

Age of Accountability

- To my knowledge, the New Testament does not address directly the age at which one should be immersed.
 - This does not leave the answer open to any application, but rather the proposed answer must harmonize with the known facts surrounding it.
 - However, the answer likely will not be specific because a number of suppositions will be necessary.
- To be an appropriate candidate for immersion, one must be able to participate in the symbolism.
 - Baptism is not magic. Participating in a ritual does not obligate God. Such an idea is at the heart of paganism (manipulating God).
 - Those who cannot understand the symbolism and who cannot make independent decisions are not accountable (John 9:41).
 - Although “washing away sins” is only one of several images in the practice, it is the most cited by a wide variety of groups. Baptism of infants for washing away sins is also a pagan concept. Babies are born sinless (Ecclesiastes 7:23)
- The symbols attached to baptism:
 - Acts 22:16, Hebrews 10:22 Sins washed away; bodies washed with pure water.
 - Jesus was sacrificed once (Romans 5:6 – 8, 6:10, 2 Corinthians 5:14 – 15, Hebrews 7:27, 9:12, 9:26 – 28, 10:10, 1 Peter 3:18) for the sins of all people, not just for the faithful (1 John 2:2 makes clear that Jesus died not just for the faithful, but for all)
 - From God’s point of view, the right-and-wrong system has been paid off, so the accumulation of sins needing to be washed away is not appropriate. If the action of baptism causes sins to be washed away, then Jesus’ sacrifice was ineffective.
 - So, the washing away of sin must be from the point of view of the one being baptized, that the person is accepting the fact that Jesus already washed sins away. Many people travel through life with a burden of guilt for their bad choices. Baptism is a symbol of releasing that baggage.
 - Acts 2:38, baptized into the remission of sins and receiving the Holy Spirit
 - The preposition has been translated in various ways for the purpose of supporting various doctrines. The literal word is “into.” Translators have made the ridiculous claim that this preposition could be represented by a half-dozen different English words, leading to the conclusion that the Scriptures are entirely unclear.
 - To be immersed “into” forgiveness or remission yields a picture that the individual is acknowledging the payment Jesus already made (remission) and accepting that God will move the bad choices of the past out of the line of sight (forgiveness) so that a relationship may be built without hindrance, so that trust by God of that individual may be established.
 - Since we are to ask for the Spirit (Luke 13:3) and endeavor to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), one must acknowledge the work of the Spirit to make it functional.

- 1 Corinthians 6:11, Ephesians 5:26 I am reserved for godly purposes (sanctified). I have been declared debt-free with regard to justice (justified).
- Romans 6:4 I walk in newness of life.
 - Galatians 3:27 I am being transformed into the image of Jesus (put on Christ)
- Romans 6:5 I will be raised on Judgment Day.
- Romans 6:6 I am freed from slavery to sin.
- Romans 12:1, 6:3 I become a sacrifice like Jesus.
- 1 Corinthians 12:13 I am dedicated to miraculous unity.
- Colossians 2:11 – 14 I am buried with Him and raised, forgiven, redeemed
- Titus 3:5 Renewed by the Holy Spirit
- 1 Peter 3:21 The water rescued Noah from an evil world as baptism rescues me.
- To be an appropriate candidate for baptism, one must be able to:
 - Comprehend and experience a burden of guilt needing to be disposed.
 - Understand a debt to justice and feel separated from God due to having been untrustworthy.
 - Make independent decisions about godly purposes.
 - Understand justice, that justice is not satisfied by “It’s OK.”
 - Change dramatically, as if from death to life.
 - Have confidence in the resurrection of the last day.
 - Recognize one’s own slavery to sin.
 - Know what a sacrifice is (a celebration of forgiveness with family and friends in the presence of God – not giving up something, which is pagan sacrifice)

How much should a person understand before being baptized? The list of concepts requires a certain level of mental maturity and abstract thinking. Each person reaches that level (exits concrete thinking) at a different age. The problem has arisen through ritualism (that the action of baptism obligates God), legalism (one size fits all), and incomplete teaching (minimum requirements). Paul addressed poor teaching in 1 Corinthians 3:11 – 15.