

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Furthermore, the New Testament also establishes not only the symbolism of *cleansing* to the ordinance of baptism, but also the imagery of *dying, being buried and being raised from the dead*. When a person is baptized (or, as the Greek word means “immersed”) into water this is the picture of a person dying, and being buried. When they are lifted out of the water they are raised to new life.

Read Romans 6:1-4. *How does Paul look at baptism? What does he state that it signifies?*

Read Colossians 2:9-12. *What does this passage say about the imagery of baptism?*

What do these two passages have in common? What was Paul’s ultimate goal in each of them? What did he want his hearers to do?

To summarize then,

*Baptism is a public demonstration by which we acknowledge before others that we—
Have believed in Jesus and have received the salvation that he freely offers, and
Desire to follow him and become obedient to Him as Lord and reject sin, because we
desire to be dead to sin and alive to God.*

If you would like to follow the Lord in baptism, please let Pastor Rick or Pastor Mike know! We will be holding a baptismal service this summer, most likely in late August!

If you ask ten people on the street, you probably will get ten different answers. Some denominations believe that baptism is one of the avenues by which people receive God’s grace. Some believe that it is the rite by which our infants symbolically enter into God’s family, the church. Others believe that without going through baptism a person is not saved. Such are some of the traditions around us—and unfortunately none of these ideas squares with scripture.

For us, however, we must not rely on tradition to understand what baptism is, but rather look to God’s Word and see what it was intended to signify in a person’s life. It is for these reasons our church does not baptize infants or small children, rather we practice what has come to be known as Believers Baptism. This simply means that we believe that scripture teaches that a person must possess a genuine faith in Christ *before* they are baptized. We also believe that baptism has no effect on a person’s salvation—to be baptized doesn’t make a person *more* saved. Rather it is a public testimony of an inward reality of faith in Christ. It is a step of obedience to Jesus!

Baptism in Scripture

When we look at scripture we see two distinct “baptisms” people in the New Testament either participated in; the baptism of John for repentance, or the baptism into Jesus demonstrating inner belief & discipleship.

John’s Baptism
(Matthew 3:1-12, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:1-19)

In the time of Jesus the Jews used baptism as a rite to signify the turning of a Gentile (non-Jewish person) to Judaism, and so people were familiar with this bodily, symbolic “dunking.”

1. Keeping this in mind, read Mark 1:1-8. *What was the purpose for John’s baptism? What did the baptism he was administering signify in the lives of the participants?*

2. *What does John say about Jesus, and how his baptism differs from what Jesus will do?*

John's ministry was to come before Jesus to help prepare people's hearts for Jesus' ministry. He helped people recognize their sin and their need of a savior, he helped them come to a point of repentance, and because of his ministry people were more apt to believe and understand Jesus.

Read Luke 7:29-30. *What does Luke say about people who were baptized by John and those who were not? Was it the ritual of being dunked in water that was effective, or was it something else?*

John also at one point baptized Jesus at Jesus' request, even though he tried to talk the Lord out of it. John said "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so for now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:13-14) John quickly acknowledges that Jesus did not need to be baptized for the sake of repentance for he was, as John understood, sinless. But Jesus knew that this act was His Father's will.

Believer's Baptism

The second usage or baptism occurs throughout the book of Acts, following Jesus' earthly ministry. Initially it is mentioned in this context by Jesus in the great commission he gave the church before he ascended into heaven.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, **Matthew 28:18-19**

The command here is foremost to "make disciples," and as they are made disciples to baptize them & teach them to be obedient to Christ. We are to be Jesus' followers, and that can be displayed through a public demonstration of repentance and faith (baptism) and through the living out of Jesus' teachings (obedience).

After Jesus gave this great commission (or task) to the church of disciple-making, we see evidence in the book of Acts that Jesus' disciples did just that.

Let's consider a few examples of this throughout the book of Acts.

Acts 2:36-41. Here Peter is preaching to a very diverse and large group of people. During his talk people came to the point where they realized they needed to do something, to respond in some way and Peter gave two specific commands, they were *repent* and *be baptized*. *Do you think there might be any significance in the order of these two commands? Could you reverse them? Why, why not?*

Acts 8:9-13. Here we see another example of people getting baptized. *What comes first; belief or baptism? Why?*

Acts 16:13-15; 16:29-34. Consider the order of belief and baptism in these verses as well.

Acts 18:7-8. Again we see another example of believers baptism, the rite of baptism was an outward expression of an inward reality—they believed in Jesus and desired to follow him.