



# WATER BAPTISM

*The believer's public expression of faith in Jesus Christ.*

## COMING TO JESUS

Accepting Christ is the most significant action a person can ever take. What an awesome moment when someone trusts Christ as Savior and Lord! At the moment of salvation, Christ comes and indwells the new believer and a wonderful, eternal journey begins. Along that journey, one of the first important steps a new believer takes is the step of water baptism.

God has chosen water baptism as the way we officially and publicly declare the transfer of our allegiance from the ways of this fallen world to the Kingdom of God.

Justification, a biblical term that means being freed from the penalty of sin and having a right standing with God, comes through faith in Jesus Christ. However, when one repents, or decides to turn from the world, the flesh, and the devil, there is a next step. The New Testament repeatedly commands that the convert be baptized in water. When this is done in faith, God meets the convert in the water and makes a profound change in his or her being.

The new Christian is expected to rise from the water and to walk in newness of life. "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." Romans 6:4 (NIV)

This is an important step. Unfortunately, many new Christians have not been informed of the joy and significance of water baptism. It is our response to the price that Jesus paid on the cross. It is our way of demonstrating to Christ and to the world that we are grateful for his free salvation. Though it is symbolic in nature, it also carries a great impact upon the life of the believer.

## WHAT IS WATER BAPTISM?

In the Old Testament, washing rites were frequently practiced as a religious expression to signify purification from sin or consecration to God. In the New Testament, baptism is seen more clearly and takes on a new dimension with the baptism ministry of John, Jesus and the early church.

John the Baptist was sent by God to spread the good news of the coming deliverer, Jesus Christ. His baptism was called "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Mark 1:4 (NIV). Those who were baptized by John admitted their sins and professed their faith in the one who was to come, that is, Jesus Christ.



Baptism is significant because it represents the forgiveness and cleansing from sin that comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

God meets us in the material world because he made us to be material creatures. For this reason he has given us material meeting places in things such as the Bible, the wine and bread of communion, oil for anointing, and water for baptism. When we approach these meeting places with reverence and faith, we can experience the presence and blessing of our Lord. We acknowledge baptism to be a biblical sacrament, a material form through which God does a spiritual work.

## FOLLOWING JESUS' EXAMPLE

Jesus' first action upon entering into His public ministry was to go to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. "Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. But John tried to talk him out of it. 'I am the one who needs to be baptized by you,' he said, 'so why are you coming to me?' But Jesus said, 'It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.' So John agreed to baptize him." Matthew 3:13-15 (NLT)

Obviously, Jesus did not have to repent. He was the sinless Son of God. Yet He took this vital step as an example to all believers. During His earthly ministry, those who followed Him were baptized as a sign of their allegiance to His kingdom.

In His final command to His disciples, before returning to heaven, Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world and declare the Good News. He commissioned them to baptize believers, all those who accepted the forgiveness of God. "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Matthew 28:18 (NIV)

## THE EARLY CHURCH MODEL

In the Book of Acts, we observe that the early believers followed the command of Christ. Whenever someone came to faith, they were immediately baptized in water.

- At Samaria – "But now the people believed Philip's message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized." Acts 8:12 (NLT)
- At the Apostle Paul's remarkable conversion – "Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized." Acts 9:18 (NLT)
- At Caesarea – "Then Peter asked, 'Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?' So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Acts 10:47,48 (NLT)



- The conversion of Lydia – “As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. She was baptized along with other members of her household.” Acts 16:14,15 (NLT)
- The Philippian jailor – “Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized.” Acts 16:33 (NLT)
- The new believers at Ephesus – “As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Acts 19:5 (NLT)

For new believers in the New Testament, baptism was never an issue. Those who came to Jesus and placed their faith in Him joyfully responded to the command to be baptized. It was that one noteworthy act that affirmed their allegiance to Christ.

## AN ACT OF OBEDIENCE

Water baptism is an act of obedience to Christ. Although one may not fully understand all there is to know about baptism, God honors the act of faith and obedience to His Word. It truly is our heart-felt response to His offer of salvation and grace.

In Acts 1, Jesus gave His final message to His disciples before ascending back into heaven. He told them to go to Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit, which would empower them for ministry. On the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2 the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples, just as Jesus had promised.

At that time, there were many who had gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish festival, Feast of Pentecost. They gathered around to witness this amazing outpouring and the Apostle Peter took the advantage of a captive audience to preach the good news about Jesus. The crowds were convicted in their hearts and asked what they must do.

"Peter replied, 'Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church--about three thousand in all." Acts 2:38, 41 (NLT) They were obedient to the faith!

Water baptism is not an attempt to win the favor of God. It shows that we are willing to follow Him fully. It is preceded by repentance, which simply means “change.” It is turning from our sin and selfishness to serve the Lord. It means placing our pride, our past and all of our possessions before the Lord. It is giving the control of our lives over to Him.



## IDENTIFYING WITH THE DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Water baptism is a picture representing profound spiritual truth. Just as Jesus went to the cross and died, was buried in the tomb and rose again, we experience the spiritual resurrection to a new life in Him. This resurrection to a new life is symbolized in water baptism. The New Testament epistles (letters written by church fathers) elaborate on this reality.

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

“Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. Romans 6:3-6 (NLT)

“When you came to Christ, you were ‘circumcised,’ but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure--the cutting away of your sinful nature. For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to a new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.” Colossians 2:11-12 (NLT)

Perhaps one of the most insightful scriptures to describe what is happening in baptism is found in First Peter, “And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” I Peter 3:21 (NIV).

You can see how important baptism is. It is truly an experience that you will always point back to – an experience that serves as a reminder that you have crossed over into Christ’s kingdom and that you are a new creation in Christ.

## WHAT ABOUT RE-BAPTISM?

While Christ Family Church has a conviction about how and when we baptize, we do not de-Christianize or invalidate the baptism of others. We receive all Christian believers into our fellowship and do not require re-baptism.

We do, however, baptize those who, for reasons of conscience, come to believe that God is leading them to reconfirm their faith in water baptism. Some were baptized as infants or were baptized at a young age.



Now that they have a more complete understanding of Christianity and the significance of baptism, they wish to celebrate their faith in Jesus by following Him at their own volition into the waters of baptism. This is completely the decision of the believer.

The place of baptisms may vary – it may be in a baptismal fount, a lake, a pool or a bathtub – what is significant is that our conscience testifies that we have been obedient to God. For many, baptism is the mark of a new life. It is the believer’s point of demarcation. The old has passed away and everything is new!

## FINAL THOUGHTS

- Don’t let fear or shyness keep you from experiencing this important step in your life.
- Baptism demonstrates your obedience to Christ and the Scriptures.
- It is the outward confession of an inward reality.
- It shows that you are not ashamed to follow Christ’s example and that you are willing to openly confess His name.
- Baptism declares publicly that you are leaving your past life behind and that you are intent on following God’s plan for your life.

## PREPARATION

- Let a pastor know of your desire to be baptized, either personally, by email or by the Connection Card at church.
- You will be notified of the next opportunity and the date will be set.
- Prepare your heart in prayer so this experience can be meaningful and memorable.
- Plan to meet with a pastor for instructions – usually 30 minutes before the service in which you are being baptized.
- Water baptisms occur at the end of the service after the message.
- Bring an extra change of clothes. Wear dark clothing for the baptism. i.e., dark sweatpants and a dark t-shirt. After baptism, you may change into dry clothes in the restrooms. There will be some towels provided, please bring extras for your personal use, if you choose.
- **LAST BUT NOT LEAST** – Invite your friends and family to come and witness this monumental step in your life!

Welcome to this new adventure in your walk with Jesus!

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