise again for us. But God's Word also foreshadows Baptism as an integral part of God's story to personally deliver *to us* what Christ has done *for us*.

With Christ, you have all that you need. Through His Word, His name—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—attached to the water of Baptism ([Mt 28:19](#)), God creates saving faith and brings forth new life. He separates you far from His wrath and punishment. He delivers you from attacks of the sinful nature that would drive you to the brink of destruction. And He graciously welcomes you into the promised land, allowing you to cross over from death into life. See p [1920](#).

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## When to Baptize

Does the Bible restrict Baptism on the basis of age, accountability, or mental ability? No. When

Christ instituted Baptism, He did not apply such restrictions but simply instituted Baptism for “all nations” (Mt 28:19; on the nonbiblical “age of accountability,” see note, Is 7:16). Such issues as age did not arise among the earliest Christians, who are known to have baptized whole households of people (see notes, Ac 16:15, 33).

In the third century AD, some people in North Africa proposed that, because the immature may fall into sin after Baptism, perhaps it should be withheld until a person is more mature (Ter, ANF 3:677–78). However, Christian leaders continued to practice Baptism as they had before—without restrictions on age. A report about a council of 66 bishops in North Africa illustrates this. The prevailing practice there was to baptize a child within two or three days of birth (ANF 5:353). These bishops even rejected the argument that Baptism should be withheld until a child was eight days old so its age could correspond to the age of Old Testament circumcision (Gn 17:12)! They pointed out that God, as Father, could be a father to anyone at any age. Cyp: “[God] shows Himself a Father to all with well-weighted equality for the attainment of heavenly grace... No one ought to be hindered from baptism and from the grace of God, who is merciful and kind and loving to all” (ANF 5:354). Baptism, like life, does not depend on the maturity of the one who receives it, but on the grace of the One who bestows it: the Father.

OT Example	NT Affirmation	Meaning
The flood (Gn 6–9)	1Pt 3:20–21	The flood shows God washing away sinners who corrupted His creation. But Peter emphasizes the blessing of salvation God provides to Noah and his family because the water lifted them up. God gave them new life.
Circumcision (Gn 17)	Col 2:11–12	Paul compares OT circumcision with NT Baptism, by which God grants new life.
The exodus (Ex 14)	1Co 10:1–2; Col 2:12–15	The Israelites faced death on every side. We are hopeless before the onslaught of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. Like Israel, though, God gives us deliverance through water—the water of Baptism. Paul wrote that we are “buried” with Christ in Baptism (Col 2:12). In that burial, God joins our death to Christ’s death. Our Baptism swallows up death, just as surely as the Red Sea swallowed up Pharaoh’s army.
Ritual cleansing (cf Ex 19:22; 24:7–8; Lv 11–15)	Mk 7:1–5; Heb 9:11–14, 19–22; 10:22	Washing was central to consecration and purity in the OT covenant. Unclean people faced exclusion from the sanctuary and from the community. Defilement was even punished with death. Cleansing brought people back into the life and holiness of the community. The NT uses the Gk word <i>baptizo</i> to describe such washings. The Book of Hebrews mingles the blood of the covenant with references to Baptism.
Entering the	1Pt 2:2–3, 9–	With great anticipation, the Israelites stood on the banks of the Jordan

<p>Promised Land (Jsh 3)</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>River, ready to enter the Promised Land. God told Joshua to lead the priests into the Jordan River with the ark of the Lord. They would open the way for the people.</p> <p>God called Canaan a "land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex 3:8). In contrast to the wilderness, it must have seemed like heaven. But before the Israelites could enter upon their new life, they would need to pass through the water. Early Christians symbolized this new life by drinking from a cup of milk and honey after Baptism.</p>
<p>New life and the Spirit (Ezk 36:25-27)</p>	<p>Jn 3:5; Ac 2:38-39</p>	<p>Through Ezekiel, the Lord prophesied that He would give a new heart and His Holy Spirit to those sprinkled in Baptism.</p>