



BAPTISM

If you have come to the point in your life where you've asked Jesus to be your forgiver and leader, then the Bible says that you should proclaim the life-change that has occurred. Baptism has always stood as a type of public testimony for people who have moved from living life for themselves to following Christ.

What is Baptism?

Baptism is an outward act that symbolizes the inward transformation of coming to and accepting Jesus Christ as real, as the means by which those who believe in him can be forever be reconciled to God. That a person believes that everything about Jesus is true. The purpose of baptism is to give visual testimony of our commitment to Christ. It shows every person that you now follow Jesus's will and way and not your own. It is the first step of discipleship (Matthew 28:16-20, 1 Peter 3:18-22, Romans 6:1-11).

The Greek word for "baptism" is "βαπτίζω". The English letters look like this: "baptidzo." The Greek word "baptidzo" literally means to "dip" or to "immerse". The symbolism of baptism is that, just as Christ died and was buried, so the baptized person is submerged (whether physically or symbolically) under water. And just as Christ rose again from beneath the earth, so the baptized person rises again from beneath the water. (Romans 6:1-11)

Baptism: The Outward Sign of Grace Received

At Gateway we believe in marking and celebrating certain spiritual milestones in the lives of people who are seeking God. The most significant milestone that anyone can reach is the decision to appeal to God for His grace and to begin a new life in Jesus Christ. ***Baptism is a way of marking this very important decision*** that a follower of Christ makes. We want you to be informed about the biblical meaning of Baptism, and nothing would give us greater pleasure as a church than to celebrate your Baptism with you as a symbol of a spiritual change that has happened in your life.

In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus commands his followers to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit..." ***Baptism is the means by which disciples of Christ are identified.*** And because Christ himself commanded it, all Christ followers ought to be baptized.

In other passages like Acts 2:41, 8:12, and 10:47-48, it is evident that the act of **Baptism came after an individual's decision to trust Christ for salvation**. It is an outward sign of something that had occurred in a person's life. No one should be baptized unless they have made a decision to identify and follow Christ, and no one can make that decision for another person. The New Testament records the Baptism of adults who are believers, but never infants. Baptism can't give a person anything, spiritually speaking. It can only signify something that has already happened.

Romans 6:1-11 is a passage about Baptism. In these verses, the apostle Paul explains how the immersion mode of **Baptism identifies the believer with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ**. Going under the water pictures Christ's death, coming out of the water illustrates His resurrection. At Gateway, we baptize people by immersion because of its symbolism and because it is the biblical model through the New Testament.

- **Buried:** Going under the water symbolizes your old life being buried with Christ. This is the forgiveness that comes through the cross of Christ.
 - Romans 6:4 " We were therefore buried with Christ through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."
- **Rising:** Coming up from the water symbolizes your new life rising with Christ. This is the new life that comes through the power of God's Spirit, the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead.
 - **Ephesians 2:8-9** "For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith-and this is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast."

A good illustration of Baptism has to do with **marriage**. In a wedding, a bride and groom stand side-by-side in front of a group of people. They make solemn vows to one another, each one pledging their life to the other. To signify the unseen union that these two have with one another, they **exchange rings**. These bands tell the world that they are now married, that a permanent change has happened to them. The marriage depends on a commitment, not on the bands they wear on their fingers. The same is true of becoming a Christ follower. **You can't go through the symbol of being baptized without having made a commitment to join with Christ**. The symbol would mean nothing. And, **you don't have to be baptized in order to have Christ**, anymore than you must exchange rings in order to be really married. But if the inner commitment to trust Christ alone has been made, then the outward sign of Baptism should be as valued and as visible as the ring on a newlywed's finger.

What if you were baptized as an infant or small child? In the Bible, we read stories of parents bringing their children to Jesus. He held them, prayed for them, and blessed them...but he never baptized them, nor did he tell anyone else to. Baptism is appropriate only for **those who have made a personal decision to trust Christ** alone for their salvation. If you were baptized as a child, it was no doubt the

intent of your parents that you would one day be a follower of Christ. Your baptism as an adult can be viewed as the fulfillment of your parents' wishes. It in no way cheapens or nullifies the ceremony of Baptism that you received as a child.

To sum up, we believe that the Bible makes the following points about Baptism:

- Baptism is an act of obedience to the command of Christ
 - Baptism symbolizes the spiritual cleansing through divine forgiveness and newness of life experienced by believers by virtue of their identification with Christ in his death and resurrection
 - Baptism provides an opportunity for believers to make a formal profession of their faith before the church
 - Baptism initiates new Christ followers into the church universal
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