



# VERITAS CHURCH

## What Is Baptism?

Baptism is the visual symbol of God's saving work and is commanded by Jesus of all who have placed faith in Him (Matt. 28:19-20). Baptism is designed to be an external picture of the inward reality that a person has placed their faith in Jesus Christ and repented of their sins. The act of baptism identifies an individual with the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the forgiveness of sins (Rom. 6:1-10; Col. 2:12). We believe that this is best demonstrated by full immersion into water.

## Why Should One Be Baptized?

The Bible commands and records that all who have put saving faith in Christ are baptized (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:37-41; 22:16).

That being said, it is important to bear in mind a few helpful truths regarding what Baptism does not do:

- 1.) Baptism Does Not Save.** While salvation is proclaimed in the act of baptism, the act itself is not a guarantee to get into heaven.
- 2.) Baptism Is Not Essential For Salvation.** Without in any way diminishing the obligation and delight of baptism for a believer, it is appropriate to understand that baptism is an act of obedience to Christ's command rather than a prerequisite for salvation.

## Who Should Be Baptized?

All who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ and have repented of their sins are encouraged to follow Christ's command to be baptized.

Veritas Church practices what is called "believer's" or "confessor's" baptism, which means that we only baptize those who believe and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The New Testament portrays a consistent pattern that those who are baptized have already placed faith in Jesus Christ, repented of their sins, received the Word, and received the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:41; 8:12; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4).

## Should A Person Be Rebaptized?

Baptism should be done once. If you had placed genuine faith in Christ before your baptism, there is no need to be baptized again. Often in the Christian life there are seasons of growth and greater periods of maturity. Believers must not be rebaptized each time they experience greater joy and growth in their walk. However, if you believe that your original experience was prior to truly trusting in Christ you should pursue obedience to Christ's command and be baptized.

## When Should A Person Be Baptized?

Throughout the New Testament, when an individual becomes a believer, baptism follows soon after their confession of faith (Acts 2:38-41). It is our conviction that a person should be baptized at their first opportunity upon becoming a believer and understanding their need to obey the biblical command to be baptized.

### The Practice of Veritas Church:

At Veritas Church, we ask believers wishing to be baptized, to meet with one of the pastors for baptism counseling. First, this practice allows us to discuss the gospel and the meaning of baptism and to teach our theological convictions regarding both. Second, it allows the church the opportunity to celebrate together as a congregation sharing in the joy of a person's obedience and agreeing to walk with him or her in fellowship. Finally, it allows the person being baptized to invite family and friends who will have an opportunity to celebrate and hear the proclamation of gospel.

## How Should A Person Be Baptized?

Though other denominations and theological traditions baptize by pouring or sprinkling, Veritas Church practices baptism by immersion. We do so in light of the following considerations:

**1.) The Greek word βαπτίζω (*baptizo*) literally means to plunge, submerge, or immerse.**

Our English word baptism is a transliteration of the Greek word, "baptizo". Baptizo was used in Greek literature to describe the act of immersing something in water or another liquid. It later became a technical term that referred specifically to the Christian ordinance of baptism.

**2.) 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 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 them out (Col. 2:12).

In addition, it is interesting to note the use of water to symbolize judgment in the Scriptures (e.g. the flood of Genesis 6-7 and the destruction of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea of Exodus 14). Thus, by passing through the waters of baptism, the believer expresses trust that God's judgment has been satisfied by Christ.

### **3.) Baptisms in the New Testament suggest full immersion.**

**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."

**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."

## **Appendix A: How We Baptize At Veritas Church**

### **How Can I Get Baptized?**

Anyone interested in being baptized should contact one of the pastors/elders of Veritas church and let them know of your desire to be baptized. The pastor/elder will set up an appointment to interview the candidate. The interview will discuss the candidate's personal testimony and their understanding of baptism.

### **Baptism and Membership**

Baptism is a requirement for membership at Veritas Church. We require anyone wishing to covenant with Veritas Church to have displayed obedience to Christ's command to be baptized following conversion. While we practice a baptism by immersion at Veritas Church, we do not require the mode of immersion for membership. If a person was sprinkled, immersed, or experienced some other mode of baptism after conversion, we will consider this requirement completed.

## Helpful Hints:

- 1.) Wear dark shorts, or pants, and a dark shirt to maintain modesty.
- 2.) Bring a change of clothes, towel, and a bag to hold your wet clothes afterwards.

## Appendix B: Infant vs. Believer Baptism

As discussed in the section titled “Who Should Be Baptized?” Veritas Church only baptizes those who profess to be believers in the person and work of Jesus Christ. However, not all denominations and traditions follow this practice. Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Lutheranism, Anglicanism, and a number of other mainline Protestant Denominations practice infant baptism (called paedobaptism from the word “*paidon*” meaning infant or child). While all practice the same form, the underlying theologies of each are quite distinct. Without going into detail regarding each, we will look briefly at the two most common in the particular context of Veritas Church: Roman Catholicism and Protestant Paedobaptism.

### Roman Catholicism

Roman Catholicism teaches that all infants should be baptized and by doing so, the child is regenerated or born again. In the case of infants, who are unable to exercise saving faith, the faith of the church is effective to remove original sin and bestow saving grace.

#### Our Response:

The faith of another person will not substitute for a person’s own response to the gospel, and the baptismal waters hold no magical powers of regeneration.

The Roman Catholic understanding of baptism is precipitated upon the same system of works-righteousness which stands in utter contrast to the gospel of Jesus Christ. As Paul wrote in Galatians, a gospel of works is ultimately “another gospel” to be corrected or condemned.

### Protestant Paedobaptism

Protestant paedobaptism prescribes baptism of adults who convert to Christianity but differs in practice from those who perform believer’s baptism by additionally prescribing infant baptism for children of believing parents. This view is founded upon three main arguments:

1. Infants were circumcised in the Old Covenant as a sign of being a part of the covenant community.

2. Baptism is the sign of the New Covenant as circumcision was the sign of the Old.
3. There is essential continuity between the Old and New Covenants.

This discussion centers on the degree of continuity between the Old and New Covenants. Within the Old Covenant, Israel was commanded to circumcise their sons on the eighth day as a sign and seal of their being included within God's covenant with the nation. Protestant paedobaptism interprets baptism as the new form of circumcision (using Colossians 2:11-12 as a reference) and teaches that the sign and seal should be performed for children of New Covenant believers, as well. As Acts 2:39 states, "the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off."

#### **OUR RESPONSE:**

- 1.) The Old Covenant community was primarily entered into physically (by birth), whereas the New Covenant is entered into spiritually (by rebirth – being "born again").<sup>16</sup> Whereas Protestant paedobaptism prescribes baptism for those in physical infancy, credo-baptism (believer's baptism) insists upon the baptism of those in spiritual infancy, having been born again through the Holy Spirit.
- 2.) The Old Covenant community was a mixed community composed of both believers and unbelievers (Romans 2:29, 9:6). The New Covenant community is technically a congregation of believers (Jeremiah 31:34).
- 3.) Though there is a great degree of continuity between the covenants, there is also substantial discontinuity. The Old Covenant consisted of shadows which pointed to the substance fulfilled in Christ (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1). We need to be careful about directly applying elements of the Old Covenant without recognizing the essential distinctions.
- 4.) Passages such as Acts 2:39 do not affirm the paedobaptist position. The "promise" affirmed is the promise of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1:4 and 2:33), and it is specifically applied to "everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." The fact that the promise is for "your children" should no more lead us to thinking that all children are covenant community members as the fact that it is for "all who are far off" should lead us to conclude that all people everywhere are. The passage teaches that the Holy Spirit will be given to all whom Christ calls to Himself, not that we should baptize children.

#### **What About Household Baptisms?**

Though the explicit mention of the baptism of an entire household is only made in the two accounts in Acts 16, the narrative of Cornelius' conversion probably implies the same. Proponents of infant baptism (paedobaptism) believe that such baptisms can be used as implicit justification for infant baptism. If households were baptized and if those households included infants, we have

biblical evidence of paedobaptism. What are we to make of these claims? Here are a few thoughts:

First, it must be noted that the entire argument is founded upon the presumed presence of infants within the household. The text itself does not necessitate such a reading. There is no convincing evidence of infants in the households (though to be fair, there is no explicit statement otherwise either).

Second, the passages in question have clues, which suggest that all who were baptized had been converted.

### **Summary:**

While the timing and mode of baptism are not absolutely essential to the Christian faith, they are nonetheless important theological convictions that we hold firmly. We love and respect our Protestant brothers and sisters who disagree with believer's baptism, but we believe and subsequently teach it as the biblical form of baptism.