

Red Rocks Church

Why Baptism?

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 picture Christ's death and resurrection and 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 the old self 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*

Is Baptism necessary for salvation?

Baptism is not a "saving" command, but a "sanctifying" command in which we are becoming more like Christ by following his example. As we grow in maturity in following Christ, we will be more and more conformed into the image of Christ as we follow his example.

Without in any way diminishing the command and joy of being baptized for a believer, we must also warn against thinking which suggests that salvation is dependent upon baptism. The gospel

is one of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone. We should reiterate this, that the gospel is one of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone and not by works. This is great news for every one of us who have put our faith in Jesus.

Why should believers be baptized?

Matthew 28:18–20

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

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.

Acts 22:16

And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

Romans 10:9–13

If you declare 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 profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

There are some that will falsely argue that without baptism, a person is not saved. However, there is no evidence of this in scripture.

Some will say that John 3 states that unless a person is “born of water and the Spirit” he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Many point to this as evidence of the necessity of baptism. However, nothing in the context suggests that Jesus is speaking of baptism. Rather, He is alluding to the promise of the New Covenant in Ezekiel 36, which speaks of both “water” and “Spirit.” Therefore, Jesus is saying that “new birth” or “regeneration” is necessary for salvation, not baptism. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone. God is promising in Ezekiel that he will cleanse us, wash us and give us a new heart, a new spirit in those who believe. This is precisely what Jesus was talking about in John 3. We can also affirm this as considering the whole of scripture and the overwhelming amount of language that supports that salvation is by grace alone, through faith in Christ and not by works.

Ezekiel 36:26

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Baptism at Red Rocks Church

Baptism is not merely a responsibility but a great privilege. We have the opportunity to demonstrate to ourselves and to the world that we trust in and love Jesus Christ. If we think of

baptism as a mere burden, we have not properly understood the joy of following Christ in the call to be baptized. We should have a similar response as the Ethiopian eunuch who, when he believed the gospel, quickly proclaimed, "What prevents me from being baptized?" Like the Ethiopian man, we should eagerly anticipate the chance to be baptized with joy since we are a new creation in Christ.

While there are certain costs associated with baptism, the reward of obedience is always worth it. The desire to be baptized should be motivated by a desire to point to God's goodness in our lives as an act of obedience. Any other motivation such as joining a particular church, pleasing a family member or friend, or falsely thinking the work of baptism will actually "save you" should not be the motivation behind getting baptized.

Who should be Baptized?

Baptism is only intended for the person who has made a personal decision to ask Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior. This means the believer has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work on and become what we call a "disciple" or one who follows Christ. We practice what is called "believer's baptism" which means we only baptize those who believe and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Reading through Acts, we find baptism explicitly related to repentance, receiving the Word, believing and receiving the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:41

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 8:12

But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Galatians 3:27

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

In certain cultures, those who are baptized open themselves up to public persecution. Even in our context, participants often face the ridicule of family and friends. It can also cause tension within families that believe in the tradition of infant baptism and will feel it is an abandonment of the family tradition. However, as Christ followers we are to expect that not everyone will understand and may be persecuted for following Jesus. In those situations, we should be loving, patient, and help explain baptism clearly in hopes they will come to understand what scripture says about baptism.

Romans 6:3–4

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.

Should a person ever be Re-baptized?

For those who were sprinkled or immersed in water in the past, it is important to understand that you only need to be baptized once. If you trusted in Christ at that time, your baptism is real and should not be repeated. If, however, you experienced sprinkling with or immersion in water before being born again and trusting Christ, then it is not considered baptism according to scripture. Baptism is reserved only for a believer who is at an age where they make their own personal decision to follow Christ and decide for oneself to be baptized.

If you believe that your original experience was prior to truly trusting in Christ as Lord and Savior, you should pursue obedience in this area by being baptized. If you were baptized as an infant according to another faith tradition, we understand that it may have been a very meaningful moment for the parents and the intentions are good. At Red Rocks Church, we don't see

anywhere in scripture where we are commanded to baptize infants or children who have not made a personal decision to follow Christ. We do, however, dedicate children to the Lord, which is a biblically sound and a meaningful moment in the lives of parents. Parents commit their ways to the Lord and the church agrees to lift up the family and be a support to them as they raise their child in the ways of the Lord. Red Rocks Church offers numerous opportunities to sign up to have your child dedicated to the Lord.

Is there an age requirement for Children to be baptized?

There is no evidence in scripture that someone must be of a certain age to be baptized. At Red Rocks Church, we have seen a large number of people decide to be baptized stating that they were baptized as infants or young children and didn't understand what they were doing. Baptism should be a one-time special event in the life of a believer and we will do our best as a church to insure that each child has personally choose to be baptized and is old enough to understand what is happening. We are not given an age requirement within scripture, however, there are very simple, but important guidelines to consider.

Guidelines for Children choosing to be baptized:

- It is important that the child being baptized has put their personal trust in Christ and his atoning work on the cross.
- It should be the personal decision of the child to be baptized when they are ready to make their personal faith public, without undue pressure from parents or family to be baptized, as that should never be the motivation to please people, but to please God.
- A child needs to be able to clearly articulate what they believe and understand why they are choosing to be baptized without a parent needing to speak for them.
- Red Rocks Church suggests the minimum age of ten years old. This is not the rule, but a helpful guideline for children. Typically a child is mature enough at the age of ten to comprehend their faith and be autonomous enough to choose baptism as their next public step of faith. *(If you have specific questions regarding this, please talk to a Pastor about your child)*

When should a person be baptized?

Acts 22:16

And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

As soon as a person trusts Christ, he or she should be baptized at the next opportunity they have to be baptized. The Scriptures do not speak of a delayed baptism in which a regenerate believer refrains from obedience to the ordinance. In all the accounts in the Scriptures, baptism is rather immediate. This pattern of being baptized at the next opportunity is found throughout scripture.

The Most Common Reasons people delay Baptism

Fear

One of the most common reasons for delaying is fear, but we shouldn't allow anxiety or the fear of being in front of people hinder us. Jesus was baptized publically. It is a public act of obedience. Confront your fear and understand that God is greater than your fear. We are not to fear what people might think, but to make a public statement to everyone about the inward change in your heart and life.

Not Being Good Enough

There will never be a time where a person will be "good enough" for baptism. God tells us, "we have all fallen short," meaning none of us our good enough to merit the right to be baptized. Our right to enter the water to be baptized is based on Christ's

righteousness and what he has done for us. We just follow in his footsteps, because he made a way for us. Jesus Christ is who makes us righteous. We can then confidently enter the water with joy and thankfulness.

How does Red Rocks Church conduct baptism?

We ask believers who wish to be baptized to sign-up for the next baptism weekend. We have numerous opportunities each year for people to be baptized. This allows people to then invite family and friends to attend and celebrate with them and hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to listen to testimonies of what God has done in the lives of people. Those who have signed up for baptism have the option to share their story via video prior to being baptized. This is not a requirement, but a great option for those wanting to share their story of what God has done in their lives.

Every "Baptism Weekend" at Red Rocks Church, will have what we call a spontaneous call to baptism for those who did not sign-up. During the service, those who have made a decision for Christ will have an opportunity to be baptized that day. Each person who would like to be spontaneously baptized will meet with a pastor and insure they understand what baptism is and that they are a believer in Christ.

How should a person be baptized?

There are many denominations that practice various forms of baptism. Some sprinkle water on the head, others will be immersed or dunked into water. Red Rocks Church we believe in full immersion in water for a few reasons:

- The Greek word βαπτίζω (baptizo) literally means to plunge, submerge or immerse. Our English word baptism is a transliteration of the Greek baptizo. Baptizo was used in Greek literature to describe the act of immersing or dunking something in water or another liquid. It later became a technical term that referred specifically to the Christian practice of baptism.
- The representation of union in Christ's death and resurrection is best expressed through immersion. Whether buried below or above ground, the symbolism of burial is still that of being placed under or below something. Likewise, resurrection is accomplished by coming out of something (whether grave or tomb). Immersion best symbolizes this reality by actually placing the believer under the water and bringing up out of the water.

Colossians 2:12

"...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."

Romans 6:3-4

"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."

Matthew 3:16

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him...

Mark 1:5, 10

And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins...And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

John 3:23

John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized...

Acts 8:38–39

And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

Who can perform Baptism?

The Bible gives no prescription for the requirements to perform baptism. Contrary to some traditions, there seems to be no biblical reason to restrict the duty to pastors or those in vocational ministry. Therefore, we allow any believer, male or female, who has faithfully obeyed the command to be baptized to then baptize others. During a Red Rocks Church baptism service, for expediency and order, we will have those in vocational ministry baptizing, but this is not necessary. There are times where a family member or friend is allowed to baptize if we know ahead of time and can manage it within a busy service.

Recommended Resources about Baptism

Go to www.redrockshchurch.com, click on “media,” go to our teaching series entitled “Hooked” and view the last message titled “Raise The Flag – A Baptism Message” by Shawn Johnson