

Sunday 8th January 2023.

The Lord's Baptism.

Christening of infants is still performed in many churches, believing this removes from the baby



“original sin” brought into the world

when Adam and Eve disobeyed God. The Bible does not include anything about infant baptism or that this removes “original sin” and a baby is unable to decide to follow Christ. There are however, churches who conduct Naming ceremonies and dedications whereby a child is supported by godparents who are to be responsible for their faith journey.

When did the practice of baptism start?

The Greek word “baptizo” means to dip, plunge or immerse in water. In the Greco-Roman world of paganism, ceremonial cleansing was common prior to entering a sacred precinct. For Jewish people, the law required cleansing to remove impurities. By the time of Jesus, it was understood to require an immersion of the whole body. It appears to have originated after AD70 then given a moral meaning as a symbol of life.

Baptism is a visual picture of a person’s relationship with Christ by going through His death (going under the water) and His resurrection (being pulled out of the water). It shows others that our old way of life is gone and now we are a new creation in Christ. We’ve been “washed” clean.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “If anyone belongs to Christ, then they are made new. The old things have gone; everything is made new!”

Baptism does not wash away our sins as only Jesus can take them away. It is not necessary for salvation as salvation is by grace through faith alone. Baptism is a work of righteousness; it is a symbol of what Jesus has already done for us.

Does wearing a wedding ring make you married? No. You had to have a wedding ceremony and sign a legal document. The ring is a symbol, it shows people that you are married. If you take it off, are you still married? Yes. The ring is just a picture showing you are married. Baptism is a symbol. It shows others that our lives are new and different because we follow Jesus.

Why do followers of Christ get baptized?

Jesus was baptized as well as His disciples and in the post resurrection period full immersion baptism was administered to converts to Jesus. Baptism is an act of obedience and a testimony. It tells others about Jesus. That is why we believe we should be immersed, put totally under water in baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We also do this because Jesus did it first. Jesus was baptized by John the baptizer, the one who immerses which was unlike Jewish washings which were self-immersions. John baptized others.

He preached a repentance baptism for the forgiveness of sins, but his job was to prepare the way for the Messiah, as prophesied in Isaiah. He was telling everyone, "Hey, the Rescuer is coming!"

Why did Jesus ask to be baptized? It wasn't for repentance for sin because Jesus never sinned. He accepted baptism in obedient service to His Father God, who showed His approval.

Let's check out in this video what the baptism of Jesus might have looked like:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= VMNO2MAmWA>

We learned what happened in our reading from Matthew. This was a major moment for a couple of reasons.

1) **Jesus was inaugurating His public ministry**, ready to start the journey to fulfill God's mission. His baptism showed He was now ready to start His official ministry. No longer was He going to work for His earthly father, Joseph, as a carpenter. He was now going to do His true Father's work and God is very pleased with Him! This is also the start of Jesus' Road to righteousness through His death on the cross.

2) **Jesus is identified, by God's audible voice, that this is the anointed one, this is the Rescuer.** When we are baptized like Jesus, we tell everyone our identity is now found in Jesus Christ. Jesus told the world with His baptism, "I am God's Son, I am the Rescuer" and we tell the world "I am a servant and follower of Jesus Christ!"

Romans 6:11 says, "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

3) **The Trinity.** Just as in the beginning, in Genesis when the earth was created, there was God the Father – the creator, there was the Holy Spirit hovering over the surface of the waters and there was Jesus, the Word who spoke things into being. The doctrine of the Trinity appeared later in church history, but it teaches that God is three persons and yet one in essence.

Baptism shows to everyone that we are done with all that sin and alive in Christ. Does baptism make you a Christ follower? No. It's just normal water. To become a follower of Christ you must make the decision in your heart, believing that Christ died on a cross to save you from your sins. Jesus, through the Holy Spirit then transforms you from the inside, so you will be ready to tell everyone outside.

Baptism is a celebration! You are joining God's family and telling the world about that decision. Jesus even told His disciples before He left them.

“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”

Matthew 28:19.

Jesus wants everyone to know of His sacrifice on the cross because He loves us all so very much. Baptism is more than an act of obedience or personal testimony. It is a sacrament in which God acts through water and His Word. Christ specifically commanded baptism and with it comes a promise of grace and forgiveness.

I invite you, whether sitting in our chapel, or listening via live stream, to consider the act of baptism. If you have never, as an adult, been baptised, fully immersed in water; and you feel the Spirit urging you in your heart to take this step, I encourage you to make a time to chat with me. Full immersion represents going through Jesus' death and, as you emerge, being resurrected with Him.

As I said, baptism is not required for salvation, however it is a public act of your belief and love of Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.