



Dear Brother/Sister in Christ,

We are so excited that you express a desire to be baptized in accordance with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. This packet is offered for insight and information about the process.

First, the following sermons by John Piper teach the biblical perspective on Baptism and represent the beliefs of Oasis Covenant. Please read:

- Thoughts on Baptism
- I Baptize You with Water
- What Baptism Portrays

Parents of interested youths should find related material w/instructions.

Second, if your understanding of Baptism agrees with the material, please contact Pastor Eric or Pastor Robb for a short time of sharing on the subject. Your Baptism is a response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and should reflect a spiritual conversion. This sharing time will explore your conversion and personal testimony.

Finally, we are here to help you enjoy and appreciate this wonderful experience. The enclosed FYI sheet should answer some questions. Please feel free to contact us for any questions you may have not reflected here.

May God bless your time and prayer in this material. Our gracious heavenly Father is pleased and blessed by your obedience to Baptism (John 3:17).

Your Brother in Christ,
Pastor Robb

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<http://oasiscovenant.org>



Frequently Asked Questions on Baptism

I am thinking about being baptized, what is the first step?

The first step is to talk with an Elder. You will be given an information packet with some helpful guidelines. The process will help determine your readiness. We are here to help.

Is it okay if I was already baptized as an infant?

Yes, infant baptism is a dedication of a young life to God. While this ceremony demonstrates a Godly intent for the infant, it does not exempt the believing adult from baptism.

Do I need to be baptized as an adult?

Yes, Oasis Covenant Fellowship believes that Baptism is an act of faith that requires the believer to acknowledge the saving act of grace. Regardless of infant baptism, this act of faith upon conversion is expected of all believers.

Are there any age limitations?

Because Baptism is an act of faith by personal volition, the appropriate age will vary. Parents are given the primary responsibility of verifying young candidates. A helpful booklet entitled, "Preparing Young People for Baptism Mentor's Guide" is offered to prepare a young person's readiness for Baptism.

Do I have to be a member of Oasis?

No, the Elders are eager to baptize any believer who has accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. The same packet of information is provided to all candidates prior to a personal interview.

Where are we baptized?

Baptism at Oasis includes a full body immersion, by the example of Jesus in the New Testament (John 3). The locations will vary according to season and temperature. Rivers, pools, and hot tubs will be utilized throughout the year.

What do I wear?

Modest clothing that will not shrink is best. Oasis will provide a baptismal garment that can be slipped over your clothing.



Thoughts on Baptism

Sunday Evening Message

The New Testament teaches very plainly that we are saved by faith. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31; see also John 3:16). "By grace you were saved through faith and that not of yourselves" (Eph. 2:8). "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith" (Gal. 3:26). The New Testament also teaches that faith is an act of the heart; it comes from the spring of our emotions and will. Romans 10:10 reads, "With the heart man believes unto justification."

We must decide to take Christ as our Lord and our Savior and we must love him for the beauty of his holiness.

But the transition from death to life, from darkness to light, from hopelessness to hopefulness, from slavery in sin to slavery to God is not merely a matter of ideas or emotions. It includes the whole person, and therefore the New Testament calls not only for faith in the heart but also confession on the lips. "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). Of course this doesn't mean that a person who is paralyzed and can't speak can't be saved. Such a notion would treat confession as a mechanical addition to faith. But Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34). Confession with the mouth is simply the overflow of faith. When Paul insists on confession he means: the heart must be full of faith, and we must never limit life in Christ to a merely emotional or internal affair.

To preserve this truth the New Testament calls for one more act in the process of passing from death to life, from alienation from God to reconciliation to God, namely, baptism. Jesus' final words to his disciples were: "Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." So Peter concludes his first sermon after Jesus is gone with the words:



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"Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins."

Sometimes we refer to baptism as a symbol. That may be saying too little, unless we remember that there are two ways to symbolize something. If you write the word LOVE on a blackboard for a group of 2nd graders and say that is the English language symbol for a commitment of the heart to someone's welfare, that's one kind of symbolism. But if you take your girlfriend out to a lagoon and sitting with her under a tree you pull a diamond ring out of your pocket and ask her to marry you and offer the ring as a symbol of your love, then you are doing something very different—you are expressing love through a symbolic action. The teacher who writes LOVE on the board need not have any love. But the giving of a diamond ring is love in action.

Baptism is a symbol of faith in that second sense. It is an expression with the whole body of the heart's acceptance of Christ's lordship. Why is this so fitting that Jesus commanded it of all his people? I think it is fitting because what happens in becoming a Christian involves the body as well as the heart. In conversion the heart is freed from sin to be enslaved to God. But in Romans 6, Paul really stresses that our bodies too are involved in this change over. For example, verse 13: "Do not yield the members of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life and your members to God as instruments of righteousness." It seems fitting that since the lordship of Christ lays claim to our whole body, we should express our acceptance of that lordship with an action of the whole body. And the action Jesus commanded is baptism. Baptism gives expression to our faith that we are God's from head to toe.

The earliest church baptized by immersion and came to see this act as an acceptance of death with Christ and resurrection to new life. When the whole body goes under the water, the believer symbolizes and expresses his desire that no aspect of his person escape death with Christ and renewal by his Spirit.

I've been thinking about Bethlehem's baptismal pool. I've never seen anything like it. It is very much like a catacomb or a tomb. You enter through a small mouth, and then it opens lightly here into a small room. The



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ceiling is very low (Rick will have to stoop). But this cramped tomb-like atmosphere is perhaps symbolically very appropriate. Paul said in Romans 6:3, 4: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

So I've suggested to Rick and Marie, and Steve and Cindy that, as they enter that narrow door and move along the passage way into this pool, they let their movement signify their desire to die with Christ to sin and to walk in newness of life—life devoted wholly to God.

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I Baptize You with Water

The Baptism of John

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Matthew 3

Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." 3 For this is the one referred to by Isaiah

the prophet, saying, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, "MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!" 4 Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair, and a leather belt about his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan; 6 and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned

you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; 9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, "We have Abraham for our father"; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

May 4, 1997 By John Piper

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13 Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. 14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" 15 But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. 16 And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, 17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

Baptism : part of Jesus' Ministry and Part of our Mission

Today we begin a brief series on the Biblical teachings concerning baptism. There are several reasons for this. One is that in almost seventeen years I have never preached a series of messages on the Biblical meaning of baptism. This is a gaping hole in our treatment of the whole message of the Bible for our time.

Another reason is that Jesus made baptism part of his ministry and part of our mission. Baptism is not man's idea. It was God's idea. It is not a denominational thing. It is a Biblical thing. It started with John the Baptist at the beginning of our gospels. He came, verse 11 says, to "baptize with water for repentance." It continued in the ministry of Jesus himself. John 4:1 says, "Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John," although it was the disciples, not Jesus who did the actual immersing (John 4:2). And the practice was picked up by the church not because of their own wisdom, but because of the command of the Lord. At the end of his earthly ministry Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). So Jesus made baptism part of his ministry and part of our mission.

Baptism : Universal in the Early Church

Another reason for the series is that the practice of baptism was universal in the early church. It was not just for converted Jews or converted gentiles,



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or any one specific church. It was practiced for all converts in all the churches. We know of no unbaptized believers (except the thief on the cross, Luke 23:43). For example, in Romans 6 Paul says to a church that he has never visited (in answer to a question whether Christians can sin that grace may abound), "How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" (Romans 6:2-3).

In other words, he bases his argument that Christians can't go on willfully sinning on the fact that we have all died with Christ, as baptism shows. Dead men don't sin. He assumes that the Roman believers were all baptized, and he was simply reminding them what it stood for. It was a universal, defining experience in the early church. If we are to be in sync with the entire New Testament and the entire early church we must take baptism seriously and practice it faithfully.

Finally, there is a reason for this series that relates to our situation today at Bethlehem. We believe that we have been remiss in not calling for a more forthright and public declaration of faith in response to the ministry of the word. Most American evangelicals are familiar with what Billy Graham does at the end of his preaching, calling people to walk to the front. Sometimes these are called "invitations." Sometimes "altar calls." When you look for something like this in the Bible there is no clear example. But what is clear is that when Paul preached the word, say in a synagogue or on the Areopagus, he got connected with those who believed (Acts 17:4,12,34).

The Decisive, Public Way of Taking a Public Stand

And if you ask what the decisive, public way of taking a Christian stand was in the New Testament, the answer is, baptism. The message Peter gave in Acts 2 ended with the words, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). Our renewed conviction is that we need to regularly offer baptism as the decisive public way for people to respond publicly to the gospel. But to do this we felt we needed a clearer understanding as a church of what baptism is. Hence the series on baptism.

Then, in a step of faith and hope in God's saving power among us through the summer, we are planning to have baptism and testimony services every Wednesday evening beginning in June, with some of them being off-site in



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lakes and pools. Our thought is that God has been and will be at work among us to bring people to faith and readiness for baptism, and that the guests and families that come to baptisms need to hear the testimonies of how God brought people to himself and what it means to be a Christian.

David Livingston is planning Sunday morning baptismal classes throughout the summer that will prepare a person in two weeks for following through on their profession of faith in baptism. We want to keep the time between the profession of faith and the baptism fairly short, because that is the way the New Testament did it, and because then the symbol feels more like a declaration of the new reality of faith.

Beginning with John the Baptist

Today we begin our series with the baptizing ministry of John the Baptist. This is the New Testament origin of Christian baptism. There is a close continuity between Christian Baptism and John's baptism. John began baptizing, Jesus continued baptizing, and he commanded the church to keep on with the practice : though now the act would be done in his name. So there are crucial things to learn about baptism from the baptism of John.

The most important thing to learn is that when a Jewish person received John's baptism, it was a radical act of individual commitment to belong to the true people of God, based on personal confession and repentance, NOT on corporate identity with Israel through birth.

This is one of the main reasons I am a Baptist, that is, this is one of the main reasons that I do not believe in baptizing infants, who cannot make this personal commitment or confession or repentance. John's baptism was an assault on the very assumptions that give rise to much infant baptism. Let me try to explain and show you what I mean from Matthew 3.

First of all, get the picture. According to verses 1-2, John comes into "the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" He is in Judea and he is preaching to Jews, God's chosen people. He is the promised prophet who would come and prepare the way of the Lord : make things ready for the Messiah. It's important to realize that John's ministry was to Jews, not primarily to Gentiles. The reason this is important is that the Jews are already God's chosen



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people in an outward, ethnic sense. So this means that John's radical call to repentance was being given to Jews who were already part of the historic people of God. These are the people John was telling to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. These were people who were part of God's covenant and they had the sign of the covenant : at least the men did : namely, circumcision.

Confess Your Sin, Repent, be Baptized

To these people, who were ethnic Jews, part of God's covenant people, having the sign of the covenant, circumcision, John said, in effect, "Confess your sins, repent, and signal this with baptism, because God's wrath is hanging over you like an axe over the root of a tree." Look at verse 6:

"They were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins." This is why his baptism was called "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4). He called for the Jews to admit that they were sinners and needed to get right with God, and to admit that being Jews was no guarantee of being saved. In other words baptism was a sign that they were renouncing their old dependency on ethnic Jewishness and were relying wholly on the mercy of God to forgive those who confess their sins and repent.

You can see this even more clearly in verse 7: "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" That's the issue : the wrath of God. Not just on the nations who are circumcised, but even on God's own people. In other words, Jewishness was no guarantee of salvation. Being born into a covenant family was no guarantee of being a child of God. Baptism is John's new sign of belonging of the true people of God : not based on Jewishness or being born into a covenant family, but based on radically personal, individual repentance and faith. They got baptized one by one to show that they were repenting as individuals, and joining the true people of God : the true Israel, not simply the old ethnic Israel, but the true remnant of those who personally repent and believe. Merely traditional Jews were become true spiritual Jews through repentance : at least that was John's aim.

"We Have Abraham as our Father"



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We see even more deeply into John's position when John responds to the Pharisees and Sadducees. He says in verse 8, "Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance." And then he reads their minds, it seems, and says in verse 9, "And do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham." Now what were the Pharisees and Sadducees really saying with the words, "We have Abraham as our father!"? They were saying, "Don't talk to us about the wrath of God. Wrath belongs to the gentiles, not to the descendants of Abraham."

In other words, they were saying that physical descent from Abraham guaranteed the security of their salvation. There was no threat of wrath! "We have Abraham as our father!" What was their reasoning? Well, John shows us by the way he responds. In verse 9b he says, "I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham." In other words, what they were thinking was that God had made a promise to the children of Abraham that they would be blessed, not just with temporal blessings, but with eternal blessings (he would be their God and they his people) and that God would always be for them as his covenant people. Since God cannot lie, the children of Abraham are safe, no matter what, because if God destroyed his own people, then there would be no one left to fulfill the promises to, and he would prove to be a liar. So they use the faithfulness of God as their warrant for security.

To this John has a stunning response: he says, you are right about the faithfulness of God, but you make a terrible mistake in thinking that, if you perish in his wrath, he can't fulfill his promises. He can, and he will. God can, if he must, raise up children to Abraham from these stones (or from Gentiles!). In other words God is not boxed in or limited, the way you think he is. He will be faithful to fulfill his promises to the children to Abraham, but he will not fulfill them to unbelieving, unrepentant children of Abraham. And if all of the children should be unrepentant and unbelieving, he would raise up from stones children who would believe and repent.

God Can Raise up Children Who Believe and Repent



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Now what does all this tell us about baptism? Three things:

1. It tells us that John's baptism is not simple continuation of circumcision. This is important because those who defend infant baptism often appeal to circumcision as the old sign of the covenant and say that baptism is the new sign. The one was given to infants and so should the other be. Circumcision was the sign of belonging to the Old Covenant people of God. Every Jewish male received it. If you were born Jewish, you received the sign of the covenant as a baby boy. So at least some of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to see circumcision as the sign of God's favor and of their security as the covenant people. But John's baptism was a radical attack on this false security. He infuriated the Pharisees by calling the people to renounce reliance on the sign of the covenant that they got when they were infants, and to receive another sign to show that they were not relying on Jewish birth, but on the mercy of God received by repentance and faith. A new people within Israel was being formed, and a new sign of a new covenant was being instituted. It was not a simple continuation of circumcision. It was an indictment of a misuse of circumcision as a guarantee of salvation. Circumcision was a sign of ethnic continuity; baptism was a sign of spiritual reality.
2. John's baptism was a sign of personal, individual repentance, not a sign of birth into a covenant family. It is hard to overstate how radical this was in John's day. The Jews already had a sign of the covenant, circumcision. John came calling for repentance and offering a new sign, baptism. This was incredibly offensive, far more offensive even than when a Baptist today says that baptism is not a sign to be received by infants born into a Christian home, but a sign of repentance and faith that a person chooses for himself, even if he already has been christened as an infant, the way the Jews were circumcised as infants. John's baptism is the beginning of the radical, individual Christian ordinance of baptizing those who believe.
3. John's baptism fits what we are going to see in all the rest of the New Testament, and indeed in all the first two centuries of the Christian era until A.D. 200 when Tertullian mentions infant baptism for the first time in any historical document, namely, that all baptism was the baptism of believers, not infants. And the reason was that baptism was the sign of belonging to



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the new people of God who are constituted not by birth or ethnic identity, but by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

The way of salvation is repentance and faith in Christ, not ethnic identity or birth to Christian parents. God calls us today, no matter who our parents were, and no matter what ritual we received as infants : God calls us today to repent and believe on Christ alone for salvation and to receive the new sign of the new covenant of the people of God : the sign of repentance and faith, baptism. So I call on every one of you who has not followed Christ in this way, "Repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38). This is the call of God. This is the path of obedience and life.

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What Baptism Portrays

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Romans 5:20-6:4

Today is the last message in this short series on baptism. I know there is so much more to say. I'm sorry if I have left unanswered some of your questions. But we will have more opportunities in various settings to discuss these things.

Recall that one of our main motives for putting this series here at the beginning of the summer is that we believe the New Testament calls for people to come to Christ openly and courageously. We want to see people who have been believers come to that point of public testimony and we want to see people become believers through your witness and through the ministry of the word here all summer long.

Why Did Jesus Ordain the Act of Baptism?

Sometimes we might wonder why Jesus ordained the act of baptism. Why is there such a thing as baptism? If salvation is by grace through faith, why institute a required ritual or a symbol to act out that faith? That is a question the Bible does not answer. But experience teaches some interesting things.

For example, after my first message three weeks ago a former missionary to the Philippines came up to me and expressed her appreciation for the series and then said why. She said that in the Philippines, where there is a good bit of nominal and syncretistic Catholicism, converts were tolerated and scarcely noticed by their family - until they came to be baptized. Then the Biblical predictions of hostility and separation came to pass. There is something about this open ritual of new-found faith that makes clear where a person stands and what he is doing. In other words, in many cultures today the situation is a lot like the situation with John the Baptist. He came preaching a baptism of repentance and those who thought they already had



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all they needed were often enraged.

That same week this missions magazine (The Dawn Report, May 30) came. On page 7 there is a picture of a man baptizing in a missionary setting in a river, with this caption under the picture: "Outdoor services and river baptisms are sometimes the best vehicles for growth." We simply do not know the whole constellation of reasons God had in his wisdom for prescribing baptism as a formative way of expressing faith in Christ and identification with him and his people. We can think of several reasons why it is a good thing, but we probably cannot come near to thinking of all the good effects that God intends. In the end it is an act of trust in our Father that he knows what he is doing and we are happy to act on his command.

Immersion or Sprinkling?

But today I will try to show from Romans 5:20-6:4 a little more of the meaning of the act. This will also address the question that some of you have regarding the mode of baptism - that is, immersion rather than sprinkling. In fact, let me begin with a general word about the mode of immersion as opposed to sprinkling. There are at least three kinds of evidence for believing that the New Testament meaning and practice of baptism was by immersion. 1) The meaning of the word baptizo in Greek is essentially "dip" or "immerse," not sprinkle. 2) The descriptions of baptisms in the New Testament suggest that people went down into the water to be immersed rather than having water brought to them in a container to be poured or sprinkled (Matthew 3:6, "in the Jordan;" 3:16, "he went up out of the water;" John 3:23, "much water there;" Acts 8:38, "went down into the water"). 3) Immersion fits the symbolism of being buried with Christ (Romans 6:1-4; Colossians 2:12).

We won't linger over this, but let me say a word about how we may look at the fact that our church and our denomination make baptism by immersion a defining part of membership in the local covenant community (but not in the universal body of Christ). We do not believe that the mode of baptism is an essential act for salvation. So we do not call into question a person's Christian standing merely on the basis of the mode of their baptism. One might then ask: should you not then admit to membership those who are truly born again but who were sprinkled as believers? There are two ways to account for why we do not.

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- 1) Should we call a manmade method of baptism "baptism," if we believe on good evidence that it departs from the form that Christ inaugurated? Would this not run the risk of minimizing the significance that Christ himself invested in the ordinance?
- 2) Local Christian communities, called churches, are built around shared Biblical convictions, some of which are essential for salvation and some of which are not. We do not define our covenant life together only by the narrowest possible set of beliefs one must have to be saved. We believe rather that the importance of truth and the authority of Scripture are better honored when communities of Christian faith define themselves by clusters of Biblical convictions and stand by them, rather than redefining the meaning of membership each time one of their convictions is disputed. When different Christian communities can do this while expressing love and brotherly affection for other believers, both truth and love are well-served. For example, the fact that many of the speakers we invite to the Bethlehem Conference for Pastors could not be members of this church says that we take love and unity seriously and we take truth seriously.

Which non-essentials will be included from generation to generation in defining various communities depends largely on varying circumstances and varying assessments of what truths need to be emphasized.

What Baptism Portrays

With that background let's look at Romans 5:20-6:4 to see what baptism portrays, and only secondarily what implications this has for the mode of baptism. My aim here is to help you see the glorious reality that baptism points to so that, mainly, the reality itself will grip you, and that, secondarily, the beauty and significance of the act will rise in your mind and hearts. Romans 5:20-6:4:

And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, (21) that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (6:1) What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? (2) May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? (3) Or do you not know that all of us who have been



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baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? (4) Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

One of the great things about this text is that it shows that, if you understand what baptism portrays, you understand what really happened to you when you became a Christian. Many of us came to faith and were baptized at a point when we did not know very much. This is good. It is expected that baptism happens early in the Christian walk when you do not know very much. So it is also expected that you will learn later more and more of what it means.

Don't think, "Oh, I must go back and get baptized again. I didn't know it had all this meaning." No. No. That would mean you would be getting rebaptized with every new course you take in Biblical theology. Rather, rejoice that you expressed your simple faith in obedience to Jesus and now are learning more and more of what it all meant. That is what Paul is doing here: he is hoping that his readers know what their baptism meant, but he goes ahead and teaches them anyway, in case they don't or have forgotten. Learn from these verses what you once portrayed in the eyes of God, and what actually happened to you in becoming a Christian.

I am going to deal with only two things that baptism portrays, according to these verses.

- 1) Baptism portrays our death in the death of Christ. Verses 3-4a: "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death," Here is a great truth about us Christians. We have died. When Christ died he died our death. This means at least two things. 1) One is that we are not the same people we once were; our old self has died. We are not the same. 2) Another is that our future physical death will not have the same meaning for us that it would have had if Christ had not died our death. Since we have died with Christ, and he died our death for us, our death will not be the horrible thing it would have been. "O death where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). The answer is that the sting and the victory of death have been swallowed up by Christ. Remember from last week: he drank the tank.



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Notice the repetition of the word "into" in verses 3 and 4. Baptized "into Christ Jesus," and baptized "into his death" (verse 3), and baptism "into death" (verse 4a). What this says is that baptism portrays our union with Christ, that is, we are united to him spiritually so that his death becomes our death and his life will become our life. How do we experience this? How do you know if this has happened to you? The answer is that it is experienced by faith. You can hear this in the parallel verses. Galatians 2:20 makes the connection with faith: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God. . ." In other words, the "I" who died was the old unbelieving, rebellious "I" and the "I" who came to life was the "I" of faith - "The life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God." And the basis of all this is union with Christ - "Christ lives in me." And I live in him - in spiritual union with him. His death is my death and his life is being lived out in my life.

Another illustration of this would be Colossians 2:6-7a: "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith." Here again you can see that faith in Christ is the way you experience union with Christ. You receive him as Lord and Savior and in that faith you are united to him and walk "in him" and are built up "in him."

So when Romans 6:3-4a says that we are baptized into Christ and into his death, I take it to mean that baptism expresses the faith in which we experience union with Christ. This is presumably why God designed the mode of baptism to portray a burial. It represents the death that we experience when we are united to Christ. This is why we are immersed: it's a symbolic burial. So know, believer, that you have died. The old unbelieving, rebellious "I" has been crucified with Christ. This is what your baptism meant and means.

- 2) Baptism portrays our newness of life in Christ. Verse 4: "We have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." Nobody stays under the water of baptism. We come up out of the water. After death comes new



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life. The old "I" of unbelief and rebellion died when I was united to Christ through faith. But the instant the old "I" died a new "I" was given life – a new spiritual person was, as it were, raised from the dead.

The most crucial commentary on this truth is Colossians 2:12. Paul says, "Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." Notice: We are raised up with Christ just like Romans 6:4 says we walk in newness of life. And there is the working of God who raised him from the dead just like Romans 6:4 says that Christ was raised through the glory of the Father. And this happens through faith in the working of God who raised Jesus from the dead.

So Colossians 2:12 makes explicit what Romans 6:4 leaves implicit – that baptism expresses our faith in the working of God to raise Jesus from the dead. We believe that Christ is alive from the grave and reigning today at the Father's right hand in heaven from which he will come again in power and glory. And that faith in God's working - God's glory as Paul calls it – is how we share in the newness of life that Christ has in himself.

In fact, the newness of life is the life of faith in the glory and the working of God. "I am crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live. but the life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God." The newness of life is the life of day by day trusting in the working of God - the glory of God.

Baptism Portrays What Happened to us When We Became Christians So let's summarize and come to a conclusion. Baptism portrays what happened to us when we became Christians. This is what happened to us: we were united to Christ. His death became our death. We died with him. And in the same instant, his life became our life. We are now living out the life of Christ in us. And all this is experienced through faith.

This is what it means to be a Christian - to live in the reality of what our baptism portrays: day by day we look away from ourselves to God and say, "Because of Christ, your Son, I come to you. In him I belong to you. I am at home with you. He is my only hope of acceptance with you. I receive that acceptance anew every day. My hope is based on his death for me and my death in him. My life in him is a life of faith in you, Father. Because of him I trust your working in me and for me. The same power and glory that



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you used to raise him from the dead you will use to help me. In that promise of future grace I believe, and in that I hope. That is what makes my life new. O Christ, how I glory in what my baptism portrays! Thank you for dying my death for me and giving new life to me. Amen."

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