

Good morning CCC. So good to be with you and we are overjoyed today to be able to baptize new disciples and to publicly witness their confession of Christ before this body.

We're going to do things slightly different today—whereas I usually bring the message after our corporate praise and singing, this morning I want to lead in with a message on Baptism, and make just a few simply observations about what it is and why we do it.

First of all, what is Baptism? Immersion in water as an act of repentance, symbolizing your participation with Jesus' death to the old and resurrection to the new, and is the first act of obedience as the disciple seeks to follow all that Jesus has commanded and taught.

That's a helpful overview, but why do we do it?

1. Baptism was ordained by Jesus. Matt 28:18–20 “Jesus came near and said to them, ‘All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ **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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.’”

We should never quote the Great Commission without verse 18. The basis for the church's authority to baptize men and women into the body of Christ is Jesus' command that we do so.

Because Jesus has received all authority in heaven and on earth, we as his followers are now authorized to immerse new believers in God's name—the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And so we are authorized to go and plant churches right in the middle of cities, towns, suburbs, rural fields that become suburbs—and as we proclaim the Gospel and men, women, boys and girls respond—we initiate them into a life of discipleship to Jesus through immersion.

2. Baptism signifies our admission into Christ's body by the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor 12:13 “For just as the **body is one** and has **many parts**, and all the parts of that body, though many, are **one body**—so also is Christ. ¹³ For we were all **baptized by one Spirit** into **one body**—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink.”

The believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ, and this act is a public symbol of that individual's membership and admission into Christ's body, being baptized by the Holy Spirit into that universal body and Church of Jesus.

3. Baptism is a visible sign that we have been sealed into a new covenant with Christ.

Romans 2:28-29 "For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, and true circumcision is not something visible in the flesh. ²⁹ On the contrary, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart—by the Spirit, not the letter."

We mentioned a few weeks ago that physical circumcision was the Jewish sign of being covenant members with God.

Rom 4:11 "And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while still uncircumcised."

Col 2:11–12 "You were also circumcised in him with a circumcision not done with human hands, by putting off the body of flesh, but in the circumcision of Christ, ¹² when you were **buried with him in baptism**, in which you were also **raised with him through** faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead."

Understand that physical circumcision was the OT sign that a person had been sealed in the Old Covenant. The believer, has received the Holy Spirit who has baptized them into Christ's universal church and body, and now baptism is that visible symbolic act which demonstrates this internal sealing and admission to the body. It is the sign of having received the Spirit and gaining entrance into Christ's family.

Eph 1:13–14 "In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed. ¹⁴ The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory."

4. Baptism is an act of repentance.

Christian baptism was borrowed from these daily ritual washings in Jewish culture—but one particular kind of baptism appears to be the direct ancestor of Christian immersion – *the baptism of repentance* or the Jewish practice of proselyte baptism.

Peter replied, "**Repent** and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

John the Priest—the last prophet of the Old Testament, is best known by the title “John the Baptist.” He was given this title because two important shifts took place with the emergence of his baptism.

- **First, instead of self-baptism,** John would baptize the people. The first shocking element of John’s immersion is not that he is in a river (in fact, the rabbis would be very comfortable with this – as the river was a natural water source) – but it’s the fact that HE is baptizing people with the authority to call them to life-change.
- **Second, instead daily ritual washings, John was calling people to a baptism of repentance.** Jews did NOT practice *repentance* baptism – because they had nothing to repent of. They were God’s chosen people, they had Abraham as their father, they studied and read the Torah, they attended the national feasts and they were Kosher and met in Synagogue on Sabbath.

The only people who underwent a *repentance* baptism to enter God’s Kingdom would be Gentile (non-Jewish) converts, or apostate Jews who were now repenting of their sins to come under Torah law. That is, those non-Jews who decided to convert to Judaism by becoming Kosher, observing the Sabbath, and circumcision etc. The “proselytes” as they are called, would undergo the ancient מק'ואות which required that the Gentile initiate get fully unclothed and immerse themselves in a stone ritual tank – fed by a natural spring.

It was quite shocking that John called *the Jews* to repentance. In order to participate in their Messiah’s coming rule, they would have to repent and be baptized in preparation for the Christ’s coming. John is in effect saying that they are “spiritual gentiles” or spiritual outsiders until they turn to the Messiah in faith.

So, when the Apostle Peter tells all his fellow Jews to “Repent and be baptized – everyone of you in the name of Yeshua the Messiah” – this means that these good observant religious-folk who are trusting in their status as “Abraham’s children” must embrace Jesus as their savior – their Master. It was a big step for them. A “baptism of repentance” meant that they **were leaving one life and beginning a new life, leaving one family to join a new family...** repenting from their sin and pledging their allegiance to God’s Son was not a casual activity – it had huge implications for their lives as good observant religious people.

Paul highlights the implication of this public act of baptism and what it signifies in the life of the believer—wholesale change.

Romans 6:23–24 “How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ

Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in the newness of life.”

Baptism doesn't just signify our change from the old to the new—it exemplifies walking in the newness of resurrection life that has now been poured out upon us by the Holy Spirit.

- 1. Baptism was ordained by Jesus.**
- 2. Baptism signifies our admission into Christ's body by the Holy Spirit.**
- 3. Baptism is a visible sign that we have been sealed into a new covenant with Christ.**
- 4. Baptism is an act of repentance—signifying what has transacted but also the new walk and way of life in the Spirit.**