



NARARAVALLEY
BAPTIST CHURCH



BAPTISM

Welcome.

Baptism is an outward expression of an inward decision.

Just like we would celebrate a wedding or a birthday, baptism is an event you can look back on to symbolise the decision you've made to follow Jesus for life. It's a marker in your spiritual journey.

This book is designed to answer some questions you might have about baptism.

What Baptism Isn't.

Before we look at what baptism is, it's important to get clear on what baptism isn't.

1. *Baptism isn't 'how I get into heaven'.*

It is not our ticket to heaven. We do not necessarily need to be baptised to have salvation either. Eternity with God is based on a personal relationship with God through Jesus.

2. *Baptism isn't a magical formula to make you feel holy or closer to God.*

For some people they think that if they get baptised it will somehow fix a problem, like sinning or not feeling close to God. While Baptism is an act of obedience and can be an intimate experience, it certainly doesn't simply solve the issue of sin or any distance that may exist between a person and God.



Where Does Baptism Come From?

1. *Has Old Testament and Jewish roots*

Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah and David likewise used water as an external symbol for internal cleansing (Isaiah 1:16, Psalm 51:2). In the book of Leviticus, the Levite priests were commanded to perform a symbolic cleansing in water before and after performing their priestly duties (Leviticus 16:4, 23-24). Similarly, those who were deemed to be ceremonially unclean were required to be washed with water to become ceremonially clean again (Leviticus 17:15).

2. *Received fresh meaning firstly by John the Baptist, then by Jesus*

John the Baptist is perhaps the best known 'baptiser' in the Gospels. Whilst John's baptism found its roots in Jewish practice of the day, it was different in that it was primarily a baptism of repentance (Mark 1:4, Acts 13:24). John used this commonly known symbol and filled it with new meaning. Rather than simply 'going through the motions' on the way to the Temple, people were called to a deep repentance of the heart in preparation for the coming Messiah.

It was at Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist, that the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus in the form of a dove (Matthew 3:16). Whilst Jesus did not need to 'repent' of anything, this baptism signalled the beginning of His earthly ministry in the power of the Spirit.

3. *Was commanded by Jesus*

Toward the end of His ministry, Jesus issues a commands His disciples to go, make disciples, baptise those disciples "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit", and teach them everything Jesus had commanded (Matthew 28:19). This model of going, making disciples, baptising and teaching soon became the normative model within the church. Equally at this point we see that Jesus (like John) takes an understood practice of the day and imbues it with fresh meaning. No longer is baptism simply about ceremonial cleansing or even repentance. Now baptism is a bold identification with the crucified and resurrected Jesus and just as significantly with the Trinity.

4. *Was the normative practice by the early church*

At the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2-3, 3000 people become disciples, and the first thing we read taking place at their conversion is public baptism (Acts 2:41). In Acts 8 we read of the disciple Phillip going into Samaria, making disciples (Acts 8:12, 35), publicly baptising (Acts 8:12, 38) and teaching (Acts 8:25).



5. Was explained and practiced by the apostle Paul

It is perhaps not surprising that baptism became a key part of Peter and Paul's teaching and ministry (Acts 10:48, 18:8, 19:5), with on occasions, whole households being baptised (Acts 10:48). These 'household' baptisms appear to have come with the blessing of the household leaders (parents), yet probably included people of a variety of ages.

6. Was an important part of an overarching strategy of: go, make disciples, baptise, and teach

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

7. Was a public declaration of faith that boldly declared an identification with the death & resurrection of Jesus and an relationship more broadly with the Trinity

"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. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him." Romans 6:3-8

"In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." Colossians 2:11-12

8. Typically occurred immediately after conversion and in a public setting

When Saul/Paul became a disciple of Jesus the first thing he does is be baptised (Acts 9:18), even before eating!



FAQ's

Who Can Be Baptised?

Baptism is for those who have decided to become a follower of Jesus. This is important because of what Baptism represents (John 3:3; Romans 10:9-10). For this reason those who haven't made such a commitment shouldn't get baptised.

When should I get baptised?

There is no specific time you have to be baptised. However, we see in the Bible that people were baptised shortly after coming to faith in Jesus. (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 8:35-38; 10:44-48; 16:14-15; 18:8).

This is a preferred model as it is what is demonstrated in the Scriptures, but it is not necessary. However, if you have a genuine faith in Jesus and understand what baptism is, there's no reason why you should wait!

Who Can Baptise Me?

Most people like asking someone that has been significant in their journey with Jesus to baptise them. Any of the pastors are available to baptise you, otherwise anyone who is a Christian and has been baptised themselves, is able to baptise you.



What Will Actually Happen At My Baptism?

Baptisms generally include these key elements

- + A gathering of people that are close to you
- + A Pastor briefly explaining what baptism is
- + Sharing your 'God-story'
- + Going into the water, answering faith questions, and being lowered into the water and raised out again.
- + People praying for you

When you go into the water you will be asked to affirm your faith in Jesus. This will usually be with three questions similar to this:

1. Do you believe that Jesus is the son of God?
2. Do you believe that he died for your sins and was raised again to life?
3. Do you commit to follow Jesus, with God's help, all the days of your life?



Practicals - What You Will Need

Practical Items

We encourage those getting baptised to bring a towel, swim-shorts, swimwear and a t-shirt to wear over their swimwear.

Share Your Story

At their baptism most people share their faith story of how they came to know Jesus and why they are being baptised. This is a way of sharing the good news of what Jesus has done for you. It only needs to be a couple of minutes and can even be done as an interview if this helps with nerves.

To give you some ideas of what to share, here are some things that might be important to share:

- Your old life and how you came to realise your need for God
- How you came to know Jesus and make a decision to accept and follow him
- Any specific experiences of God that you may want to share
- The difference that Jesus has made in your life
- Why you decided to get baptised

Ultimately, this is your story of your experience of God and how you came to know him.

Most people are a bit nervous about sharing their story, but we find that it has amazing power to touch and impact others for God. It also helps the person sharing to realise more fully what this means and is all about for them.

A helpful tip is to write out what you want to say or even note down the key points of your story that you want to share.

Invite People.

Since baptism is a special event in your faith journey it can be very meaningful to invite friends, family and your community of faith (church) to witness your baptism.

