



**CABOOLTURE**  
BAPTIST CHURCH



*Baptism*

By David Loder



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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

The words “baptise”, “baptised” or “baptism” occur around 100 times in the New Testament. Baptism is an important belief and practice in our church. There is a lot of confusion regarding baptism with different churches having different thoughts and practices on this topic. Our beliefs are not unique to the “Baptist” church. Many other denominations have identical beliefs and practices to ours. Some don’t practice baptism at all whilst others have quite different beliefs about baptism. So, where do we begin? We firmly believe in the authority of the Bible and so base our beliefs and practices on what the Bible says. Other churches do so as well, but others see traditions and church decisions as being very important (along with the Bible) in deciding beliefs and practices. The purpose of this booklet is to outline what the Bible says about this important topic. Even after reading this, you still may have some questions. Our pastors are very happy to spend time with you to help you further understand baptism.

There are two key statements we hold to:

1. We believe the Bible teaches that everyone who becomes a follower of Jesus ought to be baptised and that this baptism is by immersion. We call it “believer’s baptism”.
2. We define baptism as “the outward sign of an inward change.”

Look to see how these statements are supported through the booklet.

## **B. BAPTISM IN THE BIBLE**

We have already stated that what the Bible says is very important to us. So, it naturally follows that we begin this study with a brief outline of the Bible’s teaching. You may wish to go into this in more detail and we can supply you with resources that will help you to do so.



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## **1. Jesus was baptised**

Jesus is our example. He is the God/Man whose life on earth accomplished many things. Most importantly, He came to die for our sins. He shows us what the God the Father is like and also lived His life as an example how we should live. Jesus' baptism is recorded in three of the Gospels (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11 and Luke 3:21-23). Why Jesus had to be baptised is puzzling for some people. As baptism is connected with repentance and Jesus was perfect, why was He baptised? John the Baptist, who baptised Jesus, asked the same question! Jesus gave the answer – to fulfil all righteousness. Righteousness means right living and so Jesus, whilst perfect, did the “right thing” to show that all people need to be baptised. So whilst it was not necessary, He chose to do so as an example to His followers.

## **2. Jesus commanded baptism**

Whilst Jesus was baptised and He commanded others to be baptised, John 4:1-3 tells us that Jesus never baptised anyone. However, towards the end of His time on earth, He commissioned all disciples, both then and throughout history, to be involved in ministry. What is known as the Great Commission is found in Matthew 28:18-20. The commission, or command, is to make disciples. There are three parts to making disciples – we do so by going, baptising new disciples and teaching them to be obedient to the commands of Jesus. All this is couched in the promise of Jesus that He would be with us always as we are involved in this process.

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### **3. The New Testament church preached baptism**

The early church took this command seriously. Many times, throughout the Book of Acts, we read how the church preached the need for baptism. The first recorded sermon by the apostle Peter was on the Day of Pentecost. Before he had even finished preaching, the Bible tells us that the listeners were so moved they asked him how they should respond? His answer was very clear. “Repent and be baptised, 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.” (Acts 2:38-39)

The order is clear. First repent and then be baptised. The application was clear. It was for the listeners, their descendants and actually for everyone, even those who are far away. There are many other instances in the New Testament where baptism was preached.

### **4. The New Testament Church practised baptism**

Not only did the early church preach the need for baptism, they also put it into practice. Sometimes there were many people being baptised at once. On the day of Pentecost referred to above, the Bible says about three thousand people became followers of Jesus on that day! Yet on another occasion, we read about an Ethiopian official who was baptised out in the desert, probably the only person being baptised (Acts 8:36-38). Reading through the Book of Acts, one becomes aware of how many new followers of Jesus there are and how each of them was baptised as an important part of their declaration of being one of Jesus’ disciples.

### **5. The New Testament Church taught baptism**

One of the clearest places where the early church taught baptism was in Paul’s letter to the church in Rome. Let’s look at that now in more detail.

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## **C. THE MEANING OF BAPTISM (Romans 6:3-4)**

The New Testament teaches baptism in many places but in Romans 6:3-4, the teaching is quite clear. Three scenarios are woven together to explain our situation – what happened to Jesus, what happens to us and then how baptism ties these together. The passage reads:

*“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised 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.”*

### **1. Jesus’ experience**

Jesus came to earth (celebrated at Christmas), lived His life here and then, aged in His early thirties, was crucified (celebrated at Easter). He died, was buried and the Bible tells us that on the third day, He was raised to life again. After His resurrection, Jesus was still recognisable to His disciples, He bore the scars of His crucifixion and still ate meals with His disciples. It appears his resurrection body had many similarities but there were also had some distinction from His previous manner of existence. He came and went through closed doors, He didn’t appear to need rest and then, of course, He ascended into heaven.

### **2. Our experience**

The Bible talks about what happens to us when we become followers of Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 it states that if a person “is in Christ he (she) becomes a new person altogether—the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new. (JB Phillips). Elsewhere Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” So we see that the act of becoming a Christian is like a death,

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burial and resurrection. We “mirror” what happened to Jesus at Calvary. This is an inward change, a decision we have made to abandon our selfish way of living and have decided to become followers of Jesus.

### **3. What baptism shows**

Baptism becomes a metaphor or picture of what has happened to us. Just as we “died” to our old way of life and were “buried”, leaving our old way of life behind, now being plunged under the water pictures this burial. Just as we were raised to new life in Jesus, we are raised out of the water signifying the completion of the process.

***Baptism is the outward sign of the inward change.***

### **D. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTISED?**

The Bible clearly shows that everyone who became a Christian was baptised soon after. The Bible makes it clear – through the command of Jesus, the teaching and practice of the early church - that all those giving their life to Jesus, ought to be baptised. There is no need to wait for a “special word” from Jesus, the Bible says that if you have received Christ as your Saviour, baptism is the next step.

### **E. HOW SHOULD I BE BAPTISED?**

There are various practices of “baptism” including sprinkling, pouring water over someone or fully immersing someone under the water. It is this last concept that we practice. There are good reasons why.

#### **1. What baptism shows**

As baptism shows a burial and resurrection, full immersion, as the mode of baptism, fits most naturally.

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## **2. The meaning of the word “baptism”**

Foreign words can be translated (given the meaning in the alternate language) or they can be transliterated (the foreign word has its letters transcribed). Baptism comes from a Greek word and has been transliterated for our English use. If we translate the word, we have the meaning of dip or immerse or submerge. It is not a special religious word. Therefore Greek-speaking people will know that the word fits in best with immersion rather than any other mode.

## **F. GIVING MY TESTIMONY**

It is usual for a person being baptised to share with the congregation their journey to faith. In essence, it is a three to four-minute talk that briefly describes three things: life without Christ, how you came to faith, and the difference that Jesus has made and is making in your life. Speaking in front of people can be daunting but there are ways to assist you with this. We have more resources to help with writing a testimony and any of the pastors would be delighted to assist you.

## **G. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

Whilst it was common for the early believers to belong to a local church, it was quite different from membership as we know it. Our practice of membership covers a lot of practical issues.

- It is an outward declaration of your commitment to our church, its values and vision
- Members form the main decision-making body for important issues facing the church
- It accepts mutual responsibility or partnership with other believers in our Christian walk



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## H. SO WHAT HAPPENS?

Prior to your baptism, the Pastor (or whoever is baptising you) will go through the practical details of what will happen, but here are a couple of things to consider. Remember you will be wet “all over” as a result of your baptism, so:

- Don't get your hair done especially for the occasion (or similar!)
- Don't forget to bring a complete change of clothing
- Bring a towel and have it nearby when you get out of the water
- Don't forget to remove your jewellery, watch, etc before your baptism
- Give your clothing the “wet test” beforehand to ensure it is not transparent when wet
- Sometimes you might be asked if you have a special song that you would like sung

## I. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

### 1. *Is there a minimum age to be baptised?*

No. Sometimes our practice of baptism is referred to as “adult baptism.” This is not correct. Our belief is that the Bible teaches that those who put their trust in Jesus (believers) should be baptised. If someone is old enough to genuinely put their trust in Jesus, they are old enough to be baptised.

### 2. *I was “baptised” as a baby. Isn't that enough?*

“Infant baptism” is not taught in the Bible nor was it a practice of the early church. Those who try to justify their position quote Acts 10, Acts 16 and 1 Corinthians 1 where it mentions “households.” Two things need to be noted. First, whether or not children were present is not stated and second, especially in Acts 10, it clearly states that those being baptised were first committed to being followers of Jesus. Our stance is that infant baptism is not what the Bible teaches. (You may want to know more about our practice of “infant dedication.”)

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### ***3. I was baptised in a church that wasn't Baptist. Is that OK?***

It depends. First let's get some more information! If it was believer's baptism in a Bible-believing, evangelical church, no it doesn't really matter. However, there are some sects and cults that also practice "baptism" in a similar way to the way we do. In this case we would say that that "baptism" wasn't a genuine baptism.

### ***4. Do I need to get baptised in a church building?***

No. Whilst a church usually has facilities to make a baptism easier, people have been baptised in swimming pools, dams, rivers or at the beach – anywhere where there is sufficient water!

### ***5. Can I be a Church member without being baptised?***

There are some Baptist Churches that allow "open" membership. Most Baptist Churches, including ours, have a policy of "closed" membership, that is, one needs to be baptised as a believer to be a member.

### ***6. Do I have to become a member if I get baptised?***

No. However we encourage you to consider being a formal member of our church and encourage you to think and pray about it. The Pastors can give you more information on this process.

### ***7. I now understand more about baptism than when I was baptised. Can I get baptised again?***

No, this is not necessary. There many examples in life of events that take place where the significance becomes clearer over time. Marriage is a prime example! We don't "re-marry" as we learn more about its significance, we simply embrace the new information and enjoy in a fuller way, the commitment we made on our wedding day.

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## **8. *There are good reasons why I can't go under water so can I be baptised?***

Some people have very good reasons why they can't be baptised in the usual manner. This may include old age, health issues or some other significant reason. Genuine situations like this can always be accommodated in alternate ways. Discuss this with one of the pastors.

## **9. *Do I need to be baptised by a pastor or minister?***

No. Whilst the usual practice is for one (any) of the pastors to conduct your baptism, it doesn't have to be that way. It may be another spiritual leader who has special significance for you. However remember this is not a time for sentimentality, but a step of obedience with Jesus. God is the primary focus, not the person baptising you.

## **10. *Other questions?***

Please ask one of the pastors any other questions or comments you may have.

## **J. CHECKLIST**

- 1. Am I Christian?** *No, not sure or yes. If you aren't a Christian or not sure, please see one of the pastors who will be happy to spend time with you explaining what a Christian really is.*
- 2. Have I been baptised?** *No. Do you need more information? Talk to a pastor.*
- 3. Next step?** *Make an appointment to discuss where you are at with one of our pastoral team.*







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