

Baptism- The Initiating Sign of the New Covenant

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[0 : 00] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Death no longer has domination over him, for the death that he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives to God.

So you also must consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Happy New Year, church. Happy New Year. Happy New Year. Really excited to be back here. You know, I always love going home to Chicago, and it was great to worship with my family's church. They actually had a special testimony Sunday to conclude the year, and I got to hear testimonies like we do here of just ways God's been at work and people's love. It was awesome. But I come here, and I look around, and I know most of the faces, and I know the stories, a lot of the stories, and watching you all worship the Lord in the midst of what's going on.

[2 : 35] And, you know, as I was saying, we're seeing all sufficient merit, and I'm just thinking about loved ones of ours that have gone to be with the Lord. And they're right now, you know, before Christ in glory.

He is their merit, all sufficient merit. And I was thinking about that, you know, knowing some of the loved ones of our own here that have passed away, and just things that, you know, that God's doing in the midst of this church. And so I love you guys, and I'm so thankful to be back here.

But I will ask you to pray for me, because, you know, Rob comes in here last week and preaches a 30-minute sermon. And I'm not going to preach just a 30-minute sermon, so, you know, if you want me to preach short sermons, you're going to have to pray.

Because I already cut out, like, a thousand words from this thing. So here we go, all right? In 1529, so a little history here.

In 1529, after several years of back and forth between Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, two fathers of the Reformation, a really important meeting was held.

[3 : 37] And the subject of that meeting was their views on whether Christ was really present bodily in the bread and cup of the Lord's Supper. Luther said yes, Zwingli said no.

And the debate grew heated, to the point even of Zwingli shedding tears. He exclaimed in this meeting how greatly he desired the friendship of Martin Luther. And Luther said that he could consider Zwingli a friend, but not a brother or member of the church.

Think about that. Two years after that meeting, Zwingli died unexpectedly. And Luther considered it a sign of God's judgment for Zwingli's errant views.

And he even expressed doubt that Zwingli was even saved. Over the course of church history, repeatedly, it has been people's beliefs about both baptism and the Lord's Supper that have yielded heated debates, led to the breaking of fellowship, led to excommunication, and even burning the state.

Now, why do I mention all this? I want to demonstrate how significant and importance the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper have been to many of those who have gone before us.

[4 : 55] We need to realize today, and I think the elders and I have come to a greater realization of this over the past year, that we're actually at a pretty unique point in church history, in which many among the evangelical church at large view the ordinances as far less important than our forefathers have done.

And again, I'm not just talking generally about the church out there. I'm talking about my own experience growing up in the church, perhaps many of yours as well. And the elders' hope over this week and next is for us to better grasp the biblical meaning and the significance of the two

ordinances that the Lord Jesus Christ has left his church until he returns.

And just to give you a little bit of background on why we're talking about this now, you know, the occasion that led us down this path was seeking to lay out and to articulate a process for the baptism of children specifically.

We're blessed with so many children in this church, and so, you know, we've been telling you that we're overdue to lay this out. And we knew that this was much needed, and so we set off about a year ago with that goal.

And in that process, we realized that there was a lot for us to learn before we could solidify our conviction, before we could communicate that to the church.

[6 : 17] And so it actually took most of 2025 working on that. And then once that position paper was done, we were going to send it out to you all, but we realized with the help of some of our own members here that it would benefit the church to accompany that paper with teaching from the pulpit.

And so here we are. Today we're going to cover baptism, the initiating sign of the new covenant, and then next week we're going to cover the Lord's Supper.

And then, Lord willing, like I've been saying for months now, we're going to jump into the book of Genesis. But here we're going to start a year covering the ordinances. Today we're going to move from the what to the why to the who to the how of baptism.

And before we do that, let me go before the Lord in prayer and ask for his help. Father, truly, we do need your help. And so I upload a prayer of my brother, Rob. Father, this would be your word to your church.

These are the people for whom you've died. And so we want to hear from you, Lord. We want to hear from your spirit. And so teach us and instruct us from your all-sufficient word, which is able to build us up to salvation and bring us to a journey.

[7 : 34] Lord, thank you that you are here. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. In Christ's commissioning of his disciples, right before his ascension, he declares, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

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 at the end of the age. Here, Jesus has already come to earth. He's lived a perfect life. He's died a death on the cross in our place.

He's risen from the grave. And then he commands his disciples to take this gospel message and to spread it far and wide to the corners of the earth, right? To make disciples of all nations.

And so if one of the two actions involved in that work is baptizing them, then it is imperative that we understand how to do that. And so we're going to begin here with the what of baptism.

[8 : 37] The what of baptism. What is baptism? A reminder, kids, there's youth worksheets on the back table. If there's more adults, feel free to take one. Well, you can follow along with that.

You know, when we hear the word baptism, we so often first think of the man who lived in the wilderness and ate locusts and honey and wore garments of camel's hair and a leather belt.

Do you all know who I'm talking about? John the Baptist. You know, John preached a very simple message. He said, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That's how his message is summarized in scripture.

And Matthew's gospel reports that people from the whole region were going out to him and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. People were immersed in water to symbolize their repentance of sin, their turning to the Lord, and then his divine forgiveness of their sin.

John the Baptist was set as a forerunner, we know, to Christ. He was preparing the way for the coming Messiah as prophesied. And so therefore, John's ministry had a brief shelf life.

[9 : 44] In John 3, verse 30, John the Baptist says, He, speaking of Christ, he must increase, but I must decrease. And John knew that his ministry was fulfilled and that the coming kingdom, which he was announcing, was now here in the person of Jesus Christ.

And so therefore, you know, when we think about Christian baptism, we see similarities but also differences with John's baptism. And so to understand this, let's look now at Acts 2.

Actually, turn to your Bibles in Acts 2, the end of Peter's sermon at Pentecost. Acts 2, starting in verse 37. So this is moving forward a little bit.

Christ has ascended. The Spirit has been poured out upon the disciples at Pentecost as Christ had promised. This is the promise of the Father that has come. And then Peter preaches what is essentially the first Christian sermon after Christ.

And he preaches that before thousands of Jews that have gathered. And Peter shows in his sermon how Jesus is the promised one, the promised Messiah, that the new covenant is now here.

[10:51] And so we read, starting in Acts 2, verse 37. Now when they heard this, all those Jews that were gathered there, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, with forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself. Jump to verse 41. So those who received his word were baptized. And there were added that day about 3,000 souls. Similar to John's baptism, this was most likely a baptism done by immersion in water.

And it was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Different from John's baptism, it's a baptism, Peter says here, in the name of Jesus Christ.

And it's tied here also, it's tied to the gift of the Holy Spirit. And so what John's baptism prefigures, what it anticipates, looks forward to, is what Christian baptism declares is now here, namely, forgiveness of sins through the Messiah.

[12:08] The new covenant age, which is characterized by an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Now I've used that word covenant several times here. And if you're not familiar with that word, it's a serious binding promise that God makes with his people.

There's a lot we can say about the covenants. We're going to be walking through some of those covenants in Genesis. God's covenant with Adam and Eve, his covenant with Noah, his covenant with Abraham. Some covenants, you know, also include conditions for his people to keep. And so we see, you know, God makes several covenants throughout the Old Testament. And each of those covenants reveals something to us about God and his plan of salvation. We see from the biblical covenants how God patiently and faithfully works through history to restore broken humanity and creation.

And all of those culminate in Jesus Christ, who inaugurates the new covenant in his blood, shed on the cross. With all that said, now that's like a sparsely scratching the surface on covenants.

We'll say a little bit more about covenants later. But if you have questions, by all means come ask. With all that said, though, we can now begin to define what baptism actually is. Defining Christian baptism.

[13:21] And the first thing that it is, and this is apparent right here in Acts 2, is it is the sign of initiation into the new covenant. The sign of initiation into the new covenant.

Now I attended Cedarville University Christian School, and I entered into a Christian service organization. A secular school, you know, maybe as a frat, but this was truly a Christian service organization.

But there was an initiation process. I had to wear, for a week, a stuffed animal tied to my shirt on the outside. It was a little bear. And the bear's name was the name of my mom.

Everyone had to name their stuffed animal the name of their mom. So my animal's name was Judy. And if anybody asked me in class or wherever, why are you wearing that stuffed animal? I had to say, it's because I'm scaled.

And we practiced over and over again, scaled. Now this was a strange sign of initiation into this Christian service organization, Sigma Phi Lambda.

[14:23] And those who underwent the sign were those who belonged to the ORE. If you didn't undergo the sign, you didn't belong to the ORE. You had to go through that initiation process. Because Coast Guard, cadets, you went through swab summer all the day.

I mean, everybody, you go through a different sign of initiation into the organization. Baptism is the initiating sign into the church. It's the initiating sign into the new covenant people of God.

Now in this, we see that there are three parties involved. There's God, there's the church, and there's the believer being baptized. Thank God the church, the believer being baptized.

Accordingly, old scholar George Beasley Murray, he's referred to baptism as a divine human event.

A divine human event. See, baptism, it is first a sign and a seal of God's gracious work of redemption. It vividly portrays that work.

It's a sign. It's portraying the work done in the gospel. And it's also a seal, meaning it confirms that work. Think about, you know, a king's seal on a letter. It's sealing that the gospel has been applied to a person's heart by faith in Christ and by the power of the Spirit, uniting that person with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.

[15 : 39] So it is first, it's an act of God. It's also the action of the believer, right? That the believer in baptism is publicly professing his or her faith in Christ, right?

They're declaring their new allegiance to King Jesus and to his kingdom. And third, it's also the action of the church. The church, the members of the church, they're representatives of God's kingdom.

And so in baptism, the church is affirming that believer's profession of faith. Bobby Jameson writes this, baptism is the passport of the kingdom. The passport of the kingdom.

We become kingdom citizens by faith in the king. And in baptism, the church recognizes and affirms our citizenship. So we read the three actions involved in baptism.

Now that baptism is a sign of initiation into the new covenant is also seen in another really key text with regards to baptism. It's Colossians chapter 2. So feel free to turn there if you want.

[16 : 41] You don't have to. Colossians chapter 2, verses 11 and 12. Paul says that in Christ, you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead.

circumcision, and we're going to be talking about this in Genesis a bit more, it was the initiating rite of males under the old covenant.

It would mark them off as belonging to the covenant community of God. And you know, that was through the removal of foreskins. It was a physical sign. But even in the old covenant, God made clear that what he was really after in all of his people was not a physical, but a spiritual circumcision, right?

It's called in Deuteronomy 10, 16, a circumcision of the heart. That's what God was after. And it's that spiritual circumcision of the heart that Paul then correlates with Christian baptism.

Christian baptism is the initiating rite into the new covenant. It's signifying, what he says, is a circumcision made without hands. A spiritual circumcision of the heart by faith in Jesus, that has already occurred.

[18 : 08] And so this leads me to the second thing that baptism is. It is a sign that signifies union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Paul says, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God. And this is similar to the passage that Keegan read for us earlier in Romans 6, where Paul says, do you not know that all of us, he's speaking to the believers in Rome, 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.

Faith in Christ unites me to him in his death so that his death on the cross becomes the death of my sinful flesh.

And this is why Paul can say, I have been crucified with Christ, Galatians 2.20. And so, water immersion in baptism dramatically signifies and it seals this spiritual reality that I have died with Christ, I've been buried with Christ, I've renounced the world and the flesh and the devil, you know, those old allegiances are now severed.

[19 : 33] And then, think about it, as the believer emerges up out of the waters of baptism, their spirit brought resurrection to newness of life by faith in Christ is then also signified and sealed.

Christ's resurrection from the grave becomes my resurrection from the grave. His life becomes my life. And so, Paul also says in Galatians 2.20, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives within me.

We can summarize that by saying that baptism, in signifying union with Christ, it signifies the death of sinful flesh and it signifies the spirit brought regeneration and new life.

Now, the third thing that, you know, in conjunction with being united to Christ, it's also signifying inward cleansing and forgiveness of sin, right? the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin, 1 John 1.7.

Baptism portrays this once-for-all washing away of my sin, which as Micah said, has been cast into the depths of the sea, Micah 7.19. It also signifies the abiding presence of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. [20:47] Paul says in Ephesians 1.13-14, the Spirit is God's seal, testifying and guaranteeing that we will be kept safe in Christ forever. And baptism is signifying that.

So union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, it signifies all of these things. And that is signified in baptism. And there's another thing in addition to union with Christ, the baptism also signifies.

It signifies union, not only with Christ, but also with His body, the Church. His body, the Church. We were in 1 Corinthians last year.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, 12 and 13, for just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, and speaking of the human body, he says so it is with Christ.

So he's taking the analogy of the human body. He's looking at the body of Christ, the Church. He's saying so it is with Christ, for in one spirit we were all baptized into one body.

[21:52] Jews are great, slaves are free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit. We are baptized into union with Christ, and into union with the body of Christ's Church.

And Paul is speaking there to one particular local church. He's speaking to the church in Corinth.

And so we learn from the New Testament the intention of Christ, the intention of the New Testament, is that we are baptized into unity and fellowship, i.e.

membership, with a particular local church. And it's there in that local church that we're going to live out the one another commands of Scripture. Stated differently, when we're baptized into Christ, and therefore united to his universal, you know, the capital C church, that's made visible and tangible, as we at the same time unite with the local church.

They are the ones welcoming us into their number in baptism. So I just want to pause for a second and speak to the saints here that have been baptized.

As we consider all the glorious things that are signified and sealed in the waters of baptism, I want you to think about your own baptism. Can you recall that day when you were brought beneath the wave and emerged back up out of the water?

[23:12] I want you to think about that momentous occasion and consider all that that divine human event represents. The nailing of your sins to Christ's cross, the death and the burial of your sinful flesh, the once for all, think about this, once for all cleansing from sin that you experience by the blood of Christ, who saves you, Hebrews says, to the uttermost, your spirit brought regeneration to newness of life, your resurrection from the dead in Christ, your eternal union with him, with Christ and with all his saints, the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit that is now dwelling in you, who is with you to the end of the age until that day, saints, when we see Christ face to face in eternal glory.

Brothers and sisters, be encouraged this morning as you consider the mighty and effective grace of God in your life as vividly portrayed in the waters of baptism.

You're here this morning and you've not experienced the reality to which baptism signs and seals. If you've not received Christ by faith, I am under a duty here to warn you that there is another baptism to come.

John the Baptist talks about it. Christ will be the administrator of that baptism and it's not a baptism of water and the spirit. Christ administers that too. It is a baptism of fire, the fires of judgment, the fires of hell.

The great hope of every Christian is that all those who have undergone the first baptism shall not undergo the second. Christ sacrificed his own life upon the cross so that we would be united to him and in him receive every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

[25:07] Cast yourself upon Christ today. Receive his spirit baptism and enter into this gospel hope of salvation. If you have any questions about that, please come talk to me after the service.

Okay, we've spent a lot of time on the what. This is where we're spending the most time this morning. But before moving on to the why, it's worth considering two ditches that we can fall into regarding our approach to baptism.

On the one hand, some look at these verses as in Romans 6, Colossians 2, how Paul uses the word baptism, and they attribute a saving efficacy to baptism that it does not actually have. They divorce it from a lot of what the rest of the New Testament has to say, as if baptism in water is the effective cause of salvation. This doctrine is known as baptismal regeneration, and it undercuts the great doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, and Christ alone, that was recovered in the Reformation.

I'm brushing with broad brush notes here, so if you have more questions about any of this, please can talk to me. On the other hand though, wanting to avoid that error of baptismal regeneration, some see Paul referring not at all to water baptism, but only baptism in a spiritual sense.

[26 : 34] And the thing is though, that this relegates water baptism, that the physical act, to something trivial, something unimportant, and it essentially begs the question, why then would Jesus even command that every one of his disciples be baptized?

baptized. I just want to say, we, our church, our tradition, is obviously more in danger of the latter than the former. We're in danger of treating baptism as a trivial act that we could just do without. It is true that baptism, as a sign and seal, is not the same as the reality which it signs and seals, right? It's not the same thing. But in light of everything we've just considered, in light of all of that, it's also true that baptism is a tremendously significant event.

I want you to consider these words from Professor Robert Stein. He's speaking here of the early church. No one came to the conversion experience with questions as to whether baptism was necessary for becoming a Christian because the apostolic preaching stated that they must be baptized.

Thus, the rejection of baptism was a rejection of the divine program for conversion. To reject baptism was to reject the gospel message preached by Peter, Paul, and the other apostles who spoke of the need of baptism.

[27 : 54] Divine provision was made for those who, like the thief on the cross, could not be baptized. But to refuse the community's baptism was the same as a rejection of the Christ whom the community preached.

It involved a clear unwillingness to obey the gospel preached by the apostles. And so this leads me straight into the why. Why is baptism practiced?

Why ought we elevate baptism in significance here in our church? And I just want to run through five reasons. We're going to move a little bit more quickly now. The first is this, to follow Christ's example.

All four of the gospels account of Christ's own baptism. And in it, we might ask, why would Jesus be baptized if it represented repentance from sin and turning to the Lord?

And that's a great question. And we can say, well, definitely not because Jesus needed to repent from sin and turn to the Lord. But in baptism, Jesus was identifying himself, as Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 53.

[28 : 57] He was numbering himself with the transgressors. He was identifying himself with sinful humanity. And that was foreshadowing his own death and resurrection to come. And the death and resurrection believers would experience united to him.

So he has walked that path before us. Baptism is one way that we follow Jesus in that same path. Secondly, to obey Christ's command. Okay, at the first point, we don't find compelling.

This one ought to be. We already read the Great Commission passage. Christ commands his disciples to make disciples, baptizing them. And this would become the pattern of the early church as seen in the book of Acts and as seen in early church history.

We ought to be baptized because Christ commands us to be. And a heart that's been changed by the gospel at once in every way to love and to obey Jesus Christ.

Okay, third, to identify with Christ and his church and so be marked off from the world. One author writes, Bobby Jameson writes, there are no secret disciples.

[30 : 03] There are no secret disciples. The only way to follow Jesus, he says, is to do so openly in plain sight where everyone can see you. And baptism is how we declare ourselves before the church and the world to belong to Jesus.

Jesus wants a spotlight trained on his disciples so that the world sees him reflected in us. Baptism is how we step into that light. I want to say that this sort of flies in the face of our individualistic culture in which many Christians believe that they can actually just forge their own path and choose

to be a Christian however they want.

But that is simply not the New Testament way. That's not the gospel way. Saints, in choosing to be a Christian, we are disavowing allegiance to the world and we are swearing allegiance to Jesus Christ.

We're saying he is the king of kings and he is the Lord of lords and I am giving my life to him. We are deciding to forevermore bear his name and to associate with his family.

We are saying, hey, we now belong to this outpost of the heavenly kingdom on earth. And that is not something to blush about church. That is not something to be embarrassed about.

[31 : 21] If the gospel is true, if the son of God came to earth to save sinners, to save us from the fires of hell, if Christ came to reconcile us to God by the shedding of his own blood, and he's coming again to bring us to eternal glory with him in heaven, then there is no higher privilege in this life than to associate with him and to bear his name.

Amen? Amen. So baptism is the way, the first way that we identify with Christ and his church and so be marked off from the world.

Okay, the fourth thing is to accord with the New Testament pattern of conversion. To accord with the New Testament pattern of conversion. If you want a homework assignment, I know all of you do, read the book of Acts and note the different elements of conversion that are mentioned.

And not only the elements, but the different combinations of those elements that are present as Luke describes various conversion experiences. For example, we read from Acts 2 before, Peter says, consider what elements are here, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now I count five elements present. They're either explicit or they're implicit in those verses.

Repentance of sin. Can I take elements of the conversion experience? Repentance of sin.

[32 : 54] He says, repent and be baptized. So there's baptism. Confession of Jesus as the Lord and Messiah. So that's what he says, in the name of Jesus Christ, there's confession of Jesus as Lord.

There's faith in him for the forgiveness of sins. And there's the gift of the Holy Spirit. There's five elements there. Now if you continue to read the book of Acts, so maybe you don't have to do the homework, you're going to keep seeing those same five elements over and over again.

Though typically only some of them are mentioned and in different combinations, sometimes it's faith and baptism, sometimes it's repentance and faith, sometimes it's the spirit and baptism. But all five of those elements continue to be present and so the rest of them, when they're not mentioned, are implied.

And here's the point. The conversion experience involves all five of those elements. Repentance, faith, confession, the gift of the spirit, and baptism. And to the apostles and the early church, it would be unthinkable to divorce baptism from the other four elements.

Baptism for the apostolic church was part of the conversion experience. We want to replicate what the apostolic church did and not divorce the various elements of conversion to according to the New Testament pattern.

[34 : 07] The last thing is, oh, I guess I had this up here too. Here's the five elements. Repentance, baptism, confession, faith, the spirit. And the last thing is, why should we practice baptism to visually portray and testify to the gospel?

Now, if all the other reasons weren't enough, this is like the icing on top of the cake. And most of you have witnessed at least a baptism. It's awesome, right? Baptisms are really exciting.

The baptism itself, we've already talked about, is a dramatic reenactment of how a sinner has been transformed by gospel grace from death to life, right?

From the domain of darkness to the kingdom of light. And so baptism, it portrays the gospel. But not only that, it also testifies to the power and the grace of God to change a particular life through that gospel.

And so when we do baptisms here, we always pair that that believer's testimony before the congregation with their baptism so that the church can hear their story of God's grace in their life.

[35 : 19] And in that, are we not encouraged, right? And God is glorified and that those testimonies are proclaimed. And then for unbelievers that are present, the testimony in baptism, it's a plea.

It's a plea to them. Receive Christ. Receive Him. Look what Christ has done for me. He can do the same thing for you. I offer that same plea this morning. Look what Christ has done. They're hearing

the gospel preached and then they're seeing it portrayed.

So they're being urged to repentance and faith. Those are five reasons. I'm sure you can find more. Those are five reasons why baptism is practiced in the church and why we ought to hold it in high regard.

Now I'm hopeful that we're going to see conversions and baptisms in 2026. I'm praying for that. The elders are praying for that. And I just ask members saying that we would be praying for that this year.

I would cover the what and the why and even apply, but we ought to explicitly answer who. who should be baptized.

[36 : 25] Who should be baptized? Now simply put, the New Testament teaches and demonstrates, as we just saw, that it's those who have repented of their sin, believe in Christ for the forgiveness of their sin, confess Jesus the Savior and Lord, and receive the Holy Spirit.

Or to use Jesus' own phrase, which John records, it's those who have been born again. And again, this is the practice of the early church, as seen in Acts, and then it continued to be the practice of the church as we move into the first couple centuries.

Professor Stephen McKinnion, having surveyed the church's practice in the first few centuries, he concludes this, The ancient practice of the church was to baptize only those who had repented of sin, placed their faith in Jesus Christ, and committed to a life of faithful Christian service, following a time of instruction and testing.

Now, even after infant baptism became increasingly widespread, McKinnion notes this, in both the 3rd and 4th centuries, some theologians continued to argue for only the baptism of believers.

These writers ended up where Peter in his Pentecost sermon began, Repent and be baptized. The accountant acts and records those who received his word were baptized.

[37 : 47] So what about infants? Why has infant baptism, also known as paedobaptism, why has that been practiced historically and presently in other denominations?

Now, time fails to address this topic. It's 1124. Also, we are a Baptist church. We're a Baptist church. I'm not seeking to persuade anyone that believers' baptism, credo-baptism, is the biblical position, and that paedobaptism is not.

But I do want to at least briefly mention two things, a word of caution and a point of theology before we move on. So first, the word of caution. Maybe you're not, but in general, we're pretty good at making caricatures of other positions that we disagree with.

Especially in our current day and age where social media blasts are very common. We're really good at making it seem like the other side is really dumb and we're just brilliant, you know?

Maybe just me, I don't know. We do believe here, again, we're a Baptist church. We believe here that credo-baptism is the faithful, biblical position. But even though we think that they are misguided, many paedobaptists have robust theological arguments for why they hold to their position.

[39 : 07] So get to know someone's position well, and then even if you still disagree, do it charitably. Do it charitably. Charitable disagreement is evidence of Christ at work, and it's really, I mean, surprisingly, it is a huge testament to the world right now because charitable disagreement is like impossible in our world today.

Okay, that's the word of caution. Here's the point of theology. The reformed paedobaptist perspective hinges on there being a high level of continuity between the old and the new covenants. Without getting into a lot of detail, as Baptists, we affirm that there is continuity, but we believe there is also much more discontinuity than paedobaptist claim, and this is the key difference. Under the new covenant, Jeremiah prophesies in Jeremiah 31, they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest. They shall all know me. Now this is seen also in Isaiah and Ezekiel.

The new covenant is 100% effective. The new covenant is 100% effective. That is, all of those under the new covenant are born again, are redeemed by the blood of Christ, are eternally united to Christ by faith, and so this means that the capital C church is not a mixed community of some who are saved and some who are not, and so the visible church, the local church, it ought to, it has a duty to represent that as accurately as we can on earth.

Now we know there are always going to be some that we baptize, that by all outward appearances they seem to be saved. We believe them to be saved. We baptize them, they're not actually saved. And so we have examples of that in the New Testament. John says they went out from us because they were never really among us. We know that's going to happen. But it's one thing to baptize only

those who profess and seem to be true believers and then inadvertently baptize some unbelievers. It's another thing entirely to intentionally baptize those who are unbelievers. Infants cannot repent of their sin. Infants cannot profess faith in Christ.

[41 : 24] They cannot confess Jesus as Lord. They cannot demonstrate having received the Holy Spirit, and therefore infants, we believe, should not receive the initiating sign of the 100% effective New Covenant.

If anybody has questions about infant baptism, I encourage you to talk to me or one of the other elders. Now, closer to home for our church is the topic of when to baptize believing children. Regarding believing children. Now, this again is a topic that set us down the path that we've been on. Now, my goal here is not to fully address this topic because we've written a seven-page paper. You can hard copy to that paper on the back table. We're going to be sending it out today in the email. My goal in this sermon has been to be a little bit more comprehensive in teaching on baptism so that we together have a more biblical foundation to then receive the content that we've written. But I do want to mention a few things here. When answering the question, again, assuming credo-baptism, when answering the question of when to baptize children, it's important to first acknowledge the Bible does not prescribe specific instructions on the baptism of children. So what we do is we look at all that Scripture says and then we seek to make our best, we seek to be faithful as best as we can to what Scripture does say. And so that's what we are seeking to do as elders here.

And it's also important to realize that there are basically two approaches to 10. And both of these approaches have pros and cons. Now, on the one hand, there is the approach of delayed baptism. It's delaying the baptism. So there's more evidence of accredited profession of faith. Some churches set an age, since they're 18, since they're 12, the age of accountability. Delaying baptism. Now, at its best, this involves children being faithfully disciplined by their parents and by other members of the church. It means that by the time they decide to pursue baptism, they have a clear understanding of the gospel and of what's involved with joining the church and of the ordinances. They decide thoughtfully and intentionally to pursue baptism without pressure from their parents or their peers. The downside, if this is pressed too far, then a true believer might be kept from greater involvement in the church and could even grow discouraged in their faith because it's not being recognized. On the other hand, is immediate baptism. Now, at its best, So this would be baptizing someone immediately upon a profession of faith, whatever the age, baptizing them. At its best, what this does, it underscores the reality that Christ talks about, that the kingdom of God actually requires adults to become like children and not the reverse, right? It removes barriers to a child identifying with Christ and to making that public profession of faith. However, pressing this approach too far, it can lead children to being affirmed in a faith that they don't actually possess. And that can inoculate them against the true faith in Christ, right? Them believing they're saved when they're actually not. It can also overemphasize the individual aspect of baptism at the expense of the corporate aspect that we talked about earlier. Now, there's a lot more that could be said about this, but the long and short of our position is that we see a greater danger in the second approach, in the immediate approach. We see a greater danger there than I think we've seen in our own generation. We've seen a lot of people baptized that went on to leave the church. We believe that there is wisdom in delaying the baptism of children to allow time for their faith to manifest itself. That is, to allow time for there to be a credible profession of faith. Now, remember what we said earlier? That it's the church, right? All the members of the church, it is the church that in baptism is affirming an individual's profession of faith, right? And that's based on the authority vested in the church by

Christ. We are supplying that person with, again, the kingdom passport. And we're affirming that they belong to Christ and they now represent his heavenly kingdom on earth. And so it's important that we take that role seriously and do it with integrity.

[45 : 59] And to do that, we need to be able to see visible, tangible fruit of a transformed heart. And that way we can verify the rest of our ability that the one we're baptizing has truly repented of their sin and turned to Christ by faith. Now that said, we also recognize that the point in a child's life when the church can, with integrity, verify their profession of faith. That point will vary a lot, right? Everyone has a different story. Every person is different. So we're not going to be prescribing a specific age. What we are doing in that paper is recommending, I emphasize recommending, the late to the late middle school, high school season of life. But that's not a hard and fast rule. We are

going to consider every request for baptism. And what we're seeking to do here, what we're seeking to do here is not create some separate process for kids than from adults. It is the same process. So like we already do with adults that are seeking baptism, we're seeking membership. We want to walk down a process with them of assessing their understanding of the gospel and assessing their profession of faith. Now sometimes this is relatively quick. And I think like the church doesn't always see the time that it takes for someone to get to that point. Sometimes it's a few weeks. Sometimes it's a discipleship process that lasts for months or even a year. So know that that's already going on with the adults that are here. And we're saying this ought to be the same process where we're assessing gospel understanding and professional faith. It's just a little bit more difficult with children and with adults. And so we're seeking to have a healthy caution. There's no one size fits all formula, right? There's no one size fits all formula. We are not in the church making, you know, widgets in the machine shop or in a factory. We're making disciples of Jesus Christ. And so there's no clear cut way to go about that. Okay.

Sorry. That's about 600 words of the 3,000 word paper that we're sending out. So I'm going to stop there for now. Hopefully that paper provides a bit more clarity.

But we are also, we know that it's going to also raise more questions. So we want to encourage you, church members, read through that paper. Do it slowly. Do it thoughtfully. Do it prayerfully. Do it with your Bibles open. And then feel free to approach us, myself, any of the elders, with any questions that you have. And if anybody here has not been baptized but has repented of their sin and believed in Christ for salvation and confessed him as Lord and Savior and desires to pursue baptism, please come talk to me. Please come talk to one of the elders. That would be a great privilege of ours. And we fully expect and we hope to reap a harvest here among our children and also among the adults. So we've covered the what, the why, the who. And finally today, the how. And we've already stated a lot of this. So again, I'm going to be pretty brief here. How should baptism be practiced? With preparation, need of first thing. Again, we want to ensure to the best of our ability that the one being baptized truly understands and believes the gospel. We want to understand that they understand the duties and the privileges of church membership, of joining the church. And so really, this is the beautiful step in the discipleship process. And so there's a period of preparation. The second thing is by immersion. The Greek word for baptism itself implies immersion. And the New

Testament consistently portrays baptism as immersion. It seems to be the practice of the early church. Apart from that, I'm just thinking, how much more vivid is the portrayal of what's going on in the death and resurrection with Christ of a believer who is plunged beneath the waters and then raised up out of the water? I mean, it's such a beautiful, tangible picture. And we just really thank the Lord. He's given us two amazing signs in baptism and the Lord's Supper that vividly portray the gospel of Jesus Christ by, in and into the local church. Again, we've already talked about, and we'll talk about this more next week, the connection between baptism and membership. Because baptism is a union with Christ and therefore with his body, the church, baptism should normally be connected with membership in the local church. There will be exceptions to this, okay? Like on the mission's frontier where a church does not yet exist, we see this in Acts 8, right? When the Ethiopian eunuch is baptized by Philip, there was likely no church yet in Ethiopia. But he probably went to Ethiopia and preached the gospel and they were converging and started the church. But on the mission's frontier, you know, you're not going to baptize into membership in the church. But the normal pattern, we're talking about the normal pattern, it should be baptism by, in and into the local church. So by the local church, the baptism should normally be performed in a gathering of, by the church itself, and generally as a matter of prudence, a pastor or elder who acts on behalf of that church, in the local church. It should take place in the context of a corporate gathering, right? Those are the believers who are affirming that person's faith, who are covenanting with that new believer to live out, the one another commands, so it just, it makes sense to be in the church and then into the local church. And again, this is just highlighting the membership aspect. Think about it like this, if the church is a house, then baptism is the front door of that house, right? By walking through the front door, that new believer is entering into the family life that's going on on the inside of the house. So by in and into the local church, the last thing, with great rejoicing. This is an event worth celebrating, if ever there was one. You know, when Frank was baptized, it was kind of like a party. There was cake. It was a momentous occasion. The angels are rejoicing with great joy in heaven over every sinner that repents. So we ought to be rejoicing here on earth, right? And again, let's just

remember why that is.

What is baptism representing? That one sinner has been snatched from the fires of hell, right? They have been raised from death to life.

[53 : 00] They've been given a new heart. It once was a heart of stone. Now it's a heart of flesh. They've been made a child of the living God. They've been made a co-heir with Christ. And we've been given, when we baptize someone, we're representing. We've been given a new sibling in Christ forever. How awesome is that? Our family is growing. And so we're praying, may the Lord pour out his spirit upon Shoreline and the other local churches we were praying for in 2026 in such a way that sinners are saved, that they receive the sign and the seal of baptism, and that they're added to our number for all of our joy for the glory of Christ. Please pray with me.