



GRACE
BIBLE CHURCH

BAPTISM

“And Jesus came and said to [His disciples], ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

MATTHEW 28:18–20

Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted,
are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
WHAT IS BAPTISM?	3
WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?	4
IS BAPTISM NECESSARY FOR SALVATION?	5
WHAT IF I WAS BAPTIZED BEFORE BECOMING A CHRISTIAN?.....	6
WHEN SHOULD CHILDREN BE BAPTIZED?.....	6
HOW DO I PREPARE MY TESTIMONY?.....	8
TESTIMONY WORKSHEET.....	9
HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE DAY OF MY BAPTISM?.....	11
BIBLIOGRAPHY	12

INTRODUCTION

The Bible makes it clear that baptism is a very important step in the life of a believer. Over the course of history there have been a variety of opinions concerning baptism. In light of this, we have answered a number of questions to help you have a biblical understanding of baptism.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is one of two ordinances that are commanded in the Scriptures. One is the Lord's Supper and the other is the ordinance of baptism.

“And Jesus came and said to [His disciples], ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Baptism is a visual picture of our identification with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a reminder that the believer, once dead in sin, is alive in Christ Jesus. It is a public testimony of the miraculous work of God that has already been accomplished in the life of the one who has come to faith in the person of Jesus Christ.

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.” (Romans 6:3-6)

“For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in Him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross.”(Colossians 2:9-14)

Wayne Grudem states, “The practice of baptism in the New Testament was carried out in one way: the person being baptized was *immersed* or put completely under the water and then brought back up again. Baptism *by immersion* is therefore the ‘mode’ of baptism or the way in which baptism was carried out in the New Testament.”¹

¹ Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*, Inter-Varsity Press 1994 p. 967

Certainly the passages in Romans and Colossians would picture a baptism by immersion. Being submersed in water is a reflection of Christ's death. Coming up out of the water is a picture of being raised up with Christ.

Baptism is commanded in the Scriptures. When we are baptized we are identifying with both the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a reminder that we are no longer slaves to sin, therefore we are to walk in newness of life.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

At Grace Bible we practice what is called *Believer's Baptism*. This is because the Bible teaches that baptism is an ordinance for those who have come to personal faith in Jesus Christ. It is an act of obedience that does not confer any special grace. It is a testimony of the redeeming work that God has already accomplished in the life of the believer.

“And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:40-41)

“And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?’ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.” (Acts 8:36-38)

“And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.”(Acts 16:31-33)

Once a person “*believes in the Lord Jesus*” they should be obedient to the Lord by being baptized. Baptism is a picture of what has already taken place in the life of the one who has come to faith.

IS BAPTISM NECESSARY FOR SALVATION?

There are some who have taught that baptism is required in order to be saved. They have often referred to a verse in Acts to establish this doctrine:

“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” (Acts 2:38)

At first glance one might conclude that baptism and repentance are both necessary for salvation. However, there are several reasons why we know this is an erroneous belief.

While baptism is a very important step of obedience for the believer, to conclude that it is necessary for salvation would be to contradict other very clear passages of Scripture.

“But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12)

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“And to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness” (Romans 4:5)

In fact, the Bible declares over 200 times that salvation is based on personal faith in Jesus Christ alone.

In his commentary on the book of Acts, John MacArthur reminds us that, “Throughout the book of Acts, forgiveness is linked to repentance, not baptism (cf. 3:19; 5:31; 26:20). In addition, the Bible records that some who were baptized were not saved (Acts 8:13; 21-23), while some were saved with no mention of their being baptized (Luke 7:37-50; Matt. 9:2; Luke 18:13-14).”²

The Bible emphasizes that salvation cannot be merited by any works that we do.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” (Titus 3:5)

Baptism is not a necessary component for salvation. It is an act of obedience for those who have already placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and Him alone, for salvation.

² MacArthur, John. P. 74 *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*. Acts 1-12. Chicago: Moody Press, 1994

WHAT IF I WAS BAPTIZED BEFORE BECOMING A CHRISTIAN?

Baptism prior to conversion does not accomplish the Biblical purpose of baptism. Keep in mind that the purpose of baptism is to demonstrate what the Lord has already accomplished in your life through salvation.

If you have not been baptized as a believer then this would be an important step of obedience for you.

WHEN SHOULD CHILDREN BE BAPTIZED?

Children's pastor Art Murphy says, "The Bible never specifically mentions children being baptized. It only mentions the baptism of men and women and households, which may or may not have included children. We know that children attended sermons. But we do not know whether they were baptized."³

Children are saved in the same way that adults are saved. Both must come to God in faith. Salvation is a result of the grace of God extended to the sinner.

It is imperative that children have an understanding of salvation prior to coming to the waters of baptism. Too often our children desire to go to heaven yet do not understand the reality of sin or the meaning of faith.

Children are easily influenced. They may see a baptism service and quickly want to participate themselves. A child's friend may be baptized which then causes them to want to do the same. Or, oftentimes friends will want to be baptized together. This may have more to do with the peer influence rather than a desire to be obedient to the Lord.

"For this reason, only when a child's stated convictions and beliefs are tested by circumstances in life as he matures do parents begin to learn more conclusively his spiritual direction. While many people do make a genuine commitment to Christ when young, many others—perhaps most—don't come to an adequate understanding of the gospel until their teenage years. Others who profess Christ in childhood turn away. It is only appropriate, then, that parents move cautiously in affirming a child's profession of faith and not be quick to take any show of commitment as decisive proof of conversion."⁴

"Although Scripture commands that believers be baptized (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38), it is best not to rush into the ordinance in the case of a child. As previously stated, it is extremely difficult to recognize genuine salvation in children. Rather than rushing them into baptism after an initial profession, then, it is wiser to take the ongoing opportunity to interact with them and wait for more significant evidence of lasting commitment. Even if a child can say enough in a testimony to make it reasonably clear that he understands and embraces the gospel, baptism should wait until he manifests evidence of regeneration that is independent of parental control."⁵

³ Murphy, Art. *The Faith of a Child* p. 130 Chicago, Moody Press

⁴ Grace Community Church, *A Grace Community Church Distinctive: Evangelizing Your Children*, December 2002

⁵ Ibid.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:1-3)

If a child expresses an interest in baptism and yet does not reflect the character of a person who has been saved in the other areas of life, they should probably wait. It is vitally important that we help our children understand that baptism is stating publicly what God has accomplished internally. When God accomplishes this work of regeneration in our lives, He continues to work in us to accomplish His work of sanctification.

“Even if parents conclude it’s too early to regard their child’s interest in Christ as mature faith, they must not deride a profession of faith as false, for it may be the seed from which mature faith will later emerge. Instead, the parent should continue to point that child toward Christ, teaching the truth of God’s Word with patience and diligence, and always looking to the One who is able to open hearts to respond to the gospel.”⁶

“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6)

⁶ Ibid.

HOW DO I PREPARE MY TESTIMONY?

1. Remember the purpose of a personal testimony—to exalt Christ.
2. Keep your testimony to three minutes or less.
3. When sharing regarding your life before Christ:
 - A. Please be discreet when speaking of past sins. We never want to glorify sin or cause others to think sinfully.
 - B. Do not go into detail about your past.
 - C. Do not mention denominations, other churches or church organizations or individuals by name.
 - D. Do not slander a member of your family or your husband.
4. When relating how you came to Christ, be specific about how to receive Christ as Savior and what it means. When others leave they should be able to accept Christ as Savior based on your words and example.
5. Use one verse when relating how you became a Christian. Remember, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).” God said, “MY WORD shall not return unto me void (Is. 55:11).”
6. When relating the changes which took place after receiving Christ, attribute those changes to Christ. For example, “Christ changed my attitude toward...” “Christ began to help me with my problems.” NOT “I...and then I...and then I...”
7. Do not use evangelical words such as “born again, redeemed, saved, salvation, conversion,” etc.
8. Write your testimony out word for word. Edit and rewrite until it is an effective tool for sharing Christ.
9. Use one verse in your closing. (This makes a total of two, and no more, verses in your testimony. Remember, this is not a sermon or a lesson! No one is taking notes.)
10. Those who are already Christians should be encouraged in their own growth by your testimony. When relating the changes which have taken place in your life, share something of your own Christian growth. For example, “One thing Christ has helped me with recently is...” This could lead into your closing verse, which pertains to your total life in Christ and encourages and/or comforts all.

Baptism is an opportunity to publicly proclaim the greatness and kindness of our God.

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE DAY OF MY BAPTISM?

What to Wear:

- Please wear dark clothing that shed water, avoid clothing with pockets.
- Shorts: no shorter than mid-thigh
- Sandals (shoes you can easily slip on and off)

Things to Bring:

- A copy of your testimony (use a clear plastic cover to keep it from getting wet).
- A change of clothes.
- A towel.

Procedure:

- Please arrive 15 minutes before the service.
- We will be starting the service with baptism so you will be in the music office.
- You can change out of your wet clothes in the appropriate restroom following baptism.
- A song or two will be sung following baptism which will hopefully give you time to change and return to the service.

In the Baptismal:

- Please hold the hand rails going in and out of the baptismal.
- Stand 6 to 8 inches from the microphone. Don't touch it!
- Read your written testimony (2-3 minutes).
- Remove glasses.
- After your testimony face Pastor Will. He will ask you two questions:
 1. Who are you trusting in for your salvation?
 2. Based on your profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."
- Sit on seat in the baptistery and cross your arms over your chest. Hold your nose if you want. Don't lean back.
- You will start going under when you hear Pastor Will say "... Holy Spirit." (You will go under mostly on your own, and he will simply guide you and give you a lift back up).
- Afterwards, take your notes and glasses with you.
- Leave the same way you entered.
- You will be wrapped with one of the church towels as you exit the baptistery.
- Stand on the rugs provided if you wish to hear the testimonies of others being baptized.

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