



Baptism Matters

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"This is a picture I bought in a flea market years ago of a 'country preacher' baptizing a new believer. It was taped inside an old pulpit I purchased that now stands in our fellowship hall. Both are very old, they date to the late 1800s. This picture hangs in my study as an inspiration to me." - JKT.

One of the first steps of obedience for the new believer in Christ ... the Gospel message is portrayed in the ordinance of baptism."

- The Late Dr. W.A. Criswell

A Word about Baptism

Baptism is one of the first steps of obedience for a new believer in Christ. It really does matter. It matters to God, you, your loved ones, and your church. Your personal baptism should be a meaningful and memorable experience. Understanding what the Bible teaches is important to making your baptism the blessing and witness it is meant to be. It is a great honor to be baptized. It is a great privilege to follow the clear instructions of Scripture. In being baptized, a believer in Christ is following the Lord's own example—He was baptized! Jesus Himself commanded every believer to be "... baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:9)." In being baptized, you join literally millions and millions of people who have given their lives to Christ and demonstrated their faith through the ordinance of baptism. Baptism is a witness of a personal relationship with Christ. Your baptism will bless you and those around you. May this material bring a clear understanding in your heart on why baptism matters.

And now, why delay? Go and be baptized ... calling on the name of the Lord.

- Acts 22:16, The Living Bible

A. What is baptism?

Baptism is a public testimony about your belief in two important truths:

1. **His Ministry:** The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
2. **Our Salvation:** The fact that you were dead spiritually because of sin and have now been made alive because Christ is now your Lord.

The great news of the Bible is that Christ gave his life for all people. Baptism is a public witness about His Ministry to us. The Bible says that “*Christ died for our sins...He was buried...and rose again.*” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, GN) In the same way that a person’s wedding ring is a statement to everyone who sees it that that person has a significant relationship with their mate, so baptism is a public statement about our own significant relationship with Christ. Therefore, baptism is a public witness about our salvation. The bible says, ⁹ *If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved.* (Romans 10:9, GNT). Every true believe in Christ can say through their own baptism that they had died to themselves and are now alive in God because Christ lives in them.

Think about it—what better way to give a public witness of your belief in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and the truth that He lives in you than through *full immersion baptism* (ie., going all the way under the water and all the way back up).

B. What does the Bible teach about “baptism”?

First, the biblical word itself mean “to immerse, sink, dip or submerge”. Baptism is a transliterated from the Greek word *baptizo* (Gk: βαπτίζω)—again, it means to immerse or submerge.¹

Second, Jesus was baptized through full immersion baptism. The says, ¹⁵ *But Jesus insisted. “Do it. God’s work, putting things right all these centuries, is coming together right now in this baptism.” So John did it.* ¹⁶ *The moment Jesus came up out of the baptismal waters, the skies opened up and he saw God’s Spirit—it looked like a dove—descending and landing on him.* (Matthew 3:15-16, The Message).

Third, every baptism in the New Testament was by full immersion. There is no other recorded means of baptism in the New testament other than *in water*. There is no scriptural or historical evidence of “sprinkling” until the early second century. ³⁸ *And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.* Acts 8:38-39, NIV. The Bible speaks of John the Baptist baptizing by noting, ²³ *John was also baptizing in Aenon, near Salim, because there was plenty of water there. People were going there to be baptized* (John 3:23, NCV). Historically, and specifically archeologically, we know that the early church used baptismal pools (called *mikvahs*) for ceremonial cleansing and later for temple baptisms. They also used lakes and rivers for scriptural baptisms.

Fourth, the act of baptism always followed salvation. The sequence is (a) a person gives their life to Christ and then (b) follows that decision with the witness of baptism. ¹² *But when they believed Philip’s message about the good news of the Kingdom of God and about Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women* Acts 8:12, GNT. The Bible also says in Acts 8:36-38, NKJV - ³⁶ *Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”* ³⁷ *Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”* ³⁸ *So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.*

Fifth, the waters of baptism will not wash away sins—only the blood of Jesus can do that. The “waters” of baptism do nothing physically but get a person wet. They certainly do not cleanse a person of their sins. Good news! The blood of Jesus (and nothing but the blood of Jesus) will. Ephesians 1:7-8, NCV - ⁷ *In Christ we are set free by the blood of his death, and so we have forgiveness of sins. How rich is God’s grace,* ⁸ *which he has given to us so fully and freely.*

There is one more very important point to make (see next page). ↩

Finally, the Bible clearly teaches that baptism does not save you—only Jesus can do that. This is a very important point to make. There is no act, action, or “works” that a person can do that will save them other than making Jesus their Lord. *Only Jesus saves!*

Romans 10:9 (PME) – *If you openly admit with your own lips that Jesus is the Lord, and if you believe in your own heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Acts 4:12 (NASB95) -¹² *“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name [but Jesus] under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”*

¹Strong, James: *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.* electronic ed. Ontario : Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996, S. G907

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NCV) - ⁸... you have been saved by grace through believing. You did not save yourselves; it was a gift from God. ⁹It was not the result of your own efforts ...

A Fair Question: A Good Answer

Don't some verses in the Bible indicated you have to be baptized to be saved?

There are some verses in the New Testament that “seem” to indicate that you have to believe *and* be baptized to be saved. Once a person clearly understands the technical system of *periphrastic construction* in the Greek and has a grasp of the historical context of the verses in question, these arguments fail. For example, Acts 2:38, NKJV - ³⁸ Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It would seem that this verse indicates you have to be baptized to be forgiven of sin. Consider the historical context of this verse. In understanding it we must remember that it was originally stated as a message to Israel concerning their national crime of murdering their Messiah. It is unwise to link baptism with the remission of sins for nowhere do the Scriptures teach that salvation is dependent on baptism (see I Cor 1:17*; cf. I Cor 15:1-4**, where Paul clearly states what the gospel is and baptism is not included). Those who insist upon baptismal regeneration literally “rob Paul to pay Peter” (see II Pet 3:15-16).² Grammatically, if one understands the complex issues of periphrastic construction (the understanding of which words magnify which words—a process primarily based on word “endings”.) What Acts 2:38 literally states (periphrastically) is “Repent in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins and (also) be baptized.”

The Bible Says ...

* Christ did not send me to baptize people but to preach the Good News. And he sent me to preach the Good News without using words of human wisdom so that the cross of Christ would not lose its power.
- 1 Corinthians 1:17, NCV

** Now brothers, I want to clarify for you the gospel I proclaimed to you; you received it and have taken your stand on it. ²You are also saved by it, if you hold to the message I proclaimed to you—unless you believed to no purpose. ³For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, HCSB

Summary Statement

Believing in Jesus Christ as your Lord is the **substance** of salvation. **Baptism** is the **symbol** of believing in Jesus as Lord. Baptism represents *His Ministry* and *Our Salvation*—the fact that we were dead spiritually because of sin and have now been made alive because Christ is now our Lord. The Bible says that, “By our baptism then, we were buried with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...so also we may live a new life.” (Romans 6:4, GN) Please realize that **it is the teaching of the New Testament that baptism DOES NOT save a person from their sins, only faith in Christ saves.**

The Bible does teach the following truths about baptism*:

- Your baptism must be by full immersion (in water).
- Your baptism must take place after you have asked Christ into your heart.
- Your baptism is a public testimony of your belief in His ministry and your salvation.
- A person is baptized not to be saved but because he/she is saved.

² KJV Bible Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1994, S. 2132.

C. A *Helping Hand* About Baptism

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1. The thumbprint is a mark of identity.

Identity (i.e., thumbprint) shows who you are. In salvation, each enters into the death, burial, and resurrection life of Christ. In baptism, believer *symbolizes* that new identity going into the water—your death in Christ’s death and burial—coming out of the water—raised in Christ new walk. One baptized in the “name of the Father and the Son and Spirit” is showing a new identity as a member of a new family, the family

Matthew 28:18-20, HCSB - ¹⁸ Then Jesus came near and said to them, *authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.* ¹⁹ Go, therefore, disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”



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2. The index finger (i.e., the pointer) speaks of a new direction.

The new direction in life is now following Jesus as Lord and Savior. In baptism, one comes out of the water to walk “in newness of life” (cf., Romans 6:3-4).

Romans 6:3-4, HCSB - 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 a new way of life.

3. The middle finger stands out above the rest as a “witness”.

The middle finger stands out above the rest. In baptism, one gives a new “testimony” or “witness” about his/her life. What now stands out is a personal knowledge of Jesus as Lord and Savior. Through baptism, one gives a physical testimony of what has happened spiritually (cf., Acts 10:47-48).

Acts 10:47-48, MSG - ⁴⁷ “Do I hear any objections to baptizing these friends with water? They’ve received the Holy Spirit exactly as we did.” ⁴⁸ Hearing no objections, he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

4. The ring finger speaks of relationship.

Baptism is like a wedding ring. Both are external symbols that point to an internal reality—each speaks of a new relationship of the heart. Jesus as a ring does not make one married, so baptism does not make one a Christian. As a wedding ring symbolized the commitment of one’s life to another so baptism tells of a heart surrendered to Jesus as Lord and Savior (cf., Romans 6:3-11).

Romans 6:2-3, TLB - ² ... For sin’s power over us was broken when we became Christians and were baptized to become a part of Jesus Christ; through his death the power of your sinful nature was shattered.

5. The little finger speaks of one small (but important) step of obedience.

This small (but very significant) step of obedience to the Lord’ own command. In baptism, one simply goes into and out of the waters of the baptistery as part or a new walk of obedience (cf., Acts 16:27-34).

Acts 16:30-33, HCSB - ³⁰ ... “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ³¹ So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” ³³ Right away he and all his family were baptized.

Baptism symbolizes these five realities: (1) a new **identity**, (2) a new **direction**, (3) A new **testimony**, (4) a new **relationship**, and (5) a new walk of **obedience** to Jesus Christ and His Word.

– Richard L. Shepherd

D. Other questions about Baptism.

How do I make My decision known about giving my life to Christ?

If you are considering a decision or are sure of your decision, it is a good idea to either make an appointment with the Pastors or visit with a decision counselor during an invitation. The decision to trust Christ as Lord and/or make formal ties to a church via membership is very important. *We want to make sure that you understand your decision* and we want to answer any questions that you might have. When the invitation (the song after the message) is given, please walk forward and share with the Pastor that you are making a decision. He will ask you about your decision. If you have not already visited with him about your decision, you will meet briefly with a deacon or decision counselor to make sure everything is in order and that you don't have any questions. You will be presented to the Church Membership for a vote on your decision at a later service. This is a very routine part of *Baptist Life*, so if you have any questions, please visit with a Pastor, a deacon, or your Bible Study Leader.

*** Setting an appointment with a Pastor:** You can set an appointment to meet with one of our pastors to answer any questions you might have, discuss your decision, and/or give you more information about what the Bible teaches (and what Baptists believe) about certain things. To set an appointment, contact the Church Office at #(775) 827-3227. Our Office hours are from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Thursday. The Church Office is closed during lunch. Our Pastor's secretary, Karen Sagarra, will set the appointment up for you. Remember, we want to help you in any way that we can; **we mean that!**

Why must I be baptized if I was baptized and/or confirmed as a child?

Some churches practice "baptism of confirmation" for children. This practice began years (ie., early second century) after the Bible was completed and is different from the baptism talked about in the Bible (which was only for those old enough to believe.) At *SOUTH RENO*, we wait until our children are old enough to believe and understand the true meaning of baptism before we baptize them. The Bible clearly teaches that the first requirement for baptism is that you believe in Jesus as Lord. Acts 2:41 says, "**Those who believed and accepted His message were baptized.**" Acts 8:12 says, "**But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News . . . and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.**" Please understand, **at SOUTH RENO, it is a membership requirement that every member must have been baptized the way Jesus demonstrated and in keeping with what the Bible teaches about baptism.** SRBC asked children be baptized after they are saved and not before they turn eight years of age.

What should I wear when I am baptized?

Women should wear shorts and a top or a modest one-piece swimsuit. The less colorful the garment the better. Men may wear a swimsuit. Bring a change of clothes and a plastic bag for your wet clothes. We will provide a changing room (and a towel) for all baptismal candidates.

What about baptism and a special need I have?

We understand that there will be special circumstances from time to time. Matters like physical handicaps, aqua-phobia, terminally ill, bed ridden patients, and other situations are understandable and should not stand in the way of your baptism. Please contact the Pastor and he will discuss your situation with you. Together, we can come to a solution about receiving your baptism.

Should I be baptized before or after trusting Christ as Lord?

Baptists believe that baptism is one of the first steps of obedience for a new believer. You should be baptized as soon as you have believed and trusted Jesus as Lord of your life. The Bible says in Acts 2:41, that "*those who believed . . . were baptized . . . that day.*" **It is important to remember that baptism is a personal statement of your faith in Jesus as Lord.** Baptism doesn't make you a believer—it shows that you *already believe*. Baptism does not "save" you, only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is like a wedding ring—it's the outward symbol of the commitment you have made in your heart. It is what our Lord commanded to symbolize your belief. We encourage you to invite all your relatives and friends to attend your baptism. This is a very special time and our service will be designed with this in mind. Pictures are appropriate and encouraged during your baptism. The pastor will introduce you and tell a little about you before your baptism. You will not have to say anything.

How can I get the most out of Church Membership?

"You get out of church what your put into it" When God leads you to make formal ties with a Church, do it with all your heart. There are many good reasons to unite with the church. (1) A Biblical Reason: Christ instituted and is committed to the Church. The Bible says in Ephesians 5:25 that, "*Christ loved the church, and gave His life for it.*" (LB) (2) A Cultural Reason: It is an antidote to our society. We live in an age where very few want to be committed to anything (e.g. a job, a marriage, a country, etc.). Be committed to what Christ said He would use to help change the world. (3) A Practical Reason: Every team needs a roster and every army has an enlistment. Membership identifies our family. It helps the church know who can be counted on to help win our area for Christ. (4) A Personal Reason: You need the church as much as the church needs you. It produces spiritual growth, helps hold you accountable, provides for your need of fellowship, supports during a crisis, offers ministry via weddings, funerals, baby dedications, special prayer, etc. We know many will just be "attenders" and not "members." We welcome attenders because it is our prayer that God will grow them in their commitment to Him and to the church. Why be committed? God gave His life for the church. Be committed! Live your life for Him!

If I decide not to join the Church, may I still attend South Reno?

Yes! We strongly encourage church membership, but we realize that not all people will join. Realize that there is a difference between joining the Church and joining the Sunday School. Joining Sunday School does not require making a public decision or baptism yet does help you "get involved" in the Church.

How old should a person be before they are baptized?

The most important issue is that each person be old enough to understand their need for Christ. It is urgent that everyone knows that Jesus died to pay for our sins and we must realize our need to surrender our lives to Christ so that we can be saved. Once a person is saved, a person is generally ready to be baptized. Pastor Joe will leave the decision of whether a child is old enough to understand salvation to their parents. (His own personal counsel is that the child should be able to give a reasonable accounting of the Gospel story and verbalize their own need for salvation.) Because baptism is not a "salvation issue," Pastor Joe encourages parents to allow the child to be at least eight years old so they will be sure to remember this important event in their lives. Though not a hard-and-fast-rule, it is a guideline to help parents know when baptism should take place.

I have other questions about God and/or baptism that have not been answered, what should I do?

Set an appointment with one of our pastors. They would love to visit with you—this is important! Call the church office at 775.827.3227.

For more information about SOUTH RENO BAPTIST CHURCH, Church membership, baptism, and/or how you can be involved in the church, please participate in the next Welcome Class! The Welcome Class is offered once each month at South Reno. It will introduce the SOUTH RENO BAPTIST CHURCH FAMILY.

Please call the church office (775-827-3227) for the next class date or check our website at www.southreno.com.

D. Examples

Those baptized will receive a **CERTIFICATE OF BAPTISM (8 ½ by 11)** and a DVD recording of the baptism.

Certificate of Baptism



This is to certify that

Luke Taylor

*Was baptized in the name of the
Father and of the Son and
of the Holy Spirit.*

*Those who believed and accepted
His message were baptized. Acts 2:41*

Sunday, May 1, 2005
South Reno Baptist Church
Reno, Nevada

Joe K. Taylor
Pastor Joe K. Taylor



Those being baptized will need to fill out a “Baptism Testimony Sheet” to be read prior to your baptism.

SRBC Baptism Testimony Sheet (Child)	SRBC Baptism Testimony Sheet (Adult)
<input type="checkbox"/> Pastor and church, this is _____ <small style="margin-left: 100px;">First and last name</small>	<input type="checkbox"/> Pastor and church, this is _____ <small style="margin-left: 100px;">First and last name</small>
He/she is _____ years old and is the son of _____ <small style="margin-left: 100px;">Mom and Dad's name</small>	_____ gave his/her life to Christ at the age of _____ <small style="margin-left: 100px;">First name</small>
At _____ <small style="margin-left: 100px;">(Please give a specific place and situation if possible)</small>	At _____ <small style="margin-left: 100px;">(Please give a specific place and situation if possible)</small>
<input type="checkbox"/> _____ would like everyone to know that ... <small style="margin-left: 100px;">First name</small>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ would like everyone to know that ... <small style="margin-left: 100px;">First name</small>
<small>(Offer any personal information that will make your baptism special and personal)</small>	<small>(Offer any personal information that will make your baptism special and personal)</small>
Pastor and Church, _____ has a confession to make! <small style="margin-left: 100px;">First name</small>	Pastor and Church, _____ has a confession to make! <small style="margin-left: 100px;">First name</small>
<small style="margin-left: 100px;">Office Use Only</small>	<small style="margin-left: 100px;">Office Use Only</small>
Name: Address: Date of Birth Date of Baptism	Name: Address: Date of Birth