



## **The Church: United in Baptism**

Second in a 3-part series titled: *United*

Pastor Matt Friend – February 4 & 7, 2021

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### – OUTLINE –

#### **Why is baptism so important? Because...**

- #1 – It's the first public act Christians are called to do after deciding to follow Jesus. ([Acts 2:41](#); [8:12](#); [26-38](#); [9:18](#); [10:47-48](#); [16:13-15](#), [31-34](#); [18:8](#); [19:3-5](#); [Galatians 3:27](#))
- #2 – It's a public confession that we believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. ([Mark 1:4-5](#); [Acts 8:12](#), [26-38](#); [Romans 6:1-11](#); [10:9](#); [Colossians 2:11-12](#))
- #3 – It's a public symbol that our sins have been forgiven. ([Acts 2:38](#); [22:16](#); [Titus 3:5](#))
- #4 – It's a public testimony that we've been reborn and that God is changing us from the inside out. ([Acts 8:9-13](#), [18-24](#); [1 Peter 1:3-9](#))
- #5 – It's a public celebration that we are part of Jesus' spiritual family. ([Matthew 28:18-20](#); [John 4:1-2](#); [Ephesians 4:3-6](#); [1 Corinthians 12:12-13](#))
- #6 – It's a public illustration that Jesus is the only "ark" that can save us from the "flood" of God's judgment to come. ([1 Peter 3:20-21](#); cf. [Genesis 7:1-24](#))
- #7 – In a way that we can't fully understand, baptism provides a spiritual connection between heaven and earth where the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are more deeply experienced. ([Matthew 3:13-17](#); [Mark 1:9-11](#); [Luke 3:21-22](#); [Romans 6:1-14](#))

#### **Today's Takeaway...**

Sign up [here](#) to be baptized sometime\* over Baptism Weekend (February 25-28)

\*41 timeslots are available, and we can always open more. ☺



# ***The Church: United in Baptism***

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## **– NOTES –**

### ***Introduction***

If you're new to Christianity or are exploring spirituality, perhaps you're wondering what Christian baptism is all about. Even if you are familiar with the Bible, perhaps you're asking why you should be baptized or if it's a big deal.

Today I'll try to answer your questions by giving seven reasons baptism is important. I'll then conclude by explaining how you can sign up for our upcoming baptism weekend.

If you're a long-time Christian who enjoys studying the deeper things of God, these seven reasons (though brief) get more intense as they are unveiled. You may find it helpful to study these notes later.

### ***Why is baptism so important? Because...***

#1 – It's the first public act Christians are called to do after deciding to follow Jesus. ([Acts 2:41](#); [8:12](#); [26-38](#); [9:18](#); [10:47-48](#); [16:13-15](#), [31-34](#); [18:8](#); [19:3-5](#); [Galatians 3:27](#))

No good work can save us, including baptism. How can we be so sure?

[Luke 23](#) tells us about a guy who became a Christian but was never baptized. The thief on the cross beside Jesus realized He was God and had come to die for his sins. He prayed to Jesus, "Remember me when You come into the kingdom," to which Jesus replied, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise."

However, Jesus does invite us to be baptized as soon as possible after we've decided to follow Him. We call it "believer's baptism." First, we believe, then we're baptized.

Why do we not baptize babies here at Bible Center? Because there's no evidence in the Bible of babies ever being baptized. It's a man-made tradition that evolved later in church history. Instead, we do Child Dedication, not for the child's salvation, but as a prayer of dedication to God.

#2 – It's a public confession that we believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. ([Mark 1:4-5](#); [Acts 8:12, 26-38](#); [Romans 6:1-11:10:9](#); [Colossians 2:11-12](#))

To commemorate His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus told us to baptize believers in water as a living illustration. Just as He went down (into the grave) and came up, so the baptized believers go down in (into the water) and come up.

This is why, here at Bible Center, we practice baptism by immersion—which means that we put a person completely under the water and then (instantly) bring them back up.

We also find the following significant:

- “Baptize” is a transliteration of the Greek word “*baptizo*,” which mostly (though not exclusively) means to *dip, soak, plunge, or immerse*.
- Originally, “*baptizo*” wasn’t a religious word, but referenced people who drowned or ships that sank. We even have a recipe (from 200 B.C.) for pickles by a Greek physician named Nicander, “Baptize the cucumber in vinegar.”
- In multiple baptism instances recorded in the Bible, “They went down into the water.” It doesn’t seem that they were standing on the shore with a cup pouring the water. Instead, it seems they were immersing believers.
- John 3:23 says, “Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was *plenty of water*, and people were coming and being baptized.”
- When we bury our loved ones, we don’t sprinkle a little dirt. No, we put them deep into the ground.

Here at Bible Center, do we teach that immersion is absolutely the only way someone can ever be baptized? No. It’s just the way we’ve always preferred to practice it here based on our understanding of the Bible. Biblical arguments exist within conservative evangelicalism for other forms of baptism (pouring, sprinkling):

- Ezekiel 36:25 says, “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean.”
- In [Luke 11:38](#), a form of the Greek word for “baptize” refers to Jesus pouring water over His hands.
- Doctor Luke uses “baptize” to describe pouring on multiple occasions: [Acts 2:17, 18, 33](#); [Acts 10:45](#)... although, admittedly, it always refers to the Spirit (and not actual water).

*The Didache* (a document dating most likely from the late first or early second century) records, “Now concerning baptism, baptize as follows:

after you have reviewed all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running water. But if you have no running water, then baptize in some other water; and if you are not able to baptize in cold water, then do so in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.”

John Calvin wrote, “Whether the person being baptized should be wholly immersed or whether he should be sprinkled with poured water—these details are of no importance, but ought to be optional to churches according to diversity of countries. Yet, the word ‘baptize’ means to immerse, and it is clear that the rite of immersion was observed in the ancient church.”

Throughout millennia, faithful, conservative, gospel-loving believers have practiced baptism in multiple ways. Those who use a different method than us are no less spiritual than those who practice baptism by immersion (as we do). Therefore, we will not make it a gospel issue, a separation issue, a membership issue, or a division issue.

Nevertheless, we will continue to baptize by immersion at Bible Center because it’s how we believe Jesus would have us—our particular church—to do it.

#3 – It’s a public symbol that our sins have been forgiven. ([Acts 2:38](#); [22:16](#); [Titus 3:5](#))

In the early church, this seems to be why baptism took place so closely to the time of one’s salvation: The Apostles were eager for the new believer (and everyone in the community of faith) to see a living illustration that their sins had been washed away.

In many ways, baptism serves as a symbol like a wedding ring is a symbol.

#4 – It’s a public testimony that we’ve been reborn and that God is changing us from the inside out. ([Acts 8:9-13, 18-24](#); [1 Peter 1:3-9](#))

The water of baptism not only pictures our initial salvation (the washing away of our sins), but it also symbolizes our ongoing transformation whereby the Spirit washes and transforms us daily.

#5 – It’s a public celebration that we are part of Jesus’ spiritual family. ([Matthew 28:18-20](#); [John 4:1-2](#); [Ephesians 4:3-6](#); [1 Corinthians 12:12-13](#))

One of the questions we often receive is, “How old should my child be when he/she is baptized?” The Scriptures don’t tell us, except that the person being baptized be old enough to profess faith in Christ and show evidence of that faith with some kind of changed allegiance and love.

Here are a few tips that help Sarah and me with our children:

- Let’s celebrate their faith in Jesus, no matter how many times they feel that they have experienced salvation or chosen to

believe in Jesus.

- Let's model for them what it looks like to follow Jesus. (Apologize when we're wrong. Turn from our sin. Read our Bibles. Love our spouse. Serve others.)
- Help them follow Jesus in age-appropriate ways, namely loving God and others.
- Try to delay their baptism as long as possible until you see that it's a matter of conviction for them... then sign them up!

#6 – It's a public illustration that Jesus is the only "ark" that can save us from the "flood" of God's judgment to come. ([1 Peter 3:20-21](#); cf. [Genesis 7:1-24](#))

In [Genesis 7](#), God records the historical, biblical account of the worldwide flood. According to Jesus, Noah, the flood, and the ark were literal. But Peter picks up on that literal event and applies it figuratively. He uses a real event as a baptism illustration.

In other words, the same water that brought judgment on the world is the same water that moved the ark along. Just as God brought Noah's family safely through judgment, so Jesus brought us safely through judgment. Baptism is a picture of that.

#7 – In a way that we can't fully understand, baptism provides a spiritual connection between heaven and earth where the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are more deeply experienced. ([Matthew 3:13-17](#); [Mark 1:9-11](#); [Luke 3:21-22](#); [Romans 6:1-14](#))

We saw it in Jesus' baptism (where the Father spoke from heaven and the Spirit descended like a dove). Paul makes a similar connection in [Romans 6:1-14](#).

What does all this mean? We can't know for sure, at least we can't fully comprehend it in this life. Yet, we can accept it by faith.

"The important thing is that in the simple but powerful action of plunging someone into the water in the name of the triune God, there is a real dying to the old creation and a real rising into the new, with all the dangerous privileges and responsibilities that then accompany the new life as it sets out in this as-yet-unredeemed world. Baptism is not magic, a conjuring trick with water. But neither is it simply a visual aid. It is one of the points, established by Jesus himself, where heaven and earth interlock, where new creation, resurrection life, appears within the midst of the old."

–N. T. Wright

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