

## What We Believe About Baptism

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.” -Matthew 28:19-20 ESV

Before Jesus ascended to the Father, he gave his disciples a command for making more disciples that included baptizing people in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit and teaching people to follow Jesus. As the discipleship movement spread out in the book of Acts, we see what this disciple-making process looked like in practice: disciples formed church communities that baptized new believers and taught them to follow Jesus.

Our beliefs about baptism come from Jesus’ command in Matthew 28 and the disciples’ application of that command in the book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament. Here are some specific beliefs we hold about baptism:

**Baptism is for people who have made Jesus their Lord.** Every individual who is explicitly mentioned as being baptized in Acts has professed faith in Jesus as their Lord. Baptism follows this faith commitment as a demonstration of Jesus as their Lord.

**Baptism does not produce salvation.** Although baptism is intimately connected with salvation in the New Testament, it is never shown to produce salvation itself. In fact, we know from the story of the thief on the cross that a person can profess faith in Jesus and have security in their salvation apart from baptism.

**Baptism is closely connected with salvation.** Although baptism doesn’t produce salvation, it is closely connected with salvation. In Acts, people who make Jesus their Lord tend to immediately follow that faith commitment with baptism. Acts 2:37-41 is a clear picture of this connection, where Peter commands people to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. We are then told that those who received the Word were baptized. This is why we use the language that “baptism is the first step of obedience for a follower of Jesus.”

**Baptism is a public declaration of faith in Jesus.** In his book *Going Public*, Bobby Jamieson compares baptism to marriage vows. While the couple previously held to the truth of the vows, speaking them during the ceremony marks a formal commitment of the marriage oath. Baptism is a public demonstration of our oath to follow Jesus, an announcement that we have been made new by God. Acts 2:41 shows how this plays out when it says that everyone who believed was baptized and added to the church. The story moves from hearing the gospel, to believing the gospel, to being baptized in public, to entrance into the Church. Paul further connects baptism with the Church in 1 Corinthians 12:13 when he writes that we were all “baptized into one body.”

**Baptism involves a symbolic death and resurrection of the follower of Jesus.** In Romans 6:41, Paul writes, “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” (ESV). When a person goes under the water in baptism, they symbolize the grave in which they are buried, and when they are raised out of the water they symbolize the resurrection life that Jesus promised his followers. In baptism, we picture the beauty of the gospel story in our lives.

**Baptism is an ordinance of the church.** Baptism is considered as one of the two ordinances of the Church, along with the Lord’s Supper. By ordinances, we mean that baptism and the Lord’s Supper are the two practices that Jesus instituted for his followers and that they followed from the very beginning of the history of the Church. While both baptism and Lord’s Supper are symbolic, they are not mere human symbols. Instead, they are divinely given symbols that God uses for His glory within the life of the Church.

**Baptism is required for church membership.** Local churches are small expressions of the universal Church body made up of all true gospel believers around the world. Because baptism was instituted by Christ and is the first step of obedience for a new believer, it is the entry point for membership into our church. In baptism, the person declares before the church body that he or she has made Jesus their Lord. Just as the Lord’s Supper is practiced in the presence of the church family, baptism is also practiced in the presence of the church family.

If you have more questions about what we believe about baptism, or would like to schedule a baptism for yourself, please email [charvey@hebronchurch.org](mailto:charvey@hebronchurch.org).