



THE SYMBOL

Because baptism is an outward expression of an inward change, it is highly symbolic. A symbol is a visible picture or representation of another idea or event.

Baptism identifies or connects the believer with Christ's death, burial and resurrection. (Romans 6:4)

Just think of going into, under, and out of the water. In this way baptism displays that a person has died to any old way of life and become alive to a new life through Christ. They have been "born again." (John 3:3; II Corinthians 5:17)

Baptism is also a promise. It is commitment to God and to all those witnessing the event that you are committing your life to Christ for His use and to His Kingdom for all eternity.

Baptism should also precede membership. Why? Because it is the way of identifying with God's Church everywhere, it is also the way in which Christians are linked in the local church. (Acts 2:41)

THE PARTICIPANT

Throughout the New Testament only believers were baptized. This means that baptism followed conversion (repentance from sin and confession of Jesus Christ as Lord). Evidence of babies being baptized in the Bible or New Testament church is nonexistent. Infant baptism became commonly practiced by churches who believe baptism imparts special merit or saving grace.

Some churches felt that infants who died would be made acceptable to God in heaven if they were baptized. Many churches have adopted this tradition for baptism. The conditions found in the Bible for baptism are 1) repentance of sin and 2) faith in Jesus Christ. This sequence is important: baptism following conversion. We call this "Believer's Baptism".

Virtually all Christian churches practice the rite of baptism. They do so because of Jesus' command to "go...and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19). It is almost universally agreed that baptism is connected with the beginning of the Christian life. It is the first step of obedience a new believer can make out of humble gratitude to Christ. Still, there is considerable disagreement among various church denominations concerning baptism. We hope that this guide will help you in your understanding of baptism as it is taught in the Bible.

THE SCRIPTURES

Matthew 3:13-17 - Christ baptized by John, "he went up out of the water"

Acts 2:38,41 - "Repent and be baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ"

Mark 16:16 - "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."

Acts 8:36 - "As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized? And ... he went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, they Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away."

Acts 9:18-19 - Saul was baptized following conversion.

Romans 6:3-4 - "All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death...we were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...we too may live a new life."

Colossians 2:12 - "Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead."

Ephesians 4:5 - "There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called, one lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all..."

THE MODE

The mode that best preserves and represents the meaning and symbolism inherent in baptism is immersion (completely submerging the candidate under the water) then raising them up out of the water.

As Christ was laid in a tomb after His death, the new believer is lowered under the water. And as Christ rose from the dead after three days, so too the believer is raised up out of the water to 'walk in newness of life'.

Further, the predominant meaning of the Greek word for 'baptize' means "to dip or to plunge under water". Even major theologians such as Martin Luther and John Calvin acknowledged immersion to be the basic meaning of the term and the original form of baptism as practiced by the early church.



BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

As a Baptist church, we believe that baptism is an "outward expression of an inward change". It is a symbolic act that God has given to us to express what is true of our relationship with Jesus Christ. After a believer has put their faith, trust and hope in Jesus Christ, baptism expresses five important truths.

- ◆ **Obedience** to Jesus' command.
- ◆ **Confession** that I belong to Jesus
- ◆ **Dedication** to follow Jesus
- ◆ **Identification** with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus
- ◆ **Participation** in the Body of Christ

Baptism serves as a public testimony that the believer has been "born again" (John 3:3). It is not a rite that produces an instantaneous spiritual change in the one baptized. But it does make a clear declaration of one's faith.

WHAT IF I WAS BAPTIZED AS AN INFANT?

Biblical accounts of baptism show that people were only baptized following repentance and confession of Christ as Lord. We believe this sequence is not only descriptive, but prescriptive to the church. In fact, John the Baptist refused to baptize some people because their actions did not demonstrate their devotion to God (Matt 3:8). Infants are baptized on the merit of their parent's faith rather than their own. It is an initiatory rite where the infant is brought into the "family of faith" similar to baby dedication performed in other churches.

However, biblical accounts of baptism demonstrate that each individual believed prior to being baptized. This would seem to preclude infants. When Jesus said, "Unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3), He was referring to simple trust, faith and humility not baptism.

After much reflection and study, some people determine that they would like to have believer's baptism even though they have been baptized already as a baby. They do so as an act of their own will and devotion to God and to demonstrate to God and others the transformation that has taken place in their life through the power of God. We can assist you with this decision should you feel this is right for you.

WHAT IF I WAS BAPTIZED WITHOUT FULL UNDERSTANDING?

Occasionally people are baptized for the wrong reasons such as peer or parental pressure, instead of obedience to Christ. We believe that every Christian needs to honor God and be sincere in their commitment to Him. If you believe you did not fully understand the meaning of baptism or feel that your baptism was not done for the right reasons, you may want to consider being baptized again in order to solidify your commitment to Christ. If this is the case we would be pleased to talk with you about this decision to see if it is best. Sometimes rather than being 're-baptized', a Christian may want to publicly dedicate their life to Christ and renew their commitment of love and obedience to Him. We can assist you with either of these decisions.

WHAT IS THE CORRECT ORDER OF BAPTISM?

What is the correct order for a person who wants to be baptised? First should come repentance, then belief, and then baptism. Baptism is a wonderful demonstration to others and to God that an individual has committed their life to Jesus Christ; it is something we do because of what Christ did for us through His death on the cross.

In John 14:23 Jesus stated, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching." And in John 15:10 and 14 He said, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love...You are my friends if you do what I command".



Cornerstone Neighbourhood Church



BAPTISM

"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

- Matthew
28:19



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