



Why is it that unbelievers grab hold of water baptism like thirsty men in the desert? Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Christ and countless others, teach it is necessary for one's salvation. Mormons even say you ought to be baptized on behalf of your loved ones who died before Joseph Smith showed up in order to help bring them the "Restored" gospel. Water baptism would seem to be quite an agent to effect the new birth.

How is it then, that the greatest Christian who ever lived didn't think so? The apostle Paul wrote that **"Christ sent me NOT TO BAPTIZE, but to preach the gospel"** (1 Cor 1:17). Then, in the same book he defined the gospel as the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ **"according to the scriptures"** (1 Cor 15:1-4) MINUS water baptism.

Our friends insist that it was Christ himself who first taught their doctrines when he said **"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."** (John 3:5) To a man they all believe that the water Jesus meant was water baptism, especially as practiced by their denominations.

However, notice the context. The water mentioned in John 3:5 is marvelously identified by the words **"flesh"** (v.6) and **"his mother's womb"** (v.4). It is the labor of physical childbirth that usually begins when a woman's "water" breaks. How could Christ have meant anything else?

Peter said that, for the believer, water baptism DID NOT put away the filth of the flesh, but was **"the answer of a good conscience toward God"** (1 Pet 3:21). Water baptism is to be obeyed as a testimony of salvation, but it is never the means of it.