

## “Baptism – Holy Water?”

Romans 6:3-4; Acts 2:38

Dr. Jerry Nelson

Several years ago Ralph Wood a faculty member of Wake Forest University told of being invited to participate in a baptism at a nearby prison.

He wrote, “A guard escorted the prisoner from behind a fence that was topped with razor wire. His family was not able to attend because their broken-down car had failed yet again. There were just three of us, with the guard looking curiously on. To the strumming of the chaplain’s guitar, we sang a croaky version of “Amazing Grace.” We did not balk at declaring ourselves “wretches.”

“After a pastoral prayer, the barefoot prisoner stepped into a wooden box that had been lined with a plastic sheet and filled with water. It looked like a large coffin, and rightly so. This was no warmed and tiled (baptismal) with its painted River Jordan winding pleasantly in the distance. This was the place of death, the watery chaos from which God graciously made the world and to which, in rightful wrath, he almost returned it.

“Pronouncing the Trinitarian formula, the pastor lowered the new Christian down into the liquid grave to be buried with Christ and then raised him up to life eternal. Though the water was cold, the man stood there weeping for joy.

“When at last he left the baptismal box, I thought he would hurry away and change into something dry. I was mistaken. He said, ‘I want to wear these clothes as long as I can. In fact I wish I never had to take a shower again.’

“And so we walked to nearby tables and sat quietly in the Carolina sun, hearing this newly minted Christian explain why his baptismal burial was too good to dry off. “I am now a free man,” he declared. “I’m not impatient to leave prison because this wire can’t shackle my soul. I know that I deserved to come here, to pay for what I did. But I also learned here that Someone else has paid for all my crimes; all my sins against God.”  
(*Christian Century*, Oct 21, 1992, page 926 – found also in Vander Zee, *Christ, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper*, 120)

Baptism is a common practice.

Through the ages, many cultures have practiced baptism:

Babylonian, Egyptian, Mayan, Jewish and many more.

Many religions have and still do practice baptism:

The Sikhs, the Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and of course nearly all groups that call themselves “Christians.”

But as common as it is, baptism still raises many questions, maybe especially in Christianity:

- If I've never been baptized am I a Christian?
- Should I be baptized again if I have become a Christian since I was baptized initially?
- Should I be baptized again if I was baptized as an infant?
- What's the big deal about baptism; what do I miss if I'm never baptized?

In some groups baptism is considered essential to becoming a Christian, meaning that unless you are baptized you can't be a Christian.

For example one group declares: "The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal (blessing). As regards children who have died without Baptism, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God..." (Catholic Catechism: 1257 and 1261).

In other groups, if baptism is considered at all, it is considered optional and as merely an outward symbol of an inward faith.

In fact one very large evangelical group does not practice baptism at all.

We are convinced that both of those positions are wrong.

To gain what I believe is a biblical perspective and practice regarding baptism we cannot simply turn to one passage of the Bible to find it all spelled out.

There is no New Testament (NT) treatise on baptism.

Instead baptism is assumed because it was so much a part of the culture. But saying that does not mean we don't have good information about baptism in the Bible.

In fact baptism plays a very prominent role in the NT.

Even before Jesus began his ministry (before Christianity, if you will), a God-fearing man gained the name "John the Baptist."

Mark 1:4 "And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."

This was not the Christian baptism of the church, which would come later, but I want you to see that a water baptism related to repentance and forgiveness was a prominent part of that early message.

We are told that when Jesus began his ministry, he too preached repentance and his disciples baptized people as John the Baptist did. (Matthew 4:17; John 3:22; 4:1-2)

Not only did Jesus **preach** a baptism of repentance but also **he was baptized**.

Much could be said about Jesus' baptism but suffice it to say that though he was sinless, he was identifying with our sinfulness and the necessity of repentance.

But just as importantly for our discussion, notice the connection of water baptism and the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 3:16 "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him."

**In that very quick review of the gospels I want you to see the connections already made between water baptism and repentance, water baptism and forgiveness, and water baptism and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.**

Whether you know much or little about Christian baptism, you can readily see that this all begins to tie together.

Now you might expect that water baptism would disappear after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, which is the true basis of the forgiveness of sins.

And you might especially expect water baptism to disappear after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

But that is not at all what we find.

First we find Jesus' clear command to baptize:

Matthew 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..."

And we see the disciples' obedience to that command:

Acts 2:38,41 "Peter replied, "Repent and **be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit... Those who accepted his message **were baptized**, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

**What we see is that water baptism continues to be connected to the issues of acceptance of the gospel, of repentance, of forgiveness of sins, of receiving the Holy Spirit, and more.**

Water baptism was not only for the Jewish believers; Samaritan believers were also baptized

And as for the Jews, water baptism was connected to belief in Jesus.

Deacon Philip preached to the Samaritans and it says:

Acts 8:12 "But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, **they were baptized**, both men and women.

They believed and were baptized.

And the same was true for Gentile believers:

Acts 8:35, 36-38 "Philip told him (the Ethiopian) the good news... As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip **baptized him**.

He heard the good news and was baptized.

The same was true of the Apostle Paul but note here that water baptism is also connected to the idea of receiving the Holy Spirit:

Acts 9:17-18 Ananias said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and **was baptized**,

See here again the relationship of water baptism to receiving the Holy Spirit.

And again: Acts 10:47-48 "Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup> "Can anyone keep these people (Cornelius and guests) from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." <sup>48</sup> So he ordered that they **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ.

See again the relationship of water baptism to receiving the Holy Spirit.

This relationship of water baptism with becoming a Christian continues:

Acts 16:15 "The Lord opened her (Lydia) heart to respond to Paul's message... She and the members of her household **were baptized**..."

And again: Acts 16:33 "At that hour of the night the (Philippian) jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family **were baptized**."

And again: Acts 18:8 "and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and **were baptized**."

And yet again: Acts 19:4 "On hearing this, they (Ephesians) **were baptized** into the name of the Lord Jesus."

Baptism was not optional; it was mandatory and it was connected in some way with nearly everything about becoming and being a Christian.

You have **not** heard me say that baptism **causes** salvation or that a person cannot be saved without baptism but you **have** heard me say repeatedly that water baptism is **connected with** nearly everything about becoming and being a Christian.

It is clear that water baptism is commanded and practiced in the Christian church.

But what does it mean? What does it do? What is its significance?

As I said earlier, baptism is so assumed in the NT that there is no single passage that spells it all out.

But as we look at a number of passages in the Bible we get a fuller and fuller understanding of why baptism is so significant and why it is not optional for a Christ-follower, a Christian.

**I want you to see the relationship of water baptism to four essential aspects of what it means to be a Christian:**

**First, water baptism indicates the forgiveness of our sins.**

Acts 2:38 “Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”

Notice three ideas drawn together: repentance, baptism in the name of Jesus, and forgiveness of sins.

Repentance was called for, a change of heart, a turning around.

This repentance was part of John’s message, Jesus’ message and the message of Jesus’ disciples.

Most of us would agree that faith without repentance is not real faith.

For turning to Christ in faith both implies and necessitates a turning from what had our allegiance before.

In that we are not saying that repentance saves us for we know that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone.

But real faith repents of the former way of life and turns to Jesus.

There is a human response to God’s grace; it is repenting-faith.

According to this text, baptism is the outward manifestation of that repenting faith.

Baptism declares and demonstrates a new allegiance to Jesus as saving-LORD!

(Ajith Fernando, *NIV Application Commentary, Acts*, 106)

We know that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone but the one with real faith obeys and is baptized.

The great English preacher, Charles Spurgeon, an effective foe of any kind of works-salvation and a strong voice for salvation by grace alone through faith alone, nonetheless understood the place of baptism in the life of the one who believes:

He wrote: “For a hundred reasons, it is absolutely needful for Christ’s kingdom that the believer should openly confess his faith. Do you not see that? And hence baptism, being God’s way of our openly confessing our faith, he requires it to be added to faith, that the faith may be a confessing faith, not a cowardly faith; that the faith may be an open faith, not a private faith; so that the faith may be a working faith, influencing our life, and the life of others, and not a mere secret attempt for self-salvation by a silent faith which dares not own Christ... There is no regenerating efficacy about water, or about immersion, or about baptism in any shape or form; but baptism is needful as the outward visible expression of the inward spiritual faith by which the soul is saved.

“Baptism is often the test of obedience. He who believes in Christ takes him to be his Master as well as his Savior; and Christ, therefore, says to him, “Go and be baptized.” If the man refuses to do it, he thereby proves that he does not intend to be the disciple of the Master.

“But,” says someone, “you know that baptism is a nonessential.”  
What do you mean by “nonessential”?

“I mean that I can be saved without being baptized.”

Will you dare to say that wicked sentence over again?

Clearly, you are no servant of Jesus; you need to be saved from such a disreputable, miserable state of mind; and may the Lord save you! Oftentimes, I do believe that this little matter of believers’ baptism is the test of the sincerity of our profession of love for Jesus.”

Charles Spurgeon Oct 13, 1889 “Baptism Essential to Obedience”

Now back to the issue of the connection of water baptism with the forgiveness of our sins: Ananias said to the Saul at Saul’s conversion to Christ:

Acts 22:16 “And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on (Jesus’) name.’

There could probably be no better dramatization of the cleansing of our hearts in forgiveness than the washing of our bodies in baptism.

The baptism doesn’t accomplish the washing away of sins, the forgiveness of sins, but baptism is the quintessential expression of the faith that trusts Jesus to forgive.

It’s the outward response to the inward reality.

And again, a lack of response would indicate a lack of reality.

I want to show you another passage with which we are more familiar that also connects God’s gracious salvation with our active human response:

Romans 10:9-10 “If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

It is interesting to me that we like to quote these verses but never suggest that it is the verbal testimony from the mouth that saves us.

We do believe that never bearing witness to one’s faith in Christ, never admitting to being a Christ follower, does raise serious questions about the legitimacy of one’s saving faith.

We are even willing to say “No confession means no faith and no faith means no salvation.”

Even with that, we don’t believe it is the verbal witness that saves someone.

Paul does not make confession with the mouth a second condition for salvation but as Douglas Moo says it, “Confession is the outward manifestation of the critical inner response.” (Moo, *Romans*, 657)

Bible scholar Leon Morris wrote, “No one is saved by the merely outward; the state of the heart is important. But Paul does not contemplate an inner state that is not reflected in outward conduct. If anyone really believes he will confess Christ, so it is natural to link

the two” – the heart and the voice – the inner faith and the verbal confession of that faith.  
(Morris, *Romans*, 384)

And that is precisely what is happening in Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16.

Water baptism doesn't save us but it is the first expression of the grace/faith that does.

No baptism means no faith and no faith means no salvation.

So closely connected are forgiveness and water baptism that we can say with the NT: “Repent and be **baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**.”

Earlier I said I want you to see the relationship of water baptism to four essential aspects of what it means to be a Christian:

The first was that water baptism indicates the forgiveness of our sins.

**The second is that water baptism indicates our union with Christ in his death and resurrection.**

Romans 6:3-4 “Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Some deny that water baptism is in mind here but that seems difficult to accept when water baptism was THE outward sign of the inward conversion.

It was THE ritual of initiation into Christ and his church as demonstrated all through the book of *Acts*.

I fully recognize that this passage is not first of all a teaching about water baptism but about what happened to Christ and thus what happened to us in him.

But it is noteworthy to see the way Paul says our relationship with Christ came about.

We were baptized into Christ Jesus and were baptized into his death.

Notice Paul doesn't say “all of us who were **born again** into Christ Jesus were **born** into his death, he says, “all of us who were **baptized** into Christ Jesus were **baptized** into his death.”

He uses water baptism as the metaphor for our being joined to Christ in his death and resurrection.

It is water baptism that signifies this connection to Jesus.

When he died, we died in him; when he rose from the dead, we rose in him.

And it is water baptism that signifies that relationship.

When did this connection to Christ take place?

It was at baptism - because baptism is the external sign of the inward reality.

Our connection to Christ took place when we repented and believed (as symbolized by our baptism).

Baptism signifies death to the person I once was, death to my self-centered ambitions and dreams, death to living for myself and resurrection to a new life in Christ, to a new Lord of my life's ambitions, priorities, and goals, resurrection to a new way of life.

That's what the prisoner, with whose story I began this sermon, was talking about – in Christ, dramatically portrayed in his baptism, he had died to the old way of life and in Christ, dramatically portrayed in his baptism, he had a whole new life.

So closely connected are water baptism and being one with Christ that we can say with the NT: "We were therefore buried with Jesus through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

**The third essential aspect of Christianity to which water baptism is related is the gift of the Spirit of God.**

Please note I did not say the "gifts" of the Spirit, though to have the Spirit is to have his gifts.

But we are talking about receiving the person of the Spirit of God – the promise that Jesus made to his disciples and us that after Jesus' ascension he would send the Holy Spirit to us to dwell with us and in us.

As I showed you earlier, at Jesus' baptism in water, the Spirit of God descended upon him.

Peter stood before the crowd at Pentecost and said Acts 2:38-39:

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. **And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

Several times later in the book of Acts the reception of the Holy Spirit and water baptism are experientially coincidental.

NT scholar, FF Bruce wrote, "It might be expected that, when the disciples experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit...they would discontinue water baptism as having been superceded by something better. In fact they did not: they continued to baptize converts in water for the forgiveness of sins, but this baptism was now part of a more comprehensive initiation which took its character especially from the receiving of the Spirit." (Bruce, *Acts*, 69)

Now again, it was not that the Spirit was automatically conveyed to the one who was baptized, but that baptism was the outward sign and seal that the Holy Spirit did indeed now indwell the believer.

So closely connected are water baptism and the receiving of the Spirit that we can say with the NT: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. **And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**”

**The fourth essential aspect of Christianity to which water baptism is related to our initiation into the church, God’s new society, the body of Christ.**

Acts 2:41-42 “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Water baptism was the outward evidence of the believers’ identification not only with Christ but also with Christ’s people.

The water baptism didn’t save them meaning the water baptism didn’t cause their relationship with Christ but they pledged their allegiance to Jesus and his body, the church, through their baptism.

Upon baptism they were members of the church.

Again the outward water baptism was symbolical of the inward baptism of the Spirit whereby the believer is brought into union with Jesus and thus made one with Jesus’ people.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body.”

But again notice that either one (water baptism or Spirit baptism) presupposed the other.

Faith, baptism, reception of the Spirit, and identification with a local church were all part of the same whole – one without the others was inconceivable because they were so closely linked.

To trust Jesus was to be baptized was to join his church.

They are not synonyms of each other but they are inseparably linked.

Again from FF Bruce: “Baptism in water (is) the visible sign by which those who believed the gospel, repented of their sins, and acknowledged Jesus as Lord (and) were publicly incorporated into the Spirit-baptized fellowship of the new people of God.” (Bruce, *Acts*, 70)

By baptism the baptized separated himself from the people, the world and priorities of before and joined himself to the people of God, to the church, a specific church with its priorities.

I think it is quite apparent that it was inconceivable to NT believers that one would claim to be a Christian and not be baptized and not be an identified member of a local church.

### **So how important is baptism?**

Very important: It represents the essentials of the Christian faith.

The NT presents baptism as part and parcel of what it means to **be** a Christian.

James said that faith without works is dead.

In the same way, I think the NT makes it clear that faith without baptism is dead.

Not that either works or baptism save us but that they are so inextricably connected that without the works or baptism it is clear that faith doesn't exist.

When we separate faith from baptism from repentance from works from justification from the gift of the Spirit we dissect Christianity like a biology student dissects a lab animal.

The animal ceases to be that animal when it is dissected.

Likewise when we dissect Christianity into its constituent parts and try to make them operate independently of each other, it ceases to be genuine Christianity.

Yes, we can logically and theologically separate out regeneration from faith from repentance from baptism from confession with the mouth, and from justification.

In doing so however, and keeping them separate, today we have believers who aren't confessors, confessors who aren't baptized, baptized who aren't members of the church, and members of the church who aren't Christ-followers.

We hear such unbiblical thinking as, "I don't need to be baptized or become a member of a church; I'm a Christian by grace through faith alone."

BUT Christianity is not merely the sum of its theological parts; it functions only as the whole.

What a gracious command of our Lord that he would tell us to be baptized to make tangible and physical for us so much of what it means to be a Christian:

That our sins are washed away;

That we are united with Christ in his death to sin and and resurrection to life everlasting;

That we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit;

And that we are part of his body, the church.

Do you trust Jesus as your saving-Lord?

Have you been baptized?

Have you deliberately, publicly joined yourself to his church?

I must quickly though carefully respond to a question with which I began: Should I be baptized again if I was baptized as an infant?

I first of all acknowledge that there are Christians and Christian churches that understand and practice a Covenant Theology baptism of infants.

In this they do not believe that the baptism saves the child but that the baptism is a sign of the new covenant just as circumcision was the sign of the old covenant for OT believers.

While I do not personally hold that view, I do appreciate that those who do are orthodox, biblical Christians who are welcome as fellow believers.

Unfortunately there are many more who practice infant baptism who either have no idea what it is about except as some kind of spiritual insurance for their kids or who believe that it does in fact save the child.

I asked a friend of mine this week if, when he is working with college students in Norway, one of them told him that they had been baptized as a Mormon but have since become a Christian, and then they asked if they should be baptized again, what would he say?

He said certainly he would encourage them to be baptized because he wouldn't technically call it being baptized "again" because it would be the first time they were baptized as a Christian.

I then asked if one of them said that he had been baptized as an infant by unbelieving parents in a church that didn't teach the gospel but now wanted to know that since he had become a Christian should he be re-baptized?

My friend said he would definitely encourage baptism since the first baptism was without biblical basis, an empty ritual.

I then asked if one of them said he was baptized in a church and by parents who believe erroneously that baptism saves an infant and now he knows better and wants to know if he should be baptized as a believer, what would my friend advise?

My friend said he would encourage baptism as a believer.

I agree with my friend. But I will quickly add, I do not have some directive from God in this matter and therefore you will have to decide if you should be baptized if you were sprinkled as an infant

To those of you who know you ought to be baptized – Will you?

You say you aren't ready?

What does that mean?

You aren't ready to have your sins forgiven?  
to be joined to Christ in his death and resurrection,  
to receive the Holy Spirit,  
to belong to God's family?

What aren't you ready for?

Well you say, I just don't feel ready?

What does that mean? You have to wait for a feeling?

Did you have to wait for a certain feeling to respond to the gospel?  
 Or did you realize your need for a savior and you trusted Jesus?  
 Will you trust him now to minister his grace to you even as you  
 pledge your allegiance to him in baptism?

In five weeks, on June 4, Pentecost Sunday, we are conducting the next baptism – call us, we want to include you.

You'll find several other notes on this subject connected to my sermon, on line, available tomorrow morning.

### **Other Notes:**

**Is baptism only an outward symbol of an internal work of the Spirit or is baptism actually a significant means that God uses to accomplish his gracious work in us?**

Certainly we do something in baptism.

It can be understood that baptism both symbolizes one's witness to faith in Christ and is itself a witness to that faith.

It is not only the words of the baptized that witness to one's faith but the very baptism itself that witnesses to that faith.

But does God do something in baptism?

Does God use baptism to convey grace to us?

“Yes! - When coupled with faith:

Just as reading the Word without faith is unproductive but with faith is very productive (1 Peter 2:2) AND just as obedience without faith is a hollow work but with faith is a means of strengthening us (2 Peter 1:5ff) so the very act of baptism in faith carries a blessing, the grace of God to give assurance and strengthen our faith.

“The New Testament writers... take it that the candidate (for baptism) is neither a liar nor a hypocrite and that the action is performed, not for the automatic fulfillment of the predestined purpose, but as a meeting point for the penitent sinner and merciful Redeemer. If baptism (is) an instrument of surrender by (a person) conquered by the love of Christ, it is equally the gracious welcome of the sinner by the Lord who has sought and found him. Consequently, baptism is regarded in Acts as the occasion and means of receiving the blessings conferred by the Lord of the Kingdom. (Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 102)

I believe it is entirely appropriate to refer to Baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments in that they are special means that God has ordained whereby he will convey his grace to the believing person.

### **The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689**

with scripture proofs

Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party baptized, a sign of his fellowship with him, in his death and resurrection; of his being engrafted into him;<sup>3</sup> of remission of sins;<sup>4</sup> and of giving up into God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:27

<sup>4</sup> Mark 1:4; Acts 22:16

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 6:4

### **Westminster Confession of Faith 1646**

Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, or his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life: which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in his Church until the end of the world.

Regarding Acts 2:38-39

“Let them repent of their sin and turn to God; let them submit to baptism in the name of Jesus, confessed as Messiah. Then not only would they receive forgiveness of sins, but they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...” Even John the Baptist distinguished his baptism of repentance from the baptism of the Holy Spirit. “It might be expected that, when the disciples experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit...they would discontinue water baptism as having been superceded by something better. In fact they did not: they continued to baptize converts in water for the forgiveness of sins, but this baptism was now part of a more comprehensive initiation which took its character especially from the receiving of the Spirit.” (Bruce, *Acts*, 69)

Then Peter said, “Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” Take the open and decisive step: stand forth as believers in Jesus, and confess him by that outward and visible sign which he has ordained. Be buried with him in whom your sin is buried. You slew him in error; be buried with him in truth. They did it gladly; they repented of the sin; they were baptized into the sacred name. And then Peter could tell them-”You have remission of sins: the wrong you have done to your Lord is cancelled: the Lord hath put away your sin forever. Remission of sins comes to you through Jesus, whom you slew, whom the Father has raised up. You shall not be summoned before the bar of God to account even for the hideous crime of murdering the Lord, for by his death you are forgiven. In proof of forgiveness you shall now be made partakers of the great gift which marks his ascending power. The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, even upon you his murderers, and you shall go forth, and be witnesses for him.” (From Spurgeon sermon 2102)

“Baptism in water (is) the visible sign by which those who believed the gospel, repented of their sins, and acknowledged Jesus as Lord (and) were publicly incorporated into the Spirit-baptized fellowship of the new people of God.” (Bruce, *Acts*, 70)

“It would indeed be a mistake to link the words, ‘for the forgiveness of sins’ with the command ‘be baptized’ to the exclusion of the prior command to repent. It is against the whole genius of biblical religion to suppose that the outward rite could have any value except insofar as it was accompanied by the work of grace within.” (Bruce, *Acts*, 70)

John 3:3-5 Some see Christian baptism in these verses while others (e.g. Carson) see water and spirit as part of one the same as “born again” (from above) in v3 and referring to Ezekiel 36:25-27

Romans 6:3-4 “I do not understand Paul to say that if improper persons, such as unbelievers, and hypocrites, and deceivers, are baptized they are baptized into our Lord’s death. He says “so many of us,” putting himself with the rest of the children of God. He intends such as are entitled to baptism, and come to it with their hearts in a right state. Of them he says, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” He does not even intend to say that those who were rightly baptized have all of them entered into the fullness of its spiritual meaning; for if they had, there would have been no need of the question, “Know ye not?” It would seem that some had been baptized who did not clearly know the meaning of their own baptism. They had faith, and a glimmer of knowledge sufficient to make them right recipients of baptism, but they were not well instructed in the teaching of baptism; perhaps they saw in it only a washing, but had never discerned the burial. (Spurgeon, sermon 1621)

Baptism sets forth the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and our participation therein. Its teaching is twofold. First, think of our representative union with Christ, so that when he died and was buried it was on our behalf, and we were thus buried with him. This will give you the teaching of baptism so far as it sets forth a creed. We declare in baptism that we believe in the death of Jesus, and desire to partake in all the merit of it. But there is a second equally important matter, and that is our realized union with Christ which is set forth in baptism, not so much as a doctrine of our creed as a matter of our experience. There is a manner of dying, or being buried, of rising, and of living in Christ which must be displayed in each one of us if we are indeed members of the body of Christ. (Spurgeon, sermon 1621)

Galatians 3:26-27 “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,<sup>27</sup> for all of you who **were baptized** into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Baptism and faith are always related but not identical nor supplemental to each other.

“Faith in Christ is that which results in acceptance before God and the gift of God’s Spirit; baptism is the outward sign and heavenly seal of that new relationship established by faith.” (Longenecker, *Word, Galatians*, 156)

“Baptism in the NT invariably implies a radical personal commitment involving a decisive ‘no’ to one’s former way of life and an equally emphatic ‘yes’ to Jesus Christ. Historically, however, the doctrine of believers’ baptism has also implied a gathered church, a community of intentional disciples marked off from the world by their commitment to Christ and one another.” (George, *NAC, Galatians*, 276)

See Timothy George’s conflation of several early church baptismal rites in *NAC, Galatians*, 280-81:

Catechesis, fasting and prayer, renunciation, credo, disrobing, immersion, new robe, anointing, laying on of hands, the Lord’s Supper.