

Baptism at Northcross

What is water baptism, since salvation is “by grace through faith”
(Ephesians 2:8-9)?

1 WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Water baptism is a **figure or type** of something which already took place in the heart of the believer the moment he or she was saved (1 Peter 3:21). It is the ordinance representing the identification of the Christian with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

You are “crucified” (standing upright in water), “buried” (immersed into the water), “resurrected” (raised out of the water).

Water baptism is a picture of spiritual baptism as defined in Romans 6:3–5 and 1 Corinthians 12:13. It is the **outward testimony** of the believer’s inward faith. Baptism does not save – a sinner is saved the moment he places his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is a visible testimony to that faith.

Scriptural baptism pictures and proclaims four important things:

1. **Death, burial and resurrection with Christ** – *“Buried with Him in baptism, where also you are raised with Him, through your faith in the working of God, who has raised Him from the dead.”* Colossians 2:12
2. **Death of our old life, resurrection to newness of life** – *“As Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* Romans 6:4
3. **Our faith in the Trinity** – *“Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”* Matthew 28:19
4. **Our “putting on” of Christ** – *“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”* Galatians 3:26–27

Water baptism does **not** atone for sin. Only the blood of Christ cleanses us from sin (1 John 1:7; Colossians 1:14).

2 WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

The Bible makes it clear that scriptural baptism is **believer’s baptism**. Belief always comes first:

- In Acts 2:41, they received the word, **then** they were baptized.
- In Acts 8:12, 36–37, they believed, **then** they were baptized.
- In Acts 10:43–47, those who believed received the Holy Spirit, **then** they were baptized.
- In Acts 16:30–34, the Philippian jailer was told to *“believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”* – and his baptism came **after** his believing.

Only those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour should be baptized. Water baptism is not salvation – it is obedience to a command by God concerning discipleship.

3 WHEN AND WHERE?

When: The Bible teaches that water baptism follows shortly after spiritual baptism (the new birth). See the examples of Paul (Acts 9:18), Cornelius (Acts 10:43–48), and the Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:33).

Where: Baptism takes place in the presence of other believers – the local church. The Lord Jesus Christ gave the local church the ordinance of water baptism (Matthew 28:18–20). It is a **community celebration**, where someone baptizes someone else in the presence of others.

4 HOW SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

Immersion in water is the only scriptural method of baptism:

- In Matthew 3:13–16 and Mark 1:9–10, John the Baptist needed “much water” for baptism.
- In Acts 8:38–39, baptism by immersion is explicitly described.
- In Romans 6:3–6, baptism pictures three things: death, burial, and resurrection. Only immersion fulfills all three pictures.

Scriptural expressions such as “much water” (John 3:23) and “down both into the water” (Acts 8:38) are conclusive evidence that baptism is by immersion.

5 WHY SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

Spiritual baptism is the Christian’s identification with Christ (Colossians 2:12). Romans 6:3–5 teaches us that it is literally a picture of your death, burial, and resurrection with Christ. It is your **first act of obedience to God** after salvation. Two key reasons:

1. **It pleases the Lord** – When Jesus was baptized, God the Father said, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Matthew 3:17). When we follow the example of Christ, we please the Father.
2. **It is a testimony to the world** – Jesus said, “*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 10:32). Baptism is a public testimony of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

IN CONCLUSION

Baptism is the outward symbol of what has already transpired in the heart of the one who has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for full salvation.