

Cityview Church
Celebration of Baptism



I. Mandate

Biblical Teaching:

Matthew 28: 16-20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Jesus gave His people a communal purpose by commanding them to fulfill a global mission. The architect of this mission has “all authority” and is “with” His disciples until “the very end of the age.” Thus, the church is called to courageously “go” and “make disciples of all nations.” This involves preaching the Good News and “teaching” gospel-embracers to grow in their obedience to Jesus. Those who accept the gospel *by grace alone and through faith alone* have been forever affected by God’s redemptive message and are called to exhibit allegiance to the triune God by being baptized.

Example: Peter’s Sermon

Acts 2:37-41

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

II. Meaning

Biblical Teaching:

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.

The act of baptism is a public and grace-filled illustration of what has taken place inwardly in a believer's life. At conversion, a person's old identity is buried with Christ, and he or she is given a new identity that is found in the resurrected Christ. The Triune God of Scripture commissions believers to publicly and symbolically celebrate their "new creation" status through baptism.

"We may never be martyrs but we can die to self, to sin, to the world, to our plans and ambitions. That is the significance of baptism; we died with Christ and rose to new life." - Vance Havner

1 Peter 3:18-22

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. *In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*

In this passage, Peter describes how believers, in some sense, are "saved through water" just like Noah and His family were "long ago." Although the water technically does not justify a person, for it only "symbolizes baptism" and can only "remove dirt from the body," it does play an instrumental role in signifying how God does save persons who embrace Jesus via simple faith, and how He makes them a new creature in Jesus.

Example: The Exodus and Baptism

1 Corinthians 10:1-2

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

The Exodus serves as a helpful illustration of baptism. The Israelites were enslaved to the Egyptians. God not only rescued them from their old masters, He gave them a new identity by cleansing them from their former enslavers through water during the Exodus. In the same way, believers are no longer

enslaved to sin or captive to darkness. They are a new creation in Christ. Through the celebratory act of baptism, believers declare their new status in Christ. Disciples also look back to their baptism to reaffirm their union with Jesus in order to grow as a disciple and avoid the identity crisis that the Israelites experienced in the wilderness.

III. Method

Biblical Teaching:

CityView affirms that a believer should be immersed in water in order to *fully* exhibit his or her spiritual union with Christ for the following reasons:

- The word *baptize* almost always means “to dip or to immerse” in water.
- Immersion is symbolically superior to sprinkling in demonstrating a believer’s union with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection.
- The Bible affirms that faith and repentance are a prerequisite for baptism; hence, only believers should be baptized.
- There are no passages of Scripture in the New Testament that explicitly support infant baptism or the mode of sprinkling.

St. Jerome – “For it cannot be that the body should receive the sacrament of baptism till the soul has before received the truth of faith.”

Example: Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:34-39

The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch *went down into the water* and Philip baptized him. When *they came up out of the water*, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.