

Believe and Be Baptized

Gold from "Through the Water" — to the believer

Jørn André Halseth



The Risen One's Final Command

Matthew 28:19-20 · Therefore go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.

With all authority in heaven and on earth, the risen King commands: make disciples — and disciples are made through baptism and obedience to everything He commanded. This is not a suggestion; it is the foundation.

Dear friend — this is gold from the Bible, tried in the fire. Not something made up or merely my opinion; just the Scripture itself, presented as openly and honestly as possible. The risen Jesus Christ, our Savior and friend, gave the church **his final commands** before he ascended — and baptism stands as **one** pillar in the midst of them.

Mark 16:16 · He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe shall be condemned.

Notice what is bound together, and by which word. **Believe and be baptized** — joined by "and," not "or." This is not a suggestion from a preacher; these are the final words of Jesus, who had just conquered death. In Greek, pisteúsas πιστεύσας^{G4100} ("he who has believed") is an **active** participle: you act, you believe. Baptisteís βαπτισθείς^{G907}

("he who has been baptized") is **passive**: you submit, it is done to you. Two halves of one and the same response. The judgment in the final clause, by the way, does not fall on the unbaptized, but on the *unbelieving* — for it is unbelief, not a lack of water, that shuts a soul out. Jesus' command stands: believe **and** be baptized. These are Jesus' own words.

The Pattern That Is Never Broken

The Acts of the Apostles shows the same order every single time: preaching, belief, baptism — without a single exception. The eunuch (Acts 8:36), Lydia and the jailer (Acts 16), Crispus and the Corinthians who "heard, believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). And it began on the day of Pentecost:

Acts 2:38 · Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Even the grammar distinguishes. "Repent" is active and plural — a command to the whole crowd. "Let yourselves be baptized" shifts to the passive and **singular** — one by one. And the preposition matters: one is baptized "into" (Greek *eis eis*^{G1519}) the remission of sins — *with a view toward* it, not *because* it had already been given:

The grammar itself teaches us that repentance is a decision you make, while baptism is an act you receive — and that no one can disappear into the crowd at the water's edge. Every soul stands alone before God.

The promise — and your children

Acts 2:39 · For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are far off, even as many as the Lord our God will call to himself.

Here someone will object: "You see — the promise belongs to the children." But read what the promise *is*, and whom it reaches. It is not an automatic membership; it is "the gift of the Holy Spirit" from the verse before (v. 38) — the very thing Peter has just promised *to those who repent and are baptized*. And note the three terms: "your children" (τέκνα τέκνα^{G5043} — offspring, descendants; not βρέφος βρέφος^{G1025}, an infant) stands side by side with "all who are far off." If the word "children" secured baptism without faith, then "all who are far off" would do the same — and the whole world would be baptized at a stroke. But the sentence is locked by its own key: "as many as the Lord our God will **call**" (προσκαλέσεται προσκαλέσεται^{G4341}). The promise is wide in *reach* — it embraces your children and the distant generations — but it is received personally,

by the call that is heard and answered. And Luke himself shuts the door that same day: "those who received his word were baptized" (v. 41) — not all who were born into a house, but those who *received* it. The promise belongs to the children; it waits for them at the same door you yourself walked through: hear, believe, be baptized.

When the Savior, the Risen One, struck Saul to the ground, the first person to meet him was Ananias. He said: "Why do you delay? Arise and be baptized" (Acts 22:16). No hesitation. No delay, no debate.

Saul became Paul the moment he died, was buried, and rose with Christ. It was not a question but a command — he **humbled** himself and obeyed; then and there.

And when households were baptized — Lydia's, the jailer's, Crispus' — the word was first preached to them, they believed, and *then* they were baptized (*Acts 16:32-34, Acts 18:8*). Not one infant is described in the original text. To read infant baptism into these accounts is to add what Scripture does not say — and the Word of God warns against adding to or taking away (*Revelation 22:18-19*).

Buried with Christ

Romans 6:3-4 · Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Here lies the crucial point: one only buries someone who is dead. The form of baptism — down into the water, up again — requires one who has died to themselves and desires to be raised with Christ. Paul binds the power to faith: "in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God" (Col 2:12). An infant has no faith to exercise.

Noah was saved *through* water (*First Peter 3:20*); Israel was baptized into Moses in the cloud and the sea (*First Corinthians 10:2*); Naaman dipped himself seven times and came up clean (*Second Kings 5:14* — the full type in [Naaman](#)). The pattern was set long before Christ. Therefore it is written: "*You go down as the old man; you come up as the new.*"

Colossians 2:11-12 · In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

One Word — and It Is Not Sprinkling

Greek had three words. *Rhantízō* ῥαντίζω^{G4472} — to **sprinkle** — is used of the blood (Heb 9), never of baptism. *Ekchéō* ἐκχέω^{G1632} — to **pour out** — is used of the Spirit (Acts 2:17), never of baptism. For baptism, the Holy Spirit uses only one word: *baptízō* βαπτίζω^{G907} — to immerse completely. Had baptism been sprinkling, there was a word for it — but the Spirit did not use it, not even once. The imagery is confirmed everywhere: Jesus "came up out of the water" (Matt 3:16); Philip and the eunuch went *down into* the water, and when the eunuch came *up out of* the water, Philip was no longer there (Acts 8:38-39). Therefore, there is only **one** baptism:

Ephesians 4:5 · one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

The Bride's Garment

John's baptism was no new invention — it was the *mikvah* every Jew knew: **full immersion** in "living water" from a heavenly source, always with a portion of the water having free access from heaven, as a shadow of the life of Jesus. When a non-Jew wanted to become part of Israel — a citizen among God's own people — he first had to descend into this water (a "proselyte baptism"):

Through the waters of the *mikvah*, the old man died, and a new identity was born. The convert emerged as a new creation, a son or daughter of Abraham. This is the shadow of baptism, hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Jesus Himself provided the pattern for the *mikvah* and instituted it among the Jews long before the Gentiles received Him! And when Jesus came, His disciples began to baptize us, His people, into **His** kingdom. You were married to your wife just as we are married to Christ. Nothing less. Shall we then treat the marriage and the consummation with Jesus Christ as infinitely less important than our earthly ones — with spouse and wedding ceremony? Jesus never said we should stop baptizing people upon their own faith. And if we claim to be faithful to **HIS WORD, the Bible**, then we will have a problem explaining ourselves the day we stand before Him — for then even the most zealous among us may be rejected:

Matthew 7:23 · And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

And it is here the wedding imagery comes forward. He who rises from the water is clothed in a new garment by God — and Paul says directly what that garment is:

Galatians 3:27 · For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

And it is God Himself who clothes His bride — the prophet Isaiah sang:

Isaiah 61:10 · I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

To be baptized is to *put on Christ* just as the bride puts on her wedding dress. For the church is the bride, and Christ is the bridegroom who "cleansed her with the washing of water by the word... that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle" (Eph 5:26-27). Faith is real before the water — but in baptism, just as a couple is only married when the vow is made in the ceremony, the covenant is sealed publicly and completely. A man who had struggled with addiction told how baptism became his weapon against the accuser:

Every time the devil whispered in my ear that I wasn't good enough to follow Jesus, I pointed back to my baptism and reminded him that Jesus had married me. I wear the wedding ring of the King of kings. When Jesus chooses to call me His bride — who are you to doubt me? For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it (*Matthew 16:25*).

But the gift is not given in defiance. He who came to the wedding in his own clothes — without the garment the King Himself provides — was left speechless and cast out:

Matthew 22:11-13 · But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The Thief Does Not Prove What People Think

"But the thief on the cross was never baptized." No — he was nailed fast and could not reach the water, just as the snake-bitten in the desert could only *look* at the bronze serpent and live (Num 21; John 3:14). There was no time for anything else. Who dares to stall and put God's grace to the test? The door of grace is always open for the dying, the bedridden, the prisoner. But to hide behind the thief while one is healthy enough to go into the water is to be Naaman *before* he obeyed — he who stood by the Jordan and insisted he was already clean, while the cleansing lay in descending into the river (2 Kings

5). Do we spurn the betrothal to our bridegroom, yet still desire to enjoy the bride's embrace, her body, her fruit — without giving ourselves in the full gift of the covenant? That's like putting the cart before the horse. The thief is the exception for the one who *cannot* — not the rule for the one who *will not*.

The Voice of History — and of the Letters

Infant baptism has no theological foundation; it is a custom that first appears in written sources in the 3rd century. One of the foremost voices of the early church, Tertullian, *opposed* baptizing small children and asked that one rather wait until faith was formed. Later, one could claim the custom existed — but never demonstrate it from Scripture. Precedent is not a precept. And Peter himself shuts the door: baptism is "the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet 3:21) — a conscious response an infant cannot give, nor in retrospect claim to have done by free will as its own. Were you destined to be pre-married to your wife from before you were born? I speak as a child now. Surely not. So why the excuse?

But what then does Scripture itself say about baptism? Precisely the three witnesses John mentions: "the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one" (1 John 5:8) — laid down in the Torah a thousand years before John wrote them. For when Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, he anointed them and sprinkled blood on them and washed them with water (Lev 8:6,23-24,30; Ex 29:4,20-21). The anointing oil, the blood, and the water. *The Spirit, the blood, and the water*. The three witnesses that point forward to Christ's complete work — and to the baptism that unites us with Him in His death and resurrection.

God has spoken through all of Scripture — and He speaks with one voice. As we now move on to see what Scripture says about the *water* — the second witness.

Mark 7:13 · making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down.

Through the Water

Titus 3:5 · not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

It is as simple as that, my friend: Christ commanded it, the apostles did it without hesitation, all of Scripture points toward it, and even the letters beneath the text bear

witness to it. Baptism does not save you instead of faith — it is the place where the new birth occurs, the washing of regeneration. But a faith that refuses the water has stopped in the middle of obedience. For everyone practicing evil hates the light — and does not come to the light.

Jesus does not say "refusal of baptism" — but He speaks of those who saw the light and turned away, and the Pharisees were in the midst of them:

Matthew 21:32 · For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.

Luke 13:34 · O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!

I know what I speak of — I have seen it. The egg is us before rebirth. And after confessing Jesus as Lord and Master of my life, in the days awaiting baptism, I felt a joy like nothing else. It disappeared in baptism, exactly as the evangelist said. Luke 13:34 opened my eyes to what God had shown me seven years earlier. That is how He had called me. The vision from God was a gift to live by.

John 5:40 · But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

And the church today? It shuts the door to the gifts of God's children in the power of the Spirit, discards the voice of prophecy, and asks wonderingly: "Why is almost nothing happening?" Jesus wept over Jerusalem because they **would** not — and that same **will** lives on wherever the Word of God is set aside for the sake of tradition.

Jesus **speaks to religious people** who were convinced they belonged to God. They had the theology, the tradition, the position. But baptism? They refused. Obedience? They stopped. What is different today? Almost nothing.

To me, this is not just doctrine. When I received Christ in 2008, I was caught up in a vision: I saw myself inside a large, white egg — enclosed, cleansed, filled with new life. And a true evangelist said to me: Are you ready to be baptized? And yes. But for seven years I asked God — a thousand times — why I had seen myself inside the egg. Then, in 2015, He answered — through a youth pastor He sent out onto the street with three eggs. For the first time in his life, the pastor had heard the Holy Spirit speak audibly, and he followed the order to take three eggs and go down to the city center. And I

myself — together with a brother in the faith — was specifically led to him by the Holy Spirit — I knew we were supposed to go to his group, where three young women stood at the youth pastor's side. Three eggs, three women, three men of God — the strongest threefold trinity I have witnessed, for YOU. And it was I who said: "The eggs mean new life" to this youth pastor — without understanding that the Holy Spirit was answering my question through my own mouth, just as He spoke through my daughter in 2017, no less — whereupon the shock came afterward to both of us. And thus God confirmed the very vision of my conception in the Holy Spirit with the accompanying rebirth. A picture within the picture. A miracle in itself. Truly. The youth pastor was my witness, sent by God who rules over all, and everything fell into place afterward, so that I can forever say: I am born again. And baptism? Baptism was the wedding I walked through; I rose from the water as a completely new person in the spirit. The renewal of the mind is, however, a process and can take years, just as with Paul. And some drink milk even after a long life.

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16).

But if we call Him Lord — do we do what He says?

Luke 6:46 · "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and don't do the things which I say?

John 14:15 · If you love me, keep my commandments.

The Scriptures do not have life in themselves — they testify of Him who is life (*John* 5:39-40). Nor does the water of baptism save in itself; it is the place where we put on Christ (*Galatians* 3:27). But whoever rejects the map rejects also Him to whom the map points.

In Short

Baptism is the God-appointed door into Christ — commanded (Matt 28:19), modeled by the sinless Lord "to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt 3:15), the moment the believer puts on Christ as a white garment (Gal 3:27) — so that to willfully refuse it when able is not to "skip a rite" but to set aside (atheteō ἄθετέω^{G114}, Luke 7:30; Heb 10:28-29) the counsel of God against oneself, a doing of the very lawlessness Christ names in those He "never knew" (Matt 7:23), since God himself defines doing His will as concrete obedience to what He has said (Ps 40:8 / Heb 10:7; Luke 22:42); the water does not save magically (Israel was baptized into Moses at the Red Sea and in the cloud, yet fell in the wilderness; Simon Magus believed and was baptized, yet his heart was not right before God

— baptism is the entrance, obedience must follow), and true inability is no bar to grace (the thief on the cross could not, and grace met him) — but no one may call Christ "Lord, Lord" while despising His plain command and still claim the white garment, for the judgment is God's, the warning is Scripture's, and the whole matter reduces to one axis: His will, not ours.

This is just the core. The entire red thread — Noah, the Red Sea, the Jordan, the *mikvah*, Jesus' own baptism, Romans 6, church history, and the Hebrew codes — lies in the book. Read it here: [Through the Water](#).

All Scripture references are from the World English Bible (WEB).

How this was made

This is the author's own work. It was composed with [junifye](#) and an AI assistant, drawing its Scripture and original-language work (Greek, Hebrew, cross-references) from [Darash](#) (Hebrew *darash*, “to seek, inquire, study”), a tool and reference work for the Bible in its original languages.

Both are **MCP** tools you can use from Claude Desktop or any AI assistant. Study the Word in its original tongues with Darash, read the Scriptures in [Bibleread](#), and browse the [public library](#).

Free for personal and congregational use — not for sale. © the author; commercial rights reserved to Publifye AS.

A gift of support — [Stripe](#)



Scan to read this book online