

## Baptized into the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ

Acts 16:30–31; Matthew 28:16–20; Romans 5:1

This morning, as a constituted local body of believers, we have the delight of baptizing a young man who has come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is one of two ordinances that the Lord established for his Church, done under the authority of the local church: Lord's Supper, and Baptism. We do both this morning. As a timely refresher, we are re-examining the **command** to be baptized, **who** is to be baptized, and the **pattern** the apostles established for baptism.

### The New Testament describes spiritual baptism and a physical baptism.

- Spiritual baptism involves being united with Christ — Being spiritually baptized into Christ is regeneration. We are baptized into his death<sup>1</sup> and into his body<sup>2</sup>. This is the inner work that makes sinful hearts new. Christ removes dead hearts of stone and gives new living hearts that love him. As Jesus passed through death to life, so the follower of Jesus is freed from love of sin and death and made alive in Christ.
- Physical baptism is an outward sign done with the body that pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It signals to the world that the one being baptized is now a disciple of Christ — a Christian — through faith. Baptism graphically displays Christ's work of salvation, evening picturing repentance: I was walking in my own way, but now I am dead to my old self but alive in Christ. His will, his desires, his rule and reign is what now governs my life.

We'll look at several passages, but as a starting place, let's turn to **Acts 16:30–31** — <sup>30</sup> Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" <sup>31</sup> And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

### PRAY

#### Many think baptism is an essential religious work that gains favor or merit with God.

I have encountered people through the years who phone the church or simply show up and say "I want to be baptized." When you ask them why, the answers often reveal complete disorientation to God's word: "I want to be saved so I don't go to Hell" is an answer I've heard more than once.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 6:3

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13

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But baptism won't save anyone or keep anyone out of Hell. Jesus is the only conqueror of Hell and the domain of darkness. If one is to be saved and Hell is to be avoided, Jesus will have to be one to accomplish that.

So that begs the question, **who, then, is to be baptized?**

Those who believe in the Lord Jesus, who place their trust in him for salvation.

We are justified, made right with God, through faith.

**Romans 5:1** — Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Baptism confers nothing. The water is water. It makes one wet; that's it. Salvation is of the Lord. Created things like water, or the work of hands that push someone under the water — these things can't produce spiritual life. Water baptism signals life-giving faith. Stated in reverse, faith is first professed through the sign of baptism.

This is why we don't baptize babies or unbelievers. Faith is the instrument, the vehicle by which we enter Christ. Babies cannot profess faith; unbelievers by definition will not profess faith.

We *enter faith* in Christ, because he has given us a *new heart*, and we are changed. Credible evidence of a new heart is what I look for as a pastor when someone says they want to be baptized. Evidence of faith is a heart that wants to love Christ and obey him. Jesus links love and obedience in John 14:15 and following. When I visited with Jace and his parents a week or so ago, I asked him why he wanted to be baptized. The summary of his response was this: I hate my sin, and I love God and obey him.

Now, there is evidence of faith. Here is one who, in words of the prophet Ezekiel, has had the stone heart removed and God has given a heart of flesh that produces a desire to walk in God's statutes and keep his rules and obey them. Here the picture of baptism clearly matches the profession in that he has died to his old sinful desires and walks in newness of life. Lack of credible evidence deals with wanting to escape Hell and the consequences of sin without falling out of love with sin. A new nature hates sin, is empowered to fight it, to kill it, and moves forward in Christ's resurrection power.

In a moment, Jace is going to get physically wet. That is all that is occurring in regards to the H<sub>2</sub>O in that tank. But, oh, what is being signaled for a lifetime of worshipful obedience after the water is evaporated and dried! Christ died, was buried, and raised to eternal life. In baptism, as the believer

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goes under a watery grave, a public proclamation is made: “I am dead to myself — I am putting to death what belongs to the sinful nature that produces death. Jesus is Lord, and I will live for him.

#### **Why is baptism necessary for believers? If the new heart is given by Christ, why be baptized?**

First, the Lord Jesus, who has all authority, commands it for Christians — those believe him, and living under his rule and reign. Baptism is the first step of life-long journey of obedience to Christ.

**Matthew 28:18–20** — <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The *main* command is to make disciples. In order, then, the first command is for the church to baptize the disciple. Baptism is essential and tied with profession of faith. Teaching in all things naturally follows.

The Lord’s command should be enough. But the apostles who had authority to lay the foundation of the church established the pattern of faith and immediate baptism as people professed Christ.

In Acts we see the pattern of belief followed by baptism over and over.

**Acts 2:36–38a** — <sup>36</sup> Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” <sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” <sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, “**Repent** and **be baptized** every one of you...”

And in **v 41** — So **those who received his word were baptized...**

**Acts 8:12–13a** — <sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. <sup>13</sup> Even Simon himself **believed**, and **after being baptized** he continued with Philip.

**Acts 18:8** — Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, **believed in the Lord**, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul **believed and were baptized**.

And if we need further reason to be baptized, Jesus was baptized himself — he insisted on it as John was initially reluctant — and so in following Christ, we pass through the waters of baptism.

**What happens in Baptism? What’s that water doing?** The Short Answer: Nothing is happening in that water. It saves no one. It’s not gaining favor or merit. It’s just signaling.

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The big orange Whataburger sign in the sky is not producing delicious hamburgers. It's just signaling that delicious hamburgers are in here. Baptism doesn't produce salvation; when properly administered it just signals that faith is found here. Faith in Christ changes the inner heart so the outer sign of following Christ, belonging to him, has meaning.

### **How are we to baptize? Baptism is by immersion.**

To be baptized is to be immersed — it's what the word means. Jesus was immersed. One has to perform a lot of back flips to embrace anything less than a robust dunking. Rivers and ponds were the places of baptisms. If sprinkling a few ounces of water was an acceptable apostolic pattern, why would they ever have gone to a river or lake?

Further, immersion is the only thing that accurately portrays what baptism is meant to portray. See that tank? It even resembles a grave. A body laid out under the water of that tank is a vivid picture of what it means to be dead to sin and self. Then the raising up of that body out of the grave... what a dramatic picture of victory over death!

Anything less than immersion defies the example of Jesus, the pattern of the apostles, the meaning of the word itself, and the life-saving work of the Savior who died, was buried, and rose to life.

### **Application**

I think there are three groups of people in this room. One, those who have come to faith, and have followed the Lord in baptism. If you are in that category, as we administer the ordinance I encourage you to reflect on the meaning and beauty of baptism. You have publicly professed your faith in Christ. You have acted obediently to the Lord. Your baptism has signaled that you are dead to sin and self and alive to Christ. You have publicly proclaimed you are denying yourself. It is no longer you that lives — it is Christ that lives in you. You have been given a new heart that loves God and desires to walk in his walks. You are raised to walk in newness of life. Let these truths about pictured in baptism rekindle your heart this morning spur you on to repentance and obedience. In the fullness of loving obedience, put to death, therefore whatever remains of the old sinful nature, and embrace the resurrection power of life in Christ. Let Jace's baptism warm your heart afresh. As when it was new for you, believe the gospel, turn from sin, and walk in the reality of resurrection power in Christ.

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The second group are those who believe in Christ but are not walking in obedience to the first step of discipleship: baptism. If you have moved into faith but not followed the Lord in baptism, how long will you continue to resist the clear biblical command to be baptized? If your spiritual life is not warm as you know it should be, or if biblical obedience in other areas is hard, could it be because you are resisting the Lord in this primary area? Perhaps you've never considered that holding to an imaginary exemption to the Lord's command in this area produces hardness of heart in other areas. Of course it does. While becoming obedient in the Lord's command to be baptized will not suddenly make all areas of the Christian life easy, it is certain that resistance to obedience at the first step will set a trajectory of disobedience on the journey that will be hard to overcome. In the baptism this morning, see the beauty and joy of a tender new heart that desires to walk in obedience without reservation. Let his delight in obedience mark your heart and move you forward in responsive faith to all the Scriptures call us to do.

The third group would be those who would've never come to faith at all. In observing the baptism this morning, see and consider how God has demonstrated his love for us. The eternal, living Lord Jesus came in human form, as we celebrate at this time of year, in order to die our death — the death we earned through our sin. He bore our punishment — the wages of sin is death. When that boy goes under the water signaling what the Lord has done, would you look there and see, as it were, the crucified Savior, laid in a dead in a tomb on your behalf? And would you then see the dramatic raising out of the grave when the Lord conquered death and rose to eternal life? This is the offer of the good news of the Gospel. Sinners who have earned the penalty of death through their personal rebellion against God can have the son of God die in their place through faith, and be raised to life through his resurrection and so have peace with God forever. In this picture of salvation, be reminded that you will either have a substitute who dies in your place, pictured in this baptism, or you will die in your own sins, and there will be no resurrection to eternal life, but only to eternal condemnation for the rejection of the Son. Today is the day of salvation. In obedience to the commands of scripture we engage in this beautiful ordinance that puts the grace and power of the Lord Jesus on blazing display. Know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ. Believe this, repent, and be baptized.

PRAY