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Faith in Jesus Christ & the Importance of Water Baptism

1. Have you believed & obeyed the gospel (the good news about Jesus)?

- regarding God, creation & the Bible

- regarding sin & judgment

- regarding Christ & *salvation (*being justified, sanctified & glorified)

2. Have you been baptized?

- Water baptism visibly expresses the gospel – our salvation in Christ
--> Water symbolizes judgment & salvation (the Flood, crossing the Red Sea)

- > Baptism symbolizes the cleansing of our sin & our union with Christ

- Thru baptism a believer publicly professes faith in Christ – and the church recognizes & welcomes his/her adoption into the family of God

Excursus: Understanding Water Baptism in the New Testament & Today

(Notes below adapted from the "Water Baptism Study Guide" by Marcus Johnson, © 2022)

Definition: the Greek word for baptism (*baptisma*) means immersion or submersion. The Greek word for baptized (*baptizo*) means to be immersed, submerged, dipped, washed or made clean with water, and implies a permanent change, not just a one-time act of being immersed (*you are cleansed from sin, belong to Christ, etc.*).

Doctrine: Water baptism is an outward expression of our salvation (our saving faith is exercised in, and demonstrated by, the act of water baptism). It is a public profession of one's faith in Christ and a celebratory recognition of the church's acceptance of the believer into the fellowship of the believers. "Baptism is the picture of a promise, the visible sign of an invisible grace ... a visible form of the gospel, but not just the gospel proclaimed. Baptism also displays the gospel being believed and received. In one symbolic act, baptism unites God's grace displayed, human faith exercised, and the church celebrating them both by publicly welcoming a new believer into the global body of Christ, the family of God" (*Evangelical Convictions*, 171-175; © 2011).

Mode of Baptism: This refers to when and how people should be baptized (as infants or believers, sprinkling or immersion, etc.). Baptistic (the practice of our church) – baptizing believers (usually thru immersion). Paedobaptism – baptizing infants of Christian parents, welcoming them into the covenant community of God's people (this may or may not include the belief that one becomes a child of God when baptized).

History/Practice: During the New Testament days, many new believers were Jews and God-fearing Gentiles well acquainted with the Old Testament and were waiting for their Messiah to come. As God revealed the crucified and resurrected Christ to them, they were coming to faith in Jesus with a more understanding about the Lord and the Scriptures than many new converts today. They were baptized as they first put their faith in Jesus the Christ, therefore water baptism was directly linked with being saved, because of the faith and immediate response involved. Once you believed that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, you repented and put your faith in Christ by being baptized. This is like the "sinner's prayer" today. The prayer itself does not save you, but you are putting your faith in Christ and using the sinner's prayer to do so (to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and to call on the Lord to be saved). Today, however, many churches will wait to baptize new believers until they have been instructed in the basic teachings of the gospel and have demonstrated a saving faith in Christ. In other words, **the focus is not primarily on the timing of baptism** (baptizing converts immediately), **but rather on the readiness of those getting baptized** (that they are in a similar place of understanding and faith as the new converts we read about in the NT).