

# The Picture of Baptism

By Matthew Black, Pastor

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## Tabernacle Baptist Church

7020 Barrington Road

Hanover Park, Illinois 60133

**Website:** [www.GodCentered.info](http://www.GodCentered.info)

**Introduction:** Open your Bibles to **Romans 6:3-4**. Tonight we are looking at how as believers we picture the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ when we are first baptized. So the title of tonight's message is: "The Picture of Baptism".

Let's stand as we read **Romans 6:3-4**, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Baptism is one of the most misunderstood subjects in all the Bible. Tonight we are going to talk about what baptism is all about. One of the last commands that Jesus gave before He ascended to heaven was to go and teach all nations "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (**Matthew 28:19**). It is in Matthew 28 that we find the pattern for baptism. Turn there if you would.

I. The **Members** or Recipients of baptism. When and who should be baptized?

A. The recipients of baptism must be only **believers**. We see this in the Great commission in Matthew 28. It is such a simple command. There is a pattern for it. Let's look at the entire passage.

**Matthew 28:18-20**, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

The pattern of baptism is clear. The apostles were told to:

1. Go and make disciples of all nations.
2. Baptize those disciples
3. Teach them further of all the things Jesus commanded.

We could say the pattern is: **believe** and repent—turn from your sin and give your heart and life to Jesus Christ. Become a follower of Christ; then be **baptized**. And then learn and grow and change in Christ until you die.

Baptism ought to be the first step of obedience in a believer's life.

Many times, after preaching the Gospel, some churches will have an invitation. They will invite people to believe on Christ. The invitation in the early church

seemed to be baptism. If a person had faith in Christ and turned from their life of sin, then they would confess Jesus Christ as Lord of their life through bring baptized.

B. It is Christ that saves us through **faith**, not the baptismal waters. Baptism is just a picture. The Scriptures are clear on this. The water does not save, it is a testimony to the fact that you are already saved. I want us to look at two passages.

1. Paul said in **Colossians 2:12**, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (cf. John 3:5, Titus 2:5). It is faith alone that saves us. Baptism does not save. But if you believe, you should be baptized. In fact, only believers should be baptized. Baptism symbolizes our repentance—we have DIED to this world! We are "Buried with him in baptism". But what saves us is our faith! It is through faith we experience the new birth, as he says, "ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God".

It is faith that just as Christ was raised from the dead, so you are raised from your dead life to live in the power of Christ! You ought not to be baptized unless you have first believed!

There is a second passage I want us to look at.

2. Peter said in **I Peter 3:19-21**, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: 19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; 20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but **the answer of a good conscience toward God**.) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ".

Peter knew he was going to be ***misunderstood*** when he said, "baptism saves us" (**verse 21**), so he clarified it. It wasn't the baptism itself—the water—that saves! It is the "**answer of a good conscience toward God**". It is that faith in Christ that gives us a purified conscience. Our guilt is gone!

Those who were baptized believers in the early church were called the "faithful". They were growing and changing in Christ. They were ones who had already been born again.

- II. The **Mode** of Baptism. We need to be clear as to what baptism is. Today baptism could mean being immersed or dipped in the water, or it could mean sprinkling, or it could also mean pouring. But in the early church it meant only one thing.

A. What baptism is.

1. The **Definition**. baptizw (baptizo): to dip, to immerse, to submerge.

2. The common use of the word was to "**dip** a garment". The Greek word *baptizo* is one that was used in the dye and garment industry. When they took a white shirt and dunked it into red dye, for example, the white shirt was now red, soaked with the red dye, such that the white shirt had the property of being red, the dye soaked in. The action of plunging in and bringing out was called *baptizo*.
3. There is absolutely no record of **infant** baptism in the Bible. Every baptism recorded in the Bible was the baptism of an adult who had professed faith in Christ.
4. There are many testimonies of godly men in church history to this fact. Just about everyone says that the practice of **baptism by immersion** was **universal** in the early church for the first two centuries. In fact, I could not find any one who did not admit that the practice of the early church was to immerse.
  - a. **Calvin** (who practiced infant baptism) wrote, "Among the ancients [early Christians] they immersed the whole body in water, and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the early church."<sup>1</sup>
  - b. **Martin Luther** (who also practiced infant baptism) wrote: "I could wish that the baptized should be totally immersed, according to the meaning of the word and the signification of the mystery; not that I think it necessary to do so, but that it would be well that so complete and perfect a thing as baptism should have its sign also in completeness and perfection, even as it was doubtless instituted by Christ."<sup>2</sup>

B. What baptism is not. Baptism is not **sprinkling**. There is a word for sprinkling in Greek [rantizw, rhantizo], but it is a different word altogether. If they wanted to tell us to sprinkle, there was a word that was very common they would have used, but it is clear that what Christ was commanding was the total immersion of a believer into water.

III. The **Meaning** or Message of Baptism: united to Christ's death and resurrection. This spiritual union with Christ is called "regeneration" in the Bible.

**Romans 6:3-4**, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

A. The water in baptism is a **symbol** of Jesus Christ and our union to Him. What exactly are we united to? What does baptism symbolize?

1. Going down into the water symbolizes Christ's **death**. "we are buried with him by baptism into death" (**verse 4a**).

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin. *Acts* (Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 1995), 147 (comments on Acts 8:38). Also see his *Institutes*, Book 4, Chapter 15.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther. "The Babylonianish Captivity of the Church", Henry Wace, ed. *First Principles of the Reformation* (London: John Murray, 1883), 192.

2. Coming up out of the water symbolizes Christ's **resurrection**. "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (**verse 4b**).

B. Baptism then is you identifying with Jesus Christ. It is saying, my old life is dead, and I am born again in newness of life in Christ. It is saying I am not ashamed to take Jesus Christ as my Lord and master.

**Illustration:** We can compare baptism with the wedding ring. The wedding ring does not make you married. It's simply a sign that you want everyone to know that you are married.

C. This union that baptism pictures in the Bible is called "**regeneration**". Regeneration means literally, "a new beginning", and is referred to in the Bible as a "new creation" and a "new life". It is Christ who saves us—the water is only a picture. This baptism is a picture or an illustration for regeneration, our coming into union with Jesus Christ.

1. John the Baptist said in **Matthew 3:11**, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire".

Christ says He will baptize some with the Holy Ghost—that is regeneration. You will be immersed into the Holy Spirit.

2. Paul speaks of this baptism in **1 Corinthians 12:13**. He tells us "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." When we are saved, we are baptized into the body of Christ. This is a baptism that has nothing to do with water. This is salvation.

Water baptism is a **picture** of regeneration. Baptism is an outward symbol of an inward work of grace. Baptism is a picture of a radical change that takes place in the believer. At regeneration our old life dies and our new life begins!

#### IV. The **Motives** for Baptism.

A. The first motive for baptism is **Obedience**. The Bible tells us that on the Day of Pentecost, there were 3000 people saved. **Acts 2:41** records, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." The first act of obedience after you believe should be publically professing your faith in Christ through baptism. **Ezekiel 36:27** tells us that when God takes out the heart of stone and gives us a tender heart of flesh in regeneration, He says, I will "cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments". Once a person is saved, and once they are aware that God commands baptism after faith and repentance, the believer *desires* with all his or her heart to obey Christ and identify with Him in baptism.

B. Another motive for baptism is **Love** for Jesus Christ. Jesus commanded us to be baptized in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus said, "If ye

love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). In other words, love has no meaning unless it is put into action.

C. A third motive is for personal **Joy** in the Lord. The Bible records the story of the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch in **Acts 8:35-39**, “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. <sup>36</sup> And as they went on *their way*, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? <sup>37</sup> And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. <sup>38</sup> And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. <sup>39</sup> And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way **rejoicing.**”

**Conclusion:** Have you turned from your sin? Do you trust in Christ to save you from the wrath to come? Do you believe that Christ’s death satisfies the wrath of God for your sin? You are hear tonight, and you say, I believe, and I have turned from my sin to Christ.

Peter stands up on the day of Pentecost and he says, “Repent and be baptized”. In other words, he’s saying, if your repentance is real, you’ll take the stand. You’ll respond in obedience no matter what the price.

My plea to you tonight is: you need to take the first step of obedience. I’m not asking you to come down an aisle or to fill out a decision card. If you have believed on Christ and are turning your back on this empty and sinful world, my plea to you is take a stand for Christ before this church by being **baptized**, and identify with His death and resurrection and walk in newness of life!