



CAPITAL CITY

C H U R C H

What Does It Mean To Be Baptized?

At its core, baptism is a symbol of something that has happened. A symbol is not the reality, but a picture of the reality. It is a testimony, a witness, to the life-change that you have experienced as a Christian. There is nothing inherently magical about being baptized. It doesn't make you more spiritual, although many share that it deepens their commitment to and love for God. When you are baptized, you simply get wet. But you also bear witness to your family, friends, and the community that you have been made new and are now identifying with Christ and with other Christ-followers.

This view is borne out in scripture. Jesus set the example for us by being baptized Himself:

Matthew 3:13-15 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

Paul also regarded baptism as a symbol of the life-change we experience when we put our faith in Jesus Christ:

Romans 6:1-4 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

This is an important point, and the language you'll hear us use at Capital City Church when we baptize new believers: We are *buried with Jesus by baptism into death* and *raised to walk in newness of life*. When we trust Christ, something **happens**. It is a turning point in our lives. The old person is done away with ("dies"), and a person who has been made new by Jesus Christ is brought to life. We choose to trust and follow Him, and we become new creatures:

2 Corinthians 5:17 If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

So what exactly does baptism signify? In summary, it shows three things:

- **That we identify with Christ.**

The language used above in Romans 6 makes it clear that baptism is “*into Christ Jesus*”. Just as he died, was buried, and resurrected, so too do we experience something similar spiritually when we follow Him.

Colossians 2:11-12 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

- **The cleansing work of salvation.**

While baptism doesn't make us clean, it does symbolize the salvation that has done exactly that. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins makes it possible for them to be washed away – all of them!

Acts 22:14-16 The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

Ephesians 5:25-26 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word

- **The new birth.**

Though we were previously “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (*Ephesians 2:1*), we have been given the life of God through His Spirit that now dwells within us. As His children, we are given spiritual life through Him and adopted into His family forever!

John 1:12-13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Ephesians 1:5 In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will

Our spiritual rebirth brings about a new relationship with God and with the family of God (*Ephesians 3:15*)—the Church. It is for this reason that baptism serves as the rite of initiation into the Church. Through baptism we bear witness to what has happened to us (salvation) as well as identifying ourselves with others who have participated in baptism.