



START

To get things started, let's go around the circle and answer this question:

Have you ever worried and fretted over doing something; only to realize after finally doing it that it was an awesome experience?

SHARE

This last weekend, we were able to watch hundreds of people share their stories and publicly declare that they are followers of Jesus Christ, then get submerged under water in what is called "baptism." For Red Rocks Church, we consider this the Super Bowl of all events that take place each year.

Dunking people under water might seem strange at first, until you do a little research. Once you start digging, you realize that baptism is extremely significant. In fact, Jesus set an example for us by being baptized himself. Jesus beckons us all to come and follow him.

Water baptism is the first public step of obedience to Jesus Christ. Baptism is for the individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and has become His disciple. Therefore, in obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the church, oneself, and the world; a believer should be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Water baptism is a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that a person's former way of life has been put to death and vividly depicts their release from the mastery of sin, and that he or she is a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Red Rocks Church practices and teaches that once a person becomes a believer and a disciple of Christ, he or she should be baptized.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism and communion are the two things that have been commanded by Jesus Christ as visible symbols of God's invisible grace that have great symbolic meaning for believers.

With both practices, believers have an opportunity to “remember” God’s goodness and grace, especially as revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Both baptism and communion cause us to remember Christ’s death and resurrection, and thus our participation in His death and resurrection through union to Him in faith. As we enter into the waters or watch another do so, we are reminded that Christ was crucified and raised from the dead and that we too have died to our old selves in order to live for Christ. It is a powerful reminder of God’s goodness and grace, while serving as a step of obedience to follow Jesus’ example.

What a person believes about baptism is of utmost importance and we need to be clear about what baptism is and what it is not. Who should be baptized? When should they be baptized? How should they be baptized? All of these questions are answered as we reflect upon what baptism means.

Red Rocks Church describes baptism as a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person’s union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that a person’s former way of life has been put to death and symbolically depicts a release from the mastery of sin.

Baptism symbolizes a number of significant realities:

- Christ’s death and resurrection
- The disciple’s union with Christ in His death and resurrection
- The new life in which a disciple walks
- Cleansing and washing away of sin

This baptism weekend, was there one story or moment that was really memorable to you? If so, why?

Let’s read: Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:37-41, Acts 22:16 and Romans 10:9-13

In the Matthew passage, what are the three verbs that Jesus used?

Are you surprised that baptism is one of those words?

How long did people wait to get baptized after receiving Christ?

Many of us come from different faith or denominational backgrounds. How did you view baptism growing up?

GROW

Jesus commands us to be baptized. Many of us might say that we were baptized as a baby in a church service, and doesn’t that count? If you were baptized as a baby, that was a beautiful expression of faith that your parents displayed on your behalf. Biblically, we see babies and children dedicated to the Lord as an important time to ask God to bless our children and to help us as parents be godly examples for them. Once that child is mature enough to decide to follow Christ, then they are to be baptized as their own choice. There is a clear difference between child dedication and baptism in Scripture. This is why we believe that baptism should biblically be a choice a person makes for themselves when they are old enough to understand their choice to follow Jesus.

So how did baptism develop to be what we practice today? Well, nothing has changed since Jesus commanded us to be baptized. However, before John the Baptist, the idea of ceremonial washing was first seen in Scripture as a Jewish custom for those needing to be ceremonially “clean.” It was to represent the washing away of a sinful past and the decision to become Jewish. John the Baptist was the first to baptize anyone; Jewish or Gentile. The word, ‘baptize’ or ‘baptizo’ literally means to submerge, dunk, wash, to make clean with water.

Read Matthew 3:1-17

In the New American Commentary on Matthew, C. Blomberg gives us insight:

Jews seem regularly to have practiced water baptism by immersion for adult proselytes from pagan backgrounds as an initiation into Judaism. Qumran commanded ritual bathing daily to symbolize repeated cleansing from sin. But John's call for a one-time-only baptism for those who had been born as Jews was unprecedented. John thus insisted that one's ancestry was not adequate to ensure one's relationship with God. As has often been put somewhat colloquially, "God has no grandchildren." Our parents' religious affiliations afford no substitute for our own personal commitment.

Blomberg goes on to describe why Jesus was baptized:

Jesus has not come to confess any sin but "to fulfill all righteousness." He has previously fulfilled specific prophecies as well as more general scriptural themes. Now he wishes to obey all the moral demands of God's will. "To fulfill all righteousness" means to *complete everything that forms part of a relationship of obedience to God*. In so doing, Jesus identifies with and endorses John's ministry as divinely ordained and his message as one to be heeded.

Who was John the Baptist preparing the way for?

Why was Jesus baptized by John the Baptist? How did John the Baptist react to Jesus' request?

What was God the Father's reaction to Jesus being baptized? In what way was the Holy Spirit present?

MOVE

Many of us have already been baptized publicly as our own choice. For some of us, we have not had the opportunity or feel embarrassed or nervous about doing it publicly. Others of us have followed Christ for years and feel that we should have done it long ago, but feel that others will look down on us if we get baptized at this late date. Remember that baptism is a life-changing event and being obedient is between you and the Lord. Don't allow fear or what others will think to deter you from following Jesus' example. He is with you and you can trust him. Be encouraged that your obedience is actually identifying with Christ and doing the very thing he did. Trust him and the importance of going public and raising the flag that your life is now with Christ.

Luke 6:46

Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?

John 14:15

If you love me, keep my commands.

Gal. 3:27

...for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

If you have been baptized already, what was that experience like for you?

How did baptism affect you personally and/or your relationship with God and others?

If you have yet to be baptized, what are some of your fears or concerns?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.