

Q72. Does this outward washing with water itself wash away sins?

A. No,¹ only Jesus Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins.²

1. Matt. 3:11 – "I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I, and I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

1 Pet. 3:21 – "And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,"

Eph. 5:26 – "in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word,"

2. 1 John 1:7 – "but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."

1 Cor. 6:11 – "And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

Q73. Why then does the Holy Spirit call baptism the water of rebirth and the washing away of sins?

A. God has good reason for these words. To begin with, God wants to teach us that the blood and Spirit of Christ take away our sins just as water removes dirt from the body.¹ But more important, God wants to assure us, by this divine pledge and sign, that we are as truly washed of our sins spiritually as our bodies are washed with water physically.²

1. Rev. 1:5 – "and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood"

Rev. 7:14 – "I said to him, 'Sir, you are the one who knows.' Then he said to me, 'These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

1 Cor. 6:11 – "And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

2. Mark 16:16 – "The one who believes and is baptized will be saved, but the one who does not believe will be condemned."

Gal. 3:27 – "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

Q74. Should infants also be baptized?

A. Yes. Infants as well as adults are included in God's covenant and people,¹ and they, no less than adults, are promised deliverance from sin through Christ's blood² and the Holy Spirit who produces faith.³ Therefore, by baptism, the sign of the covenant, they too should be incorporated into the Christian church and distinguished from the children of unbelievers.⁴ This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision,⁵ which was replaced in the New Testament by baptism.⁶

1. Gen. 17:7 – "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you."

2. Matt. 19:14 – "but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."

3. Luke 1:15 – "for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Luke 1:44 – “For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy.”

Ps. 22:9–11 – “Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother’s breast. On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near, and there is no one to help.”

Isa. 46:1–5

Acts 2:39 – “For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.”

4. Acts 10:47 – “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”

5. Gen. 17:9–14 – “God said to Abraham, ‘As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.’”

6. Col. 2:11–13 – “In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by the removal of the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses,”