

## Water Baptism:

### Objective:

To help new believers grasp the deep significance, purpose, and biblical foundation of water baptism as a critical step in their spiritual journey.

### What is Water Baptism?

Water baptism is a significant step of **obedience** and a **public declaration of faith** for every believer. It is an outward symbol of the inward transformation that occurs when someone places their faith in Jesus Christ.

- Water baptism is when a believer is submerged in water as a public declaration of their faith in Jesus Christ. It represents a spiritual cleansing and the believer's identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.
- Water baptism is distinct from the baptism of the **Holy Spirit**. The latter refers to the empowerment by the Holy Spirit, often accompanied by spiritual gifts (Acts 1:5, Acts 2:4).
- Water baptism is more than just a ritual—it is an act of identification with Christ and a testament of new life in Him.

**Baptism: Meaning.** The word **baptism** comes from the Greek word *baptizo* (from *bapto*), which means "to immerse" or "to dip", "sink," or "plunge."

In the cultural context of the time, this word was used to describe the process of dyeing a garment.

### Significance of Baptism:

- **Baptism** signifies the believer's identification with Christ's death and resurrection (Romans 6:4). It is symbolic of dying to the old sinful self and being raised to new life in Christ. This baptism also symbolizes entrance into the New Covenant relationship with God, the cleansing of sin, and the reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). It represents a believer's full acceptance of the salvation offered by Jesus and their incorporation into the body of Christ, the Church.

This full immersion represents the believer's total identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection

- **Romans 6:3-4:** "Or don't you know that 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 through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

In the same way, water baptism signifies the believer being completely immersed in Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

- **Acts 2:38:** "Peter replied, '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.'"

### **Old Testament Prefigures**

Baptism has foreshadows in the Old Testament, such as:

- **Noah's Ark** (1 Peter 3:20-21): Water as a symbol of salvation and judgment.
- **Crossing the Red Sea** (1 Corinthians 10:1-2): A type of baptism in the Old Testament, representing the Israelites' escape from slavery to freedom.
- Baptism as a Covenant:

Baptism, much like circumcision in the Old Covenant, is seen as a covenant sign in the New Testament that marks the believer's formal entry into the covenant community of God's people.

Colossians 2:11-12, which draws a direct parallel between circumcision and baptism.

***"In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." (Colossians 2:11-12, NKJV)***

Spiritual Circumcision: Colossians 2:11-12 speaks of "circumcision made without hands" to describe the spiritual transformation that occurs in a believer's heart. This is a metaphorical circumcision of the heart, where the sinful nature is "cut away" through faith in Christ. Baptism symbolizes this internal transformation,

just as circumcision once symbolized the cutting away of sin and separation unto God in the Old Covenant.

### **Old Covenant vs. New Covenant:**

- Under the Old Covenant, circumcision was required for all male Israelites as a physical mark of their belonging to God's chosen people (Genesis 17:10-14). This act was a symbol of cutting away sin and entering into a relationship with God. It was also a sign of God's promises to Abraham and his descendants, marking them as part of the covenant community.
- Similarly, under the New Covenant, baptism serves as the outward sign of a believer's new relationship with God through Christ. Unlike circumcision, which was restricted to males, baptism is for all believers—both men and women—because it signifies the inclusive nature of the New Covenant, which extends to all who place their faith in Jesus, regardless of gender, nationality, or status (Galatians 3:27-28).

**A Covenant of Grace:** Just as circumcision was given to Israel as a sign of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants, baptism is given to believers as a sign of God's grace in the New Covenant. It represents the washing away of sins (Acts 22:16).

**Covenantal Promises:** Through baptism, believers affirm the promises of God in the New Covenant—that their sins are forgiven, they are made righteous before God, and they have eternal life through Christ. Baptism signifies the believer's acceptance of these promises and their commitment to live in accordance with the covenant.

Baptism as a covenant sign ties believers into the New Covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It mirrors the Old Testament practice of circumcision but extends beyond it by being a covenant sign for both men and women, Jew and Gentile, and for all people who come to faith in Christ.

## MODES OF BAPTISM:

In the Christian tradition, there are different modes of baptism practiced across various denominations. These include **immersion, pouring, and sprinkling**.

However, **immersion** is the preferred and emphasized mode, as it best reflects the biblical pattern of baptism as a powerful symbol of the believer's death, burial, and resurrection with Christ.

- **Pouring Baptism (Affusion):**

**Pouring**, also known as **affusion**, involves the baptizer pouring water over the head of the believer. This is accepted in some other Christian denominations. The Bible doesn't provide a direct example of affusion.

- **Sprinkling Baptism (Aspersio):**

**Sprinkling**, also known as **aspersio**, involves the sprinkling of water over the head of the believer.

Wrong application of scripture:

- **Ezekiel 36:25:** *"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols."*

In this verse, sprinkling is associated with cleansing and purification, and some Christians see it as a symbolic precursor to Christian baptism.

### **Infant Baptism (Paedobaptism):**

While some Christian traditions practice Infant baptism, it has no scriptural basis, as infants cannot make a conscious decision to follow Christ.

Baptizing infants or young children, symbolizing parental commitment to raise them in the faith. A newborn baby is baptized in a church, with parents and godparents making promises to guide the child's spiritual growth.

It is dangerous, because it often causes a child to grow up with the deception that he must be a Christian, although he has never experienced conversion.

- **Immersion Baptism:**

**Immersion** is when the believer is fully submerged under water and then brought back up, symbolizing death, burial, and resurrection with Christ.

Baptism by immersion follows the **New Testament model** more closely than affusion or aspersion. Jesus Himself was baptized by immersion (Matthew 3:16), and the early church seems to have practiced baptism by immersion. The imagery of being “buried” and “raised” with Christ is best represented through full immersion.

Full immersion powerfully captures the idea of the believer being completely transformed. The act of being completely submerged and then rising out of the water mirrors the **total transformation** that takes place when a person is saved. It symbolizes complete submission to the Lordship of Christ and a total break from the old sinful life.

Immersion symbolizes being buried with Christ in His death and raised to walk in the newness of life (Romans 6:4). Immersion as the most authentic representation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

We baptize believers by full immersion in water.

### **Who Should Be Baptized?**

- **Age of Accountability** - This refers to the age at which a person is believed to be morally responsible for their actions and capable of deciding on accepting Christ as Lord and Savior.
- **Believer's Baptism (Credobaptism):** Baptism is for those who are mature enough to decide and consciously accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. It is an act of obedience and commitment that follows salvation.
- Baptism is a personal choice. No one must be forced into baptism.

### **Biblical Examples of Baptism:**

- Mark 1:9-11: Jesus Himself was baptized by John the Baptist as an example.
- **Ethiopian Eunuch** (Acts 8:35-38): The eunuch believed Philip's preaching about Jesus and was baptized.

- **Saul (Paul)** (Acts 9:17-18): After his encounter with Jesus, Saul was baptized.
- **Cornelius and His Household** (Acts 10:47-48): After believing in the message of Christ, Cornelius and his family were baptized.

### **Reasons for Baptism:**

1. **Jesus Commanded Baptism:** Obedience to Christ's Command: Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize believers, and so, baptism is an essential act of obedience for all who trust in Him.
  - **Matthew 28:19-20:** "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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."
2. **Baptism as a Symbol:** Baptism symbolizes the death of the old self and resurrection into a new life in Christ. Through baptism, a believer identifies with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, As one is submerged, it represents the burial of the sinful past; emerging from the water represents the beginning of a new life under God's grace (Romans 6:3-4).

### **The Significance of Water Baptism**

#### **Water baptism symbolizes several profound spiritual truths:**

1. **Identification with Christ:** When a believer is submerged in water, it symbolizes their burial with Christ, and coming out of the water signifies their resurrection to a new life in Him.
  - **Romans 6:4,** "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."
2. **Entrance into the Body of Christ:** Baptism signifies a believer's formal inclusion in the community of faith, marking their identification with the church, the body of Christ.
  - **1 Corinthians 12:13,** "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit"

### **3. Symbol of Cleansing**

Baptism symbolizes the washing away of sins (Acts 22:16), representing a spiritual purification and new beginning.

- Acts 22:16, 16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

The phrase "wash away thy sins" refers to the symbolic cleansing that takes place through the act of baptism. Though the physical act involves water, the deeper meaning is that it points to the spiritual washing and renewal that happens when a person puts their faith in Christ. The washing in this context is not a literal removal of sin by the water, but rather a symbolic expression of the spiritual cleansing that occurs through Christ's sacrifice and the believer's faith in Him.

By "calling on the name of the Lord," Paul acknowledges that salvation and forgiveness of sins come from Jesus. The act of calling on His name represents the believer's trust and dependence on Christ for redemption. Therefore, water baptism, as seen here, is not only a public declaration but also a powerful symbol of the inner work of salvation—the cleansing from sin and the start of a new life in relationship with God.

### **4. Public Declaration**

Baptism is an outward confession of inward faith, showing the community of believers and the world that one is committed to following Christ. Baptism can be a symbol like in a wedding were a couple in love publicly weds declaring love.

- Romans 1:16, For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Baptism is a public testimony, declaring to others that the believer has made the decision to follow Christ. It is a bold statement of faith, aligning the believer with the global Christian community and acknowledging their transformation through Christ. The same way that wedding vows represent the binding of two people in a covenant relationship, baptism signifies the believer's entry into a covenant with God. It marks the beginning of a lifelong journey of faith, obedience, and transformation. As a public act, providing an opportunity for others to witness and support the new believer's walk with Christ.

- **Death to Sin:** Baptism symbolizes that the believer has died to sin and self. Galatians 2:20, “<sup>20</sup> I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”
- **New Life:** As one comes out of the water, it signifies resurrection to a new life in Christ, symbolizing a spiritual transformation.
  - **2 Corinthians 5:17, “<sup>17</sup> Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”**
  - Baptism is the start of a journey in faith, where the believer is called to live out their new identity in Christ
  - **Galatians 3:27, For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.**

### **The Role of Faith in Water Baptism**

- **Faith and Baptism**

Baptism follows an individual’s faith in Jesus Christ. It is a response of obedience that flows from one’s belief in the Gospel (Acts 16:31-33).

- Acts 16:31-33, 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

### **Spiritual Preparation for Baptism:**

Before being baptized, a believer should prepare spiritually by examining their heart, repenting of sin, and confessing their faith in Jesus. The importance of repentance and a clear understanding of the significance of baptism cannot be overstated.

- Acts 2:38, “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”



Before being baptized, individuals should:

- Repenting of Sin - involves a sincere turning away from sin
  - Acts 3:19, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."
- Confessing Faith in Jesus - openly declaring one's belief in Jesus Christ as Lord. Accept Jesus as your Savior.
  - Romans 10:9-10, "<sup>9</sup>That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. <sup>10</sup>For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
  - John 1:12, "<sup>12</sup>But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"
- Understand the spiritual significance of baptism, examining their hearts and motivations.

Water baptism by immersion symbolizes the believer's total identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It is a powerful visual representation of spiritual truths that have already taken place in the believer's life.

### **Is Baptism Necessary for Salvation? - Connection to Repentance**

**While baptism is important, it is not a prerequisite for salvation.**

- Salvation comes by faith alone in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9), as illustrated by the thief on the cross who was saved without being baptized (Luke 23:43).

**Baptism is closely linked to repentance (Acts 2:38). It signifies a change of mind and heart, turning from sin to God.**

- Acts 2:38, Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The physical act of baptism itself cannot wash away sin. Scripture makes it clear that only the **blood of Christ** cleanses us from sin:

- **Leviticus 17:11:** *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood ... it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”*
- **Baptism does not wash away sin. Only the blood of Christ can do that. Baptism is an outward sign of the inward transformation that has already occurred through faith in Jesus. Hebrews 9:22:** *“Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.”*

Baptism symbolizes cleansing, the actual forgiveness of sin comes through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross (Hebrews 9:26, For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.)

### **Baptism Requirements**

Baptism requires:

- **Water** (Matthew 3:11).
- **Plenty of water** (John 3:23).
- **Going down into the water** (Acts 8:38).
- **Coming up out of the water** (Matthew 3:16).
  - The Bible often depicts full immersion, such as Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan River (Mark 1:9-10), where He came up out of the water.

### **John the Baptist compared to Jesus commanded Baptism**

The baptism performed by John the Baptist and the baptism commanded by Jesus differ in their purpose, meaning, and the context in which they were practiced.

- **John the Baptist’s Baptism:** John’s baptism was a **baptism of repentance**. Its primary purpose was to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah (Jesus). It called people to repent of their sins and turn back to God, symbolizing a purification in anticipation of the arrival of Christ.

John's role was to pave the way for Jesus, urging people to change their ways and get ready for the coming Kingdom of God (*Mark 1:4-5*).

***Matthew 3:11: "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire".***

John's baptism pointed toward Jesus' greater baptism and was not about salvation in itself, but rather a symbolic act of turning away from sin.

- **Jesus' Baptism** (The Great Commission Baptism): Matthew 28:19, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" - is an **act of faith** and obedience that is linked to a believer's salvation through Christ's death and resurrection. A **baptism of faith** in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit symbolizes union with Christ's death burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4), the washing away of sins, new life in Christ, and the reception of the Holy Spirit. It is a declaration of salvation through faith in Jesus and entrance into the Christian body.

Thus, while both baptisms involved water and repentance, the baptism commanded by Jesus signifies a deeper reality of salvation, union with Christ, and receiving the Holy Spirit.

### **Post-Baptism Life: A Call to Walk in Newness of Life**

Baptism marks a crucial moment in a Christian's life. Baptism is not the end of the journey; Baptism is a beginning. It sets the believer on a journey to walk in the newness of life. Living worthy of the calling of baptism means continuously growing in Christ, pursuing holiness, and spreading the Gospel. As believers, we are called to follow Jesus, bearing witness to His resurrection in the way we live, love, and serve others.

Join a local church or small group for fellowship and support.

- Hebrews 10:25," Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

## Understanding Baptism as the Beginning

- **Not the Finish Line:** Many might view baptism as a spiritual milestone that completes their faith journey, but baptism is the starting point. It is a believer's entrance into the covenant community of faith and a commissioning for a lifelong journey of following Jesus.
- **Philippians 3:12-14;** "12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus".
- **The Ongoing Journey of Faith:** The Christian life is a race (Hebrews 12:1-2) that requires endurance and perseverance. Baptism is the starting block, but the journey involves ongoing growth, learning, and transformation.

**Ephesians 4:1 "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."**

## What Does Walking in Newness of Life Mean?

- **Transformation of Identity:** In baptism, the old self is symbolically buried, and a new self-rises. The newness of life means living with the awareness that you are no longer the same. The believer is now a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17), called to live according to the Spirit, not the flesh.
- **Walking in Obedience:** Living as a baptized believer means aligning your life with the will of God. It involves putting to death sinful habits and embracing holiness, striving to reflect Christ in daily actions (Ephesians 4:22-24).
- **Embracing a Renewed Mind:** A change of heart begins with a renewed mind (Romans 12:2). Baptized believers should strive for a mindset that focuses on what is pure, noble, and worthy of praise (Philippians 4:8).
- **Commit to Daily Obedience:** Following Christ means listening to His word and obeying it in everyday decisions (John 14:23).

- **Practice Humility and Unity:** Living worthy of the calling also involves living in unity and love within the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:2-3). Humility, patience, and forgiveness should mark relationships with others.
- **Persevere in Faith:** Baptized believers must persevere in faith, especially when facing trials and temptations. The commitment made in baptism should inspire resilience, knowing that Christ has already conquered (John 16:33).
- **Daily Repentance and Renewal:** Even after baptism, believers will make mistakes. Daily repentance and seeking God's forgiveness renews the commitment to live righteously (1 John 1:9).
- **Spiritual Disciplines:** Engage regularly in prayer, Bible study, fasting, and fellowship with other believers. These disciplines strengthen your walk and allow the Holy Spirit to continually renew you (Acts 2:42).
- **Bearing Fruit:** The evidence of walking in newness of life is seen through the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). A life marked by these qualities shows that the transformation of baptism is ongoing.

### **The Role of the Church in Baptism**

- Pastors and church leaders are often responsible for baptizing new believers and ensuring they understand the sacrament's significance.
- The church community plays a vital role in teaching and disciplining the newly Christians to be baptized and helping them grow in their faith.
- The church is responsible for supporting and encouraging the newly baptized, helping them grow in their faith and become active members of the body of Christ.

### **THE THIEF ON THE CROSS**

- Whenever it is possible get baptized. An example of salvation without baptism is the thief on the cross (Luke 23:43), who was promised entry into paradise without baptism.

**Personal Application:** Encourage participants to reflect on their understanding of water baptism. Ask them to consider if they have been baptized and if not.

**Practical Response:**

Provide guidance on the practical aspects of water baptism, including:

- Contacting church leadership to express interest in being baptized.
- Inviting family and friends to witness and celebrate the baptism.

**Conclusion:**

Baptism is a divinely appointed means of publicly professing faith in Christ. Each time a believer is baptized, they testify to the glorious truth that they have been buried with Christ and raised to new life in Him.