

# "Let's Dive In!"

By Allan Pole



Theme: Embrace the life God offers with your whole heart.

Text: Hebrews 6:2

Here's a thought: Max Lucado observes, "Baptism separates the tire kickers from the car buyers."

The next time you go to a swimming pool or a beach look around and watch the behaviours of different people in and around the water. Some remain fully clothed and don't come close, others take off their shoes and socks and get their toes wet, others wear swimsuits while they soak up the sun but rarely, if ever, go near or in the water, others sit at the side of the pool with their legs in the water, others wade in cautiously up to their waists or chests and others dive in so they are fully immersed within seconds.

This can be a helpful picture to keep in mind as we look at Hebrews 5:11-6:3:

11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. 6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, 2 **instruction about baptisms**, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And God permitting, we will do so. NIV

Note that "baptisms" is plural rather than singular. The writer says "baptisms" not "baptism". Remember that the letter to the Hebrews was written 2,000 years ago to Hebrews or Jews who had become followers of Jesus Christ. While our thoughts would rush to certain images of baptism let's start by asking, "Why would the author be inspired by the Holy Spirit to address baptisms and what would the original recipients of this letter be thinking?" The Jewish

people were certainly familiar with the baptisms or “various ceremonial washings” that were practiced (Hebrews 9:10).

Some Bible students have identified seven baptisms in Scripture ([www.gotquestions.org/seven-baptisms.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/seven-baptisms.html)):

1. The baptism of Moses (1 Corinthians 10:1–3) that demonstrated the Jews’ deliverance from Egypt.
2. The baptism of John (Mark 1:4) that showed repentance.
3. The baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13–17) that revealed Jesus’ identification with sinful humanity.
4. The baptism of fire (Matthew 3:11–12) where John the Baptist prophesied that Jesus would judge the world.
5. The baptism of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13–14; 1 Corinthians 12:13).
6. The baptism of the cross (Mark 10:35–39) where Jesus used the language of baptism to refer to His sufferings and those of His disciples).
7. The baptism of believers (Matthew 28:19), which is a washing in water to symbolize the action of the Holy Spirit in a believer’s heart.

Baptisms, or immersions of the body in water, sprinklings, and washings, were frequent as religious rites among the Hebrews, and were all emblematical of that purity which a holy God requires in his worshippers, and without which they cannot be happy here, nor glorified in heaven (from Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1996, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

The doctrine of baptisms is mentioned as the third element or principle for followers of the Messiah here in Hebrews 6:2. The Jews made much of various kinds of washings so it was important that the true doctrine on the subject should be stated as one of the elements of the Christian faith, which builds upon the foundation of the Law and the Prophets.

Of all these baptisms there are two that are particularly applicable to us today. Our Heavenly Father calls us to soak in:

**The Son (Baptism in Water)**

**The Holy Spirit (Baptism in the Holy Spirit)**

**The Son (Baptism in Water)**



Once we have repented or turned from our former way of life, the Bible commands us to take the next step - to be water baptized. Jesus Himself stressed the importance of water baptism when He commissioned His followers to baptize all those who dedicate their lives to Him.

After Jesus was resurrected from the dead and just before He was taken up into heaven in Mark 16:15-16:

15 He [Jesus] said to them [the disciples], "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." NIV

To be baptized is to identify with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism pictures the death of the believer to the old nature of sin, the burial of the old nature (going down into the water), and the resurrection of the new nature in the believer (coming up out of the water).

The word "baptism" means, "To dip, envelope, immerse or completely cover." From the very definition of the word we understand that baptism speaks of immersion. We find that the Biblical references to baptism also seem to indicate that immersion was the mode.

The young son of a Baptist minister was in church one morning when he saw, for the first time, baptism by immersion. He was greatly interested in it, and the next morning proceeded to baptize - you guessed it - his three cats in the bathtub.

The youngest kitten bore it very well, and so did the younger cat, but the old family tom cat rebelled. The old feline struggled with the boy, clawed and tore his skin, and finally got away. With considerable effort the boy caught the old tom again and proceeded with the "ceremony." But the cat acted worse than ever, clawing and spitting, and scratching the boy's face.

Finally, after barely getting the cat splattered with water, he dropped him on the floor in disgust and said, "Fine, be a Methodist if you want to!"

Some have concluded from Mark 16:16 and other verses that baptism in water is necessary for salvation. If baptism was necessary for salvation, Jesus would not have made the promise that He did to the repentant thief that hung on the cross beside Him that he would be with Him that day in paradise (see Luke 23:39-43). Water baptism is not a step to salvation, but a step of obedience.

What does the Bible say about infant baptism? We never find this practiced or referred to in the Bible; rather the Scriptures speak of someone making a conscious decision to follow Christ prior to being baptized. An infant is not able to make such a decision.

Pastor and author Max Lucado warns, “Tragically, some people believe they are going to heaven when they die just because a few drops of water were sprinkled over their heads a few weeks after their birth. They have no personal faith, have never made a personal decision, and are banking on a hollow ceremony to save them. How absurd.”

Max Lucado also observes, “Baptism separates the tire kickers from the car buyers.”

The two activities listed in Hebrews chapter 2 (baptisms and laying on of hands) have to do with a person's relationship to the local assembly of believers. In the New Testament, a person who repented and trusted Christ was baptized and became a part of a local church (Acts 2:41-47).

While water itself can never cleanse sin (1 Peter 3:21), baptism is a symbol of spiritual cleansing (from The Bible Exposition Commentary. Copyright © 1989 by Chariot Victor Publishing, and imprint of Cook Communication Ministries. All rights reserved. Used by permission.) Baptism in water is an outward sign of an inward reality. *Without* the inward reality, baptism is meaningless; *with* the inward reality, baptism is a meaningful seal on what has happened in our hearts and a strong testimony to the world of the change we have embraced.

Have you been baptized in water? If not, will you take this next step as a follower of Jesus? As you lead others to follow Jesus, will you encourage and invite them to be baptized in water?

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The Son (Baptism in Water)

### **The Holy Spirit (Baptism in the Holy Spirit)**



The phrase “baptism with, in, or by the Spirit” occurs seven times in the New Testament (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16 and 1 Corinthians 12:13). This is not the same as water baptism.

The torch was being passed from Jesus to His disciples in Acts 1:3-8:

3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion,

while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." 6 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." NIV

Jesus had told His disciples a number of times that He would die and be raised to life. They just couldn't seem to understand until it actually happened. For the Apostle Thomas, he had to see and touch Jesus after He was resurrected to believe (John 20:24). A week later he was given the opportunity, and He called out to Jesus (in John 20:28), "My Lord and my God!"

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He left them with these words that echoed what He had told them before – it would actually be better for them and for others who would come to believe that He leave and send the Holy Spirit (John 16:7). While Jesus took on the physical limitations of time and space that come with being a human, the Holy Spirit would have no such limitations, providing them with the source of power they would need to fulfill the Great Commandments – to love the Lord and to love others – and to fulfill the Great Commission – to make disciples of all nations.

R.A. Torrey (1856-1928) explained, "The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not for the purpose of cleansing from sin, but for the purpose of empowering for service."

Jesus promises His followers in Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you." The Greek word translated as "power" is *dunamis*, the same word from which we get the word "dynamite". What a powerful word picture of who and what we have available to us as followers of Christ!

Just when Thomas and the other disciples began to understand about His death and resurrection, Jesus ascended up through the clouds and into heaven. They were again left wondering what just happened. While they were scratching their heads and staring at the sky, two angels appeared to them so they would get on with obeying what Jesus had just told them to do – wait in Jerusalem to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Waiting is difficult. In fact, Will Ferrell advised, "Before you marry a person, you should first make them use a computer with slow internet service to see who they really are."

The disciples went back to Jerusalem to pray and wait, then the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost. The people spoke in tongues (praising God and speaking God's messages in the languages of men and angels) while others thought they were drunk then Peter got up to explain the Good News about Jesus and 3,000 people responded by turning to Christ, being baptized and joining the church (see Acts chapter 2). Thomas and the other disciples would never be the same. Other sources tell us that Thomas went on to preach in Greece and India, where he died for preaching about Jesus after being speared by four soldiers.

We go on to read in the Book of Acts how the church followed the rhythm that Jesus had modelled for them - spend time with the Father and be filled with the Holy Spirit then go spend time with people where the Spirit would speak and move through them. We are called to the same rhythm today of being filled up and being poured out.

Are you committed to telling others about Jesus? Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit? If no, would you like to be? If yes, are you being refilled with the Holy Spirit every day?

While on vacation in Cuba I went for a swim. While I dipped in my toe, I am sure I saw resort staff dumping a wheelbarrow full of ice into the other end of the pool. ☺ As I got in up to my chest the water felt so cold it took my breath away. I have found the best way to enjoy a pool of water that is cooler than I would like is to go underwater immediately. It is far less enjoyable to wade in gradually.

Likewise, the best way to experience Jesus Christ is to be totally dedicated to following Him. Until we give ourselves completely to knowing Him and making Him known we will not enjoy all that He has to offer and we will misrepresent Him to the world around us. When we make the big decision to confess Him as our Saviour and Lord and as we follow Him each day Christlikeness is formed and developed in us so others will see and hear Him in us.

You can't be "sort of married". You can't be "sort of pregnant". You can't be "sort of a follower of Jesus". Either you are or you aren't!

The best way to experience the Holy Spirit is to be baptized in Him and filled with Him every day. Until we allow the Spirit of God access to every part of our hearts and minds there will be bondages and pockets of resistance in us that shut Him out. When we are filled to overflowing with Him and empowered for service by Him we will walk in all that was intended for us.

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