

Text: Various

Title: What Baptism Indicates About a Christian's Identity

Truth: Baptism in water is a wonderful symbol of my new life with Christ.

Date/Location: Sunday 10/25/2026 at FBC

Introduction

Today once again we have the opportunity to witness the baptism ordinance. It was committed to the church by Jesus in the Great Commission and has been practiced in faithful churches ever since the birthday of the church at the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem about 7 weeks after Jesus rose from the dead. At that time, thousands were saved and then baptized, and began to gather for teaching, fellowship, sharing meals, prayer, and helping the poor.

I. The Symbolism of Baptism

- A. Baptism identifies _____ me as a follower of Christ, and symbolizes _____ my spiritual participation in Christ's death _____ burial _____, and resurrection _____.
- B. Baptism is not what *creates* this union, but it *pictures* it. Going down into the water pictures the death of my old self to sin, and coming out of the water pictures my resurrection to a new life. It foreshadows my future bodily resurrection. Baptism is a symbol of a spiritual reality; it is not the reality itself. It is a rich symbol of the work of God's Spirit to united me to Jesus and to His body, the church. By it, I am publicly identified as a new creature, part of the Christian family.
- B. In trying to think of illustrations that can help us understand this better, we must think of a symbol that we understand.
 - 1. How about this one: the **American Flag** is a symbol identifies our nation that originated with 13 colonies and is a union of 50 states. It stands for a republic, one nation under God, indivisible, offering liberty, and justice for all. As imperfectly as this promise has been implemented over the decades—indeed imperfectly—we have I think probably come closer than any other nation and blazed the path for many other nations which came after us. But the flag symbolizes freedom, justice, and unity. The unity which

underlies the symbol has become quite tattered of late, and so the symbol at present does not precisely picture the reality on the ground.

2. There are other national symbols which identify certain traits about the nation, like the strength, courage, and independence of the **Bald Eagle**. Or the **Liberty Bell** which symbolizes the fight to end slavery, or the **Statue of Liberty** which is a symbol of hope and welcome for immigrants to the United States who come through New York Harbor.
3. Here is another one: a **wedding ring** or band identifies me as a married person and symbolizes that I have been spiritually united into one with my spouse until death parts us. The ring symbolizes a reality with my spouse, but the ring is not the reality itself. The reality is a relationship which started when we were joined in a Christian service 23 and a half years ago, and we began to live together with all of the blessings and responsibilities of a married couple, and the ring symbolizes that. It tells others we are “taken” and it reminds us of our covenant before God.

We use symbols for important things. They are not *the thing*, but they represent the thing.

II. The Reality Behind Baptism

- A. Baptism is a memorial _____. It points back to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Remember 1 Cor. 15:3-4. When we do baptism, we should be thinking about what He did for us, like at the Lord’s Table we remember Him. With that in mind, I want you to be thinking about your own baptism and how you professed faith publicly in the Lord at that time, however many years ago it was. And remember back farther than that, to our Savior who took great pains to open the way for you to be made right with God.
- B. Baptism, as we have said, is a symbol _____ of my death to sin and rising to new life in Christ. I share with Christ in His death, and I share with Christ in His life. What created this sharing or identification was the work of the Spirit in His baptism of me. So,

as well as being a symbol of my connection to Jesus, water baptism symbolizes Spirit baptism which created that connection.

What happens with the Spirit of God's baptism is that he unites me—identifies me—with Jesus and “immerses” me into His body which is the Church of all saved people. It “incorporates” and “identifies” me with His Church. This happens without me sensing it, at the moment I am saved, whenever that is.

Similarly to how a ring shows that I am married, Christian baptism tells the world that you have made your decision to switch allegiance from self and sin and the world to Jesus. You are not in the slave market of sin anymore. You have been purchased, redeemed, and are identifying now with Christ. You are one of *His*, not one of *theirs*.

When I become a follower of Christ Jesus, I do not physically die, but my old dead-in-sin self dies with Christ at his crucifixion and then is buried and gone. But I rise to a new life, so that my alive-in-righteousness self walks with Jesus in newness of life.

So, if Spirit baptism happens at salvation, what is the use of water baptism? For one thing, the all-empowered Lord Jesus commands His followers to continue to baptize disciples, just like they experienced by the thousands at Pentecost (Matthew 28). For another, there is no space in the New Testament for a Spirit-baptized but not water-baptized Christian. Both are expected to exist together in the life of Jesus-followers. For a Christian to not be baptized is a sin, and one of a very fundamental sort.

- C. Baptism is also a prophecy _____. It tells of our new walk in this life, and it *foretells* that God will raise us from the dead like Jesus arose from the dead.
- D. We have seen that the reality behind baptism is the work of Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. We have seen that the reality behind it is Spirit baptism that connects me to Christ and His body. And we have seen that the reality behind baptism is actually a reality in the future—bodily resurrection.

III. Other Information About Baptism

- A. Baptism is for people who have trusted in Christ, not for babies, and not for those who trust in works to save them. If you were unsaved when you were baptized or thought that baptism was what washed your sins away, then it was not a valid baptism.
- B. The mode or way we do baptism is by immersion. The other ways of doing it do not show the symbolism of death, burial, and resurrection. Pouring or sprinkling picture washing or ritual cleansing, but that is only part of the picture. Only full immersion can be defended from the passages in the Bible that describe it.
- C. Baptism is required before church membership. The church properly consists of true believers, and the way we know professing believers is by water baptism.
- D. Baptism should happen as soon as practicable after a person has made a committed decision to follow Christ and understands the true meaning of baptism.
- E. Baptism is connected with the local church since it represents in any particular locality the universal body into which Spirit baptism puts us when we are saved.

Once we are baptized, there is no other thing that should hinder us from joining the church. In fact, in some traditions, baptism auto-joins you to the church. The New Testament knows nothing of a Christian who is not joined to a church, and I encourage each and every baptized person to join the church formally, even the young people who have recently been baptized or will be soon.

There is no reason we should not join for the accountability it provides, for the commitment it shows, for the encouragement of the other believers, and for unhindered participation in the full life of the church, including ministry.

Conclusion

Baptism looks back to Christ, looks to my connection to Him, and looks forward to a glorious future of resurrected, sinless life!

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