

THE MEANING OF BAPTIZE/BAPTISM

We are to FIRST make disciples and then baptize them (cf. Mt. 28:19). Only after people received the Holy Spirit were they then commanded to be baptized (cf. Acts 10:47-48). The NT, without exception, teaches that people are saved by faith, and then after they believe, they are to be baptized. Hence, we practice believer's baptism. Salvation is by faith. Baptism then follows as an outward testimony of identification.

The words baptize/baptism are actually Greek words, not English words. The KJV translators worked in a context where they did not want to upset the Church of England, which practiced sprinkling as the mode of "baptism". So instead of translating these words, they simply transliterated them.

	<u>Greek</u>	<u>English</u>
Noun.....	BAPTISMA	= BAPTISM
Verb.....	BAPTIZO	= BAPTIZE

The literal meaning of baptism/baptize means "to dip under". Without argument that is the primary meaning. The secondary meaning is "to dip into dye", with the metaphorical idea of IDENTIFICATION. So the literal meaning is "immerse", often used with the sense of identification. An actual translation would then read as follows:

Matthew 28:19 (NKJV)

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing [immersing] them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

The Holy Spirit very specifically chose this precise word, and it is for this reason that we practice immersion. This is what Jesus said to do. The Holy Spirit could have chosen other words.

The Greek word EKCHEO means "to pour". The Greek word RHANTIZO means "to sprinkle". But inspired Scripture never uses these words. Without exception it always uses the words (baptisma or baptizo), meaning to immerse.

The Greek word used for Baptism!

Ekcheo (meaning "to pour") – NEVER USED

Rhantizo (meaning "to sprinkle") – NEVER USED

Baptizo (meaning “to immerse”) – ALWAYS USED

An example of the meaning of baptize is found in a Greek text written by a Greek poet and physician named Nicander who lived about 200 B.C. In giving a recipe for making a pickle he says that the vegetable should be boiled and then baptized (baptizo) in a vinegar solution. The idea is that the vegetable would be permanently identified with the vinegar solution through and through by immersion.

This word baptizo/baptisma most accurately reflects our COMPLETE identity in Christ. We are not partially identified, but FULLY, just like a cloth dipped in dye is completely identified with the dye, or like a pickle that has been permanently and completely identified with a vinegar solution.

The Spirit used this precise word for this reason. As believers, we are constantly said to be IN Christ. Immersion pictures our complete identification of being IN CHRIST. We are thoroughly and permanently colored with and identified with Him. That is the meaning of baptism. The very word reflects the deep identifying nature of our union with Christ.

The essential MEANING of baptism in the N.T. is “**Identification**”. In baptism, we IDENTIFY with Christ in His death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection from the grave as Lord over all.

This is, without exception, the idea behind it. Keeping this straight will protect us from false doctrine. Baptism is simply a testimony of IDENTIFICATION!

Acts 18:8 (NKJV)

8 Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.