



# CORNERSTONE

CHURCH NEWCASTLE

## Baptism

At Cornerstone Church we refer to both Baptism and Communion as Sacraments. The word **sacrament** refers to an **outward visible sign of an inward, invisible spiritual reality (a personal faith)**. Sacraments are occasions commanded by Jesus to be practiced by His church when the saving faith and knowledge of Jesus is demonstrated and presented to people. We believe that the sacraments of Baptism and Communion are incredibly meaningful outward signs of our personal faith in Jesus Christ. We do not believe that either Baptism or Communion is necessary for salvation since they do not add to our salvation in any way. It is only by repenting and trusting in the saving work of Jesus that we have eternal life<sup>1</sup>, and no outward sign will make us any holier in the eyes of God.

However although Baptism and Communion are not necessary for salvation, as Christians we are explicitly commanded to practice them by Jesus<sup>2</sup>, because of this it is important for the members of Cornerstone Church that Baptism and Communion are biblically defined so that we can correctly implement the commands by our Lord Jesus and benefit from them as a community.

## Baptism

Although almost all Christians practice baptism, there is a lot of debate and disagreement about:

- 1) What baptism means
- 2) Who should be baptised
- 3) When they should be baptised and even if baptism is necessary for salvation.

We will try to answer these questions as clearly as possible.

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:16

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 22:14-22; Acts 2:42

## 1) What is baptism?

Jesus commands that all Christians should be baptised<sup>3</sup>, a command which is followed by all the apostles<sup>4</sup>, all the early Christians within the bible and which should be followed by us. The act of baptism involves believers being fully immersed in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This indicates their death to sin and their old life. The believer is then lifted out of the water, indicating their resurrection to a new life found in Jesus<sup>5</sup>. This act publicly demonstrates and indicates the change in a believers life as they receive Jesus: repent and trust in the saving faith of Jesus. In addition, since baptism is an outward sign it allows believers to publicly identify with Jesus<sup>6</sup> as well as the church locally<sup>7</sup> and universally<sup>8</sup>

As Christians look back at the point in their lives in which they were baptised, the public celebration of baptism can serve as an encouragement in that:

- It gives a sense of the union with Christ's death and resurrection that we go through in becoming believers<sup>9</sup>.
- The outward sign of what baptism represents can help increase the believer's experiential realisation of death to their old life and the power of sin and new life found in the resurrection. Baptism is often a life event that people can look back to in their lives to remember the work that God has done for them. Going through the physical act of baptism themselves can be a powerful and key reminder of the Spiritual work of Christ specifically for them – that they are dead to sin and alive in Christ (much like a wedding ring is an outward sign and reminder of the inward and spiritual reality of marriage).
- A public demonstration of the saving work of Jesus to others invited to witness the baptism. We always encourage people to bring nonbelievers to baptism meetings (especially if they're the ones being baptised!) to hear and witness testimonies of the saving work of Christ.

## Who and when should we be baptised?

We believe that scripture is clear for believer's baptism, which means that we must first believe in Jesus and then be baptised. This stance is also known as *credo-*

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 28:19

<sup>4</sup> Acts 2:38

<sup>5</sup> Romans 6:1-10; Colossians 2:12

<sup>6</sup> Acts 10:48; Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27

<sup>7</sup> Acts 2:41

<sup>8</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13

<sup>9</sup> Colossians 2:12

*baptism* (*credo* is latin and means “I believe”). It is different to the stance of *paedo-baptism* (*paedo* is latin and means “child”), where Christians baptise their Children before they first believe in Jesus.

We hold to *credo-baptism* (faith in Jesus and then baptism) rather than *paedo-baptism* for the following reasons laid out in scripture which shapes our understanding:

- John the Baptist required people to repent of sin before being baptised<sup>10</sup>.
- All Baptisms in the Bible occurred once a believer repented of sin and put their faith in Jesus<sup>11</sup>.
- Baptism requires us to personally identify with the saving work of Jesus, which requires faith<sup>12</sup>.

## **Is baptism necessary to be saved?**

Salvation is entirely a gift from God alone for those who have repented of their sins and have faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus and His power to forgive them of their sins<sup>13</sup>. Therefore the only requirement for salvation is repentance and faith in the saving work of Jesus. Although we can be Christians without being baptised, Jesus commands us to be baptised as an outward sign of our inward faith. Baptism is the biblical way in which we show that our old lives are dead and that we are born again into a life with Jesus. Baptism does not make us a Christian, but Christians should all be baptised.

**We therefore hold that as baptism is an explicit command of scripture, it should be applied to all believers out of humble obedience to God’s declared will for His people. In light of this position, we hold that those who profess to be believers and yet refuse and decline the call to be baptised are engaging in ongoing, unrepentant sin.**

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew 3:2&6; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3

<sup>11</sup> Acts 2:38-41; 8:12; 9:18-19; 10:44-48; 16:14-15; 29-36; 18:8; 19:1-7; 22:16

<sup>12</sup> Romans 6:1-10; Colossians 2:12

<sup>13</sup> John 8:37-48

## FAQ

### 1. I WAS BAPTISED AS AN UNBELIEVING INFANT, SHOULD I BE RE-BAPTISED?

Although the Bible refers to points where an entire house were baptised (possibly including children). We see that in these situations all of the people within that household **believed in Jesus** and were saved<sup>14</sup>.

Some argue for infant baptism from Acts 2:39, *“For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”* However the whole passage<sup>15</sup> explains that all the people there were old enough to profess individual and personal faith in Jesus. Everyone was old enough to hear that they needed to repent of sin before being baptised. The passage does promise these people (and children) would receive the Holy Spirit, but this promise of Salvation (of receiving the Holy Spirit) is valid for the children who had repented and trusted in Jesus that day, and for all children following who repent of sin and believe in Jesus.

Those for paedobaptism often refer to 1 Corinthians 7:14 claiming that this scripture is grounds for being baptised as a child of parents who have received Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Those for this often go beyond what the text is saying and argue that the faith of the believing spouse is able to cover their child so that they can be baptised. However this verse does not speak of anything in regards to baptism or salvation; rather it is assuring us of Gods grace over Christians and their children that may have an unbelieving spouse.

In short, at Cornerstone Church we believe in adult baptism and so we would say “yes” be baptised as an adult!

### 2. I WASN'T BAPTISED WHEN I BECAME A CHRISTIAN, DO I STILL NEED TO BE BAPTISED?

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<sup>14</sup> Acts 10:33; 44-48; 11:13; 16:15 & 23; 1 Corinthians 1:16; John 4:53; Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:16; John 4:53; Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 16:15

<sup>15</sup> Acts 2:38-41

Although all the examples we see in the New Testament of baptism in the early church always occurred immediately or very soon after receiving salvation, we hold that all who have believed should be baptised, no matter how long ago they received salvation. Not only is it a clear command of scripture but as explained above, baptism serves as an encouragement to the believer's faith and still serves to demonstrate what Jesus has done (and is doing) in their lives. In addition, it can serve as an opportunity to witness to their friends and family. Notably there are not examples of people in the Bible who have believed and not been baptised and baptism is always treated as an automatic 'must' after receiving salvation, not an 'optional' or debatable issue.