

# Is a Believer's Baptism Biblical?

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## What Is the Meaning of Credobaptism?

Credobaptism is a compound word, *credo* meaning I believe, and *baptism* which means to dip or immerse. In this belief, also known as believer's baptism, a Christian gets baptized with water *after* they have [professed faith](#) (belief) in Jesus Christ. In this view, baptism does not contribute to salvation in any way, but rather serves as an outward symbol of the inward reality of a believer's salvation obtained through [faith](#) in Jesus, which includes His death and resurrection.

## What Is the Difference between Infant Baptism and Credobaptism?

Infant baptism, also known as *pedobaptism*, refers to the practice of baptizing the infants of parents who believe in Jesus. In general, pedobaptists fall into two groups:

The first group views baptism as a [sacrament](#) that cleanses one from their sin. Roman Catholicism is the primary proponent of this view. It is their belief baptism administers a spiritual washing that operates independently from the subject's faith. Therefore, an infant can receive the purifying effect of baptism even though they do not yet have faith.

The second group is driven by their understanding of God's covenant people traced through the Bible (every saved person). [Covenant theology](#), developed by John Calvin, undergirds this view. This group puts emphasis on the unity of God's covenant relationship with His people through the whole of salvation history. There are several factors in Scripture used to support this assertion.

First, there is a connection between the covenant sign of circumcision in the Old Testament ([Genesis 17:10-14](#)) and baptism in the New Testament. In [Colossians 2:11-12](#), the Apostle Paul equates baptism to circumcision. Baptism is the sign of the new covenant which replaced circumcision. Infants underwent circumcision in the Old Testament as a sign of being part of the covenant community of Israel. Likewise, pedobaptists baptize their children to confirm their place in the community of God's people, and also to acknowledge their potential [rite of passage](#) to salvation through the Gospel.

Second, Scripture mentions household baptisms. Examples include the family of Lydia ([Acts 16:14-15](#)) and the household of the Philippian jailer ([Acts 16:31-33](#)). For the pedobaptist, this opens the possibility of infant baptism as part of their household. It should be noted, pedobaptists do believe in the baptism of new adult converts, however, they also extend this practice to include infants.

Credobaptists emphasize baptism as a conscious choice made by someone who professes faith in Christ. They do not deny the parallels between the old and new covenants. However, many credobaptists believe a spiritual shift took place with the establishment of the New Covenant in which God's people now consist of those who possess faith. Possible support for this stems from Scripture's reference to spiritual infancy. Jesus mentions spiritual birth, which implies spiritual infancy upon coming to faith ([John 3:5](#)). Paul also referred to the believers at Corinth as infants when they were new in their faith ([1 Corinthians 3:1](#)). It's possible, just as the biological children of Abraham were circumcised shortly after birth, in a similar manner baptism applies to new believers who are in their spiritual infancy. Credobaptists do not endorse infant baptism, yet some will say Scripture does not explicitly prohibit its practice. For further reading on the defense of the exclusionary view of credobaptism, which claims infant baptism is not a legitimate practice, refer to [John Piper's article](#).

## **What Is the History of Credobaptism?**

When He commissioned the Apostles, Jesus commanded them to make disciples and baptize them ([Matthew 28:19](#)). Baptism has been an important and even divisive topic [throughout Church history](#). The practice of credobaptism finds its roots in the very beginning of the Church Age in the first century. The second chapter of Acts records the baptism of about 3000 people after they heard Peter preach the Gospel. Only the people who *received* his word were baptized (Act 2:41). In this passage, we clearly see the Apostles baptized believers after they came to faith.

Over time, early church fathers such as Irenaeus and Origen openly [endorsed infant baptism](#). This view ensconced itself into church tradition and became common practice as people sought to incorporate their children into their nominal Christian

communities. The Church's traditional stance on baptism was challenged in the sixteenth century during the inflammatory advent of the Protestant Reformation.

The most prominent example of credobaptist doctrine arose from the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland. Historians accredit the roots of this movement to the event which transpired on January 21, 1525, in the Swiss town of Zurich. A group of townsfolk, led by Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz, made their way to the Manz house to decide how to respond to the pressures of the city council. The council demanded the people cease their Bible classes, and, four days earlier had issued a warning that any parents who did not have their infants baptized within eight days would face banishment from the territory.

Upon arrival, George Blaurock went over to Conrad and requested Conrad baptize him after making a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Conrad obliged George's request and the other members followed suit. This was done to comply with the Apostolic examples of baptism they had observed in Scripture, and it served as a rejection of the baptism they had all received as infants. Thus began the Anabaptist movement.

The antagonists of the movement coined the label *anabaptist*, (*re-baptizer*), to associate its proponents with heretics. The Anabaptists themselves did not endorse this name since they did not consider their infant baptisms legitimate. Instead, they believed baptism was only for those who had come to saving faith in Christ. This credobaptist view was part of a broader concept the Anabaptists held regarding the Church Body. They believed Scripture taught the true church included only believers who made a conscious decision to follow Jesus, thus rejecting the validity of infant baptism in the nominal Christian communities.

As a result, they attempted to reconstruct the Apostolic Church model found in the New Testament. This blatant separation from church tradition did not go unnoticed. The Anabaptists suffered extreme persecution for their different views. On March 7, 1526, the Zurich council agreed to drown anyone caught in the act of rebaptism. Felix Manz marked the first of many Anabaptist martyrs when Zurich authorities drowned him on January 5, 1527. The persecution caused the Anabaptists to disperse throughout Europe. It's estimated between 4000-5000 Anabaptists were martyred during the Reformation. The Mennonites and Hutterites are direct descendants, and Baptists and Quakers also share distant relations to the Anabaptist movement. The beliefs propagated by the Anabaptists have a profound impact that echoes through the ages.

### **Is There Biblical Evidence for Credobaptism?**

[Scripture affirms](#) the credobaptist position. In this article, we will look at a few of the passages which support this notion.

*The day of Pentecost.* In [Acts 2](#), Luke records about three thousand people came to faith in the Lord on the day of Pentecost ([Acts 2:41](#)). The people baptized were the ones who *received* Peter's message when he preached the Gospel. In this passage, it is clear baptism occurred *after* a person made a conscious decision to follow Christ.

*The Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit.* [Acts 10](#) records the magnificent event of God imparting the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles, which confirms the gospel message applies to all people. While Peter speaks to the Gentiles, the Holy Spirit falls upon the listeners ([Acts 10:44](#)). This is significant because no person can ever receive the gift of the Holy Spirit while they are still in an unregenerate state. The Spirit is given as a promise of eternal life only to those who are saved ([Ephesians 1:13-14](#)). This group of Gentiles was baptized *after* they received the Spirit ([Acts 10:48](#)), and one cannot argue the Gentiles received the Spirit in a manner different from believers. First, Peter acknowledged they received the Holy Spirit in the same way he did ([Acts 10:47](#)). Secondly, when the Spirit fell on Gentiles, they began to speak in tongues. This can only be the result of the Holy Spirit's indwelling because speaking in tongues is one of the spiritual gifts given exclusively to the body of believers ([1 Corinthians 12:10-13](#)). This means they possessed faith before they were baptized. In Acts chapter 10, water baptism was carried out as a response to the saving faith of the Gentiles to acknowledge their entrance into God's kingdom and did not contribute to their salvation.

*Paul's understanding of baptism.* The Apostle Paul makes a clear distinction between the saving power of the Gospel and baptism ([1 Corinthians 1:17-18](#)). This distinction makes no sense if water baptism is necessary for salvation. If it were, Paul would not have excluded it from the Gospel. Instead, this affirms the credobaptist stance that baptism is a symbol that depicts the spiritual reality of salvation through Christ.

When entering the discussion of baptism, a believer should always act with love, patience, and integrity toward those who disagree. We must handle God's Word rightly, but equally important is the example of Christ-like love we display for others. No believer should ever neglect baptism since our Lord commanded it ([Matthew 28:19](#)). It serves as a powerful symbol to acknowledge the saving work Christ has done for us. Let us glorify our Lord, putting on display with our lives the power of the Gospel to give new life as symbolized in baptism.