

Baptism of Jesus

Matthew 3:13-17 Romans 6:1-14 Titus 3:4-8

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The Bible doesn't tell as much about most of Jesus' life. We learn about His miraculous birth in Bethlehem, the Angels singing their songs to the shepherds, the Miraculous star in the sky that led the Magi to Jesus, the flight into Egypt to escape the wrath of King Herod, a couple visits to Jerusalem and the Temple, and that's about it. The Bible focuses on the *last three years* of Jesus' life; those three years where He assumed the work of the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of the world. Jesus' Baptism begins this work officially: His Baptism is portrayed as a *Commissioning service*; like an *Ordination* into the "Office of Savior" – the One who will do the work of salvation for us all.

Jesus' Baptism is a big deal. John knows it, for he resisted baptizing Jesus at first, saying, "*I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?*" **Jesus** explains the significance when He said, "*Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.*" If that was not enough, the **Holy Spirit** appears in the form of a dove coming down from heaven and landing on Jesus. And if that was not enough, **God the Father**, who rarely speaks in Scripture, declares from Heaven that "*This is My beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased.*" It is the only public appearance of the Holy Trinity recorded in the history of the world.

Jesus' Baptism is a big deal. He who had no sin to be washed away **gathers up our sins and our guilt** in the water and places it upon Himself. He is the Lamb of God who is now carrying our sin upon Himself; He will take it into Jerusalem where He will suffer and die in our place. Our sin and our guilt is nailed to the cross. Jesus' Baptism is the official beginning of His work as the Savior of the world¹!

The importance of Jesus' Baptism reminds us of the significance of our Baptisms as well.
Your baptism is a big deal!

¹ This is how Jesus' Baptism is portrayed in Scripture. Remember also, that Jesus has already been doing the work of salvation by living a perfect and holy life in complete obedience to God His Father and His commandments. Jesus' Baptism signals the beginning of His public ministry, where He will now begin teaching, working miracles, and making His way to Jerusalem and the cross. Jesus' public ministry lasted roughly three years: from His Baptism to His Ascension! It is these three years that are documented in the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Your Baptism unites you to the Savior, you belong to Him through the water of Baptism. Baptism unites you to Jesus' work of salvation: you are crucified with Him, buried, and rise to new life through the water of Holy Baptism. Here's how St. Paul describes it in the book of Romans:

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. Romans 6:3-5

Obviously, you have not physically been crucified nor buried, but spiritually you have been. What that means is that your old sinful nature has been crucified with Christ, it is dead and buried as far as God is concerned. In your Baptism a new man arises and lives before God in righteousness, purity, and holiness. Something brand-new happened to you; the person that went into the water of Baptism is not the same person that came out of the water of Baptism. You were given spiritual life; the Bible describes it as a “*new man*.” The old sinful nature is crucified, drowned, and buried in Baptism. You have spiritually rose from the dead and have new spiritual life; that new spiritual life is faith in Christ, and it changes everything about you now as you live your life on earth. You belong to Christ; you are a Christian!

As one baptized into Christ, you are to consider yourself **dead to sin and alive to God!** Being **dead to sin and alive to God** means that you do not respond to sin or temptation -- > you are “*dead to it*”. Rather, you respond to God and hear and obey His Word. You are **alive in Christ!** You have a new life of faith to live! You belong to God and live in His Kingdom! Baptism changed everything for you: *the old has been crucified, the new is here!*

Jesus teaches us to think of Holy Baptism as being “born again.”

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” . . .

Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. John 3:3,5-6

In this image of “born again,” your first birth was from your mother, where you were conceived and born into sin and death². Now, in Holy Baptism, you are born again – a

² Being “conceived and born into sin and death” is the doctrine of Original Sin. We confess it like this in the Augsburg Confession: “[Lutherans] teach that since the fall of Adam all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence (= evil desires); and that this disease, or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through Baptism and the Holy Spirit.”

second time --- from above --- by the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God in the water of Holy Baptism. This is a spiritual birth as opposed to a physical birth. In both “births”, *you are complete passive*. Your mother did the work in your physical birth; God does the work when you are born again. God is at work in your Baptism: He washes you clean from your sins and gives you eternal life. In Holy Baptism, you are redeemed from sin, set free from guilt, cleansed from unrighteousness, rescued from the world, delivered from the devil, and saved from death. Holy Baptism is *God at work* with a *life giving miracle* in your life! Without Baptism, there is no life³. Because of God's work in Holy Baptism, you will not die in your sin; you will live in Christ and His Resurrection⁴!

Born again is a life image. In Holy Baptism you are given spiritual life, spiritual life is faith in Christ now as you live each day. It includes eternal life, which you already have, which you will experience at the moment of death. At the instant of death, you will immediately be with Christ, for you have already crossed over from death to life in the water of Baptism. This new life you have from being *born again* not only includes spiritual life now, eternal life at the moment of death, but also resurrection life on the Last Day. When Jesus returns He will raise your body from the grave, glorify it, and you will live forever in the Kingdom of Heaven in both body and soul. Holy Baptism is significant, it is a life image. You will not die in your sin, you will live because of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Born again is also a family image. Just as in your first birth you were born into a family and given a name, so too in Holy Baptism you were born into God's family and given His Name. You were baptized “*in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*” You belong in God's family, this is who you are, you are a baptized child of God. This is your identity. You live your life as a member of God's family. God is your Father in Heaven, and He loves you, provides for you, and watches over every detail of your life. Holy baptism is significant, as it brings you into God's Family, and gives you your identity.

Be careful that you do not listen to false teachers when it comes to baptism. There are so many that teach that Baptism doesn't “do anything”; or that it's “just a ceremony” that

³ Of course, there are exceptions to this if someone comes to faith and dies before Holy Baptism. There may even be exceptions for someone who is grossly misled about the significance of Holy Baptism. But these are extremely rare exceptions. The rule is that “Christians are baptized”. It is how God works in our lives to bring His grace, forgiveness, and life to us. Someone who refuses Holy Baptism, after learning its significance, does so at their own peril. The question is, “why would someone refuse to be baptized?” There is no legitimate biblical reason for that . . . in fact, it would be rebellion against Christ and His Word.

⁴ Martin Luther writes in the Large Catechism: “Baptism is of divine origin . . . What God institutes and commands cannot be useless. It is a most precious thing, even though to all appearances it may not be worth a straw . . . Although it is performed by men's hands, it is nevertheless truly God's own act. . . . Thus you see plainly that Baptism is not a work which we do but is a treasure which God gives us and faith grasps.”

the church does; or that it is something that you do, like a “commitment to Jesus” or a “pledge of allegiance” to God.

**Baptism is 100% God at work
with His grace, mercy, and salvation in your life.**

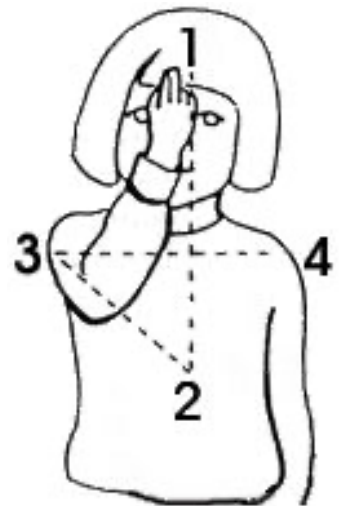
We call it “Holy” Baptism to signify that it belongs to God and is His work in your life.

- ⇒ In Baptism God washes you clean from your sins
- ⇒ in Baptism God buries you with Christ and raises you to new life
- ⇒ in Baptism God gives you new birth of water and His Spirit
- ⇒ in Baptism God declares you His child and gives you His Name
- ⇒ in Baptism you are declared holy and well pleasing in His sight
- ⇒ in Baptism God pronounces you not guilty of your sins, you are righteous in Christ

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Finally, one final point.

Wake up each day thinking about your Baptism. Wake up knowing that you live your life under the *sign of the cross*⁵ and *in the Name of God*. Let the *sign of the cross* and the *Name of God* remind you of who you are and that you have been Baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ. Your sins have been forgiven and removed from you. You are righteous in God's eyes through faith in the Lord Jesus. You belong to the Lord, and He is well pleased with you through His Son Jesus. Every day talk to yourself about this so that you never forget who you are in God's eyes. Live your life under the *sign of the cross* and “*in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.*”



Jesus' Baptism was for our salvation; Your Baptism unites you to Jesus as your Savior. All the gifts he has earned for us comes to us through Holy Baptism!

That makes His Baptism – and your Baptism – a big deal! Amen!

⁵ The sign of the cross is **NOT** a Roman Catholic “thing”; it is an ancient Christian act of piety. Here is an insightful quote: "The sign of the cross is both personal piety and a public confession. It non-verbally confesses not only a belief in God, not only a belief in Jesus -- but of the mystery of the cross, of Christ crucified, that God not only could, but did, take flesh and sacrifice Himself and die for my sins and the sins of the world, as the Lamb of God. It is at once a repudiation of atheism, Islam, heresies, cults, and pop-Christianity faddishness and things like 'name it and claim it' prosperity gospel. It is a reminder that to follow Jesus is to take up one's cross, and that gift was given to us at Baptism. The sign of the cross is also despised by the devil and the demons. All of that packed into a bodily gesture that little children can learn, that takes a couple seconds, and which binds us to the saints for nearly two millennia! It's retention by the reformers is a testimony to their wisdom and their piety." Pater Larry Beane quoted at <http://www.lutheranlayman.com/2018/01/the-sign-of-cross.html>

God the Father, we thank you for baptizing us in Your Son Jesus Christ, and giving us the Holy Spirit. We thank you for washing us clean from our sins, for giving us new and eternal life, and for reconciling ourselves to You. Give us the conviction and the knowledge that baptism is Your work alone in our lives, a gift of grace and mercy. Help us to remember our baptisms, that we belong to You and live in Your Kingdom each day. Help us to remember that we live under the cross of Your Son Jesus because we have been baptized in Your Most Holy Name, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Matthew 3:13-17

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” 15 But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. 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; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Romans 6:1-14

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 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. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free[b] from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Titus 3:4-8

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.