



## WHY DO WE USE WATER WITH BAPTISMS?

Water is necessary for physical life; Jesus is necessary for eternal **life**. Although Jesus wasn't referring specifically to baptism, He told His disciples and still tells us: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (*John 14:6*).

Water signifies the **washing** away of our sins by Christ's blood: "Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away" (*Acts 22:16*).

Water signifies that we are **buried** and **raised** with Christ: Like how the Israelites descended into the Red Sea but came up again on the side, so Jesus descended into death but came up alive again on the other side. "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" (*Romans 6:3-4*).

Water signifies the promise of and renewal by the **Holy Spirit**: John the Baptist said: "I baptize you with water for repentance... He [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (*Matthew 3:11*).

*"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, *Matthew 28*



*This past year I have given a fair bit of thought to **baptism**. Recently ordained, I administered the sacrament for the first time in November. I also spoke on the subject when it came along in the series I'm preaching on the Heidelberg Catechism. And, of course, Hannah was baptized at the beginning of August.*

When Jesus first gave His disciples the command go and baptize, He did not say "that they were to baptize the new converts on the authority of the Triune God, but rather that they had to baptize them *in relation* to Him. Baptism was to be expressive of the fact that they had entered into a new relationship with God through faith."

(Louis Berkhof in *Manual of Christian Doctrine*)

*The CRC's Contemporary Testimony, "Our World Belongs to God" summarizes well what baptism is all about... ⇨*

**"God reminds and assures us in baptism, whether of those newly born or newly converted, that His covenant love saves us, that He washes away our guilt, gives us the Spirit, and expects our love in return"** (ARTICLE 40).

## PASTORAL PRINCIPLES REGARDING BAPTISM

- ◆ Baptism is a celebration of God's grace, not human achievement. It is a means of grace through which God acts to seal the promises of the gospel.
- ◆ Baptism is not an end in itself. It always points beyond itself to celebrate God's grace and covenant faithfulness.
- ◆ Baptism is a sign of a relationship that is covenantal, not contractual. Our relationship with God in Christ is based on promises, like a marriage.
- ◆ Baptism is deeply personal, but never private. It is a communal action of the gathered congregation, which represents the church in all times and places. (*Worship Sourcebook*, pp. 249-250)

### Surfing Around

Brothers and sisters in Christ in other parts of the world risk persecution — even death — for desiring to be baptized. Get informed and get involved at:

The Voice of the Martyrs  
[www.persecution.net](http://www.persecution.net)

International Day of Prayer  
[www.idop.org](http://www.idop.org)



Water on the human forehead,  
birthmark of the love of God,  
is the sign of death and rising.  
Through the sea, there runs a road.

Gathered round the font reminds us  
of the Hebrews' climb ashore.  
Life is hallowed by the knowledge  
God has been this way before.

- Fred Kaan

## THOUGHTS ON BAPTIZING INFANTS

“It can be argued that the two forms of baptism — infant and adult — together express the full meaning of baptism better than each would alone...

Adult baptism gives greater play to the conscious and free response of a person to God's forgiving love in Jesus Christ. It stresses explicit public confession and personal commitment to the way of Christ...

Infant baptism, on the other hand, declares the sovereign grace and initiative of God. It demonstrates that even when they are helpless, human beings are loved and affirmed by God... It makes clear that baptism is a beginning of the process of growing into Christ and that this process of growth cannot take place without a supportive community of faith.”

(*Daniel L. Migliore in Faith Seeking Understanding*)



“A person baptized as an infant comes to confessing faith by a mystery of God's providence. Not all who are baptized become believers. For whatever reason, they willfully and stubbornly reject the internal grace of the Holy Spirit. Yet people who do come to faith enter into the promises already contained in their baptism. That one lays active claim later in life to one's baptism is a ground not for rebaptism, but for celebration and thanksgiving that God has brought the promises of baptism to pass in a particular life. The emphasis is properly placed on the act and promises of God rather than on the subjective experiences of the believer.”

(*Andrew Purves & Charles Partee in Encountering God*)

### Trivia & Prize

The first place in the Bible where we see people being baptized is in Matthew 3. However, at least one prophet looked forward to the practice. Be the first person to e-mail or phone to the contact info below the name of the prophet and the Scripture reference and you'll be rewarded for your Scripture searching!

### Digging Deeper

Marc Nelesen wrote an intriguing article in *Reformed Worship* #67 entitled “Wash First, Ask Questions Later,” in which he further addresses the theology behind baptizing infants as well as proposes a major change for reformed baptism liturgy.

My sermon notes/outline for my message on baptism contains more Scripture references and quotations by contemporary authors on the topic of baptism.

Both Nelesen's article and the sermon notes are online at [spaces.msn.com/members/smg99](http://spaces.msn.com/members/smg99)

4<sup>th</sup> Point is compiled and printed by Stanley J. Groothof, pastor  
Telkwa (BC) Christian Reformed Church  
[telkwapastor@hotmail.com](mailto:telkwapastor@hotmail.com)  
[spaces.msn.com/members/smg99](http://spaces.msn.com/members/smg99)  
**250.846.5777**