

BAPTISM: THREE INSIGHTS

ACTS 2:37-41.

Peter Foxwell. The Cornerstone Church. July 19, 2026.

Dismiss the Middle School

STUDY GUIDE

As you came in this morning, you should have received a bulletin. Inside, you'll find a simple study guide you can use in a few different ways: to follow along with today's teaching, to reflect on during your personal devotions this week, or to spark conversation in your small group.

More resources are available online. The link is in your study guide.

Let's get started on today's teaching ...

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN

Our summer Baptism Celebration is a couple of weeks away, and that means it's time for our annual Baptism sermon.

Before you roll your eyes ... today's teaching will be spiritually uplifting for everyone at any stage of their faith journey. I will explain and apply one of the Bible's most important sections.

So, whether you were baptized years ago or you're only now considering baptism, you're going to receive insights that will, yes, convince you about baptism, but also build your faith and help you to follow Jesus.

Let's begin with some background to our teaching passage, Acts 2:37-41.

THE BACKGROUND TO ACTS 2:37-41

Fifty days after the Last Supper, the risen, ascended, and exalted Lord Jesus poured out his Spirit on 120 disciples in Jerusalem.

It was the beginning of the last days, the new age of the Spirit, promised in the Old Testament. Listen to what the apostle Peter said about the outpouring:

Acts 2:16-17 (CSB) ... this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 17 “And it will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all people...”

The 120 Spirit-filled disciples were loud. They “***declared the magnificent acts of God***” (verse 12) in many languages. So, a curious crowd gathered, and the apostle Peter stood up to preach the very first Christian sermon.

He proclaimed God’s plan of salvation and Christ the Savior at the center of it all. His conclusion was dramatic:

Acts 2:36 (CSB) “Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

And that brings us to verse 37 and today’s teaching passage. Let’s read it now:

ACTS 2:37-41

Acts 2:37-41 (CSB) When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what should we do? ”

38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

40 With many other words, he testified and strongly urged them, saying, “Be saved from this corrupt generation! ” 41 So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them.

That account of an amazing spiritual awakening in ancient Jerusalem contains three crucial insights about baptism that we can learn and apply today.

Let's explore them now.

1. BAPTISM IS A COMMAND - verse 38

The apostle Peter didn't hesitate; when the crowd asked, "What should we do?" his reply was direct: "**Repent and be baptized, each of you**" (verse 38).

Peter commanded baptism; they knew what he was talking about because:

- First-century Jews were baptized regularly as a sign of repentance and cleansing. Immersion baths were set up around the Temple.
- When a Gentile converted to Judaism, they were immersed in water.
- John the Baptist came to the Judean desert, baptizing people in preparation for the coming of the Lord (Matthew 3:1-6).

So when Peter told them to repent and be baptized, they understood what he meant. It was a visible sign that they had repented of their sins and turned to Jesus. It was their initiation into the Christian faith.

Two thousand years later, nothing has changed. Baptism is still the visible sign of repentance, faith, and forgiveness. It is still our initiation into the faith.

Someone might say, "Why can't I just put my faith in Jesus and that's enough?" Faith is enough in one sense, but genuine saving faith in Jesus always leads to obedience to Jesus. And he, along with Peter, commanded baptism:

Matthew 28:18-20 (CSB) All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 19 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, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.

So ... insight one: baptism is a command, not an optional extra.

2. BAPTISM IS A CONSEQUENCE - verse 38.

Many in the crowd were deeply convicted by Peter's preaching: ***"They were pierced to the heart"*** (verse 37). They felt the weight of their sin; they had rejected Jesus and handed him over to godless men for execution. They had turned their backs on the Lord and Messiah.

God put that piercing conviction in their hearts. It shattered their self-confidence and shook them up. It was painful, so they cried out, ***"What should we do?"***

Peter urged them to ***"Repent and be baptized each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins"*** (verse 38). Baptism is a consequence, not a cause. It follows **AFTER** four prior events:

- **Conviction** of sin.
- **Repentance**. It's an 180-degree turn from ourselves and our sins to faith in Jesus Christ. The most important U-turn we ever make.
- **Faith** in Jesus. Peter told the crowd that baptism is ***"in the name of Jesus."*** That's a statement of faith. In our baptism, we declare, "I believe in Jesus, so I'm identifying with him now. I'm committing to him: to who he is, what he has done, and what he is doing for me."
- **Forgiveness** of sins. It's not obvious in our English translations, which are a little ambiguous, but the phrase **"FOR the forgiveness of sins"** is best understood as **BECAUSE OF** the forgiveness of sins. First, we receive forgiveness from God through faith in Jesus. Then, we receive baptism.

Baptism is a consequence, not a cause, of repentance, faith, and forgiveness.

3. BAPTISM IS COMFORTING - verse 38.

It's easy to undervalue baptism as a churchy ritual and miss its spiritual power. But the apostle Peter won't let us do that.

For him, baptism was the visible sign that joins our decision to repent and trust in Jesus to God's promise to forgive our sins and give us his Spirit; in other words, to give us salvation (restoration to God).

Peter reminded them of God's promise in Joel: ***"Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"*** (Acts 2:21, CSB) ***"... and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"*** (Acts 2:40, CSB).

Believers received the indwelling Spirit that day and that continues up until now. Their ***children*** (meaning the following generations of Jews) and ***"all who are far off,"*** meaning anyone, anywhere, who turns from sin to trust in Jesus, enters the age of the Spirit and salvation.

What does baptism have to do with all that? Baptism is the visible sign of our repentance and faith in Jesus and the gift of God's forgiveness, Spirit, and salvation in our lives.

As such, it is a comfort to us. We can always look back to our baptism as the tangible assurance that we did repent, we did believe, we did receive forgiveness, the indwelling Spirit, and salvation.

We all have days when God and salvation feel distant, when our faith falters, and temptations pile on. At those times, we can look back on our baptism, remember what it signifies, and feel comforted and confident. Then, even on our worst day, we have confidence that we did call on the name of the Lord, and he did save and fill us.

THIS IS URGENT FOR EVERYONE - verses 39-40.

The command to repent, believe, and be baptized, and the promises of the Spirit and salvation, are for everyone, everywhere, at all times.

Peter urged the crowd to respond to his preaching. The Bible tells us that ...

Acts 2:40 (CSB) With many other words, he testified and strongly urged them, saying, "Be saved from this corrupt generation! "

"Corrupt generation" is a phrase from Deuteronomy 32:5 and Psalm 78:8, referring to the generation of Israelis who wandered in the desert because they were stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful to God.

Peter's urging is still relevant: If we ignore or reject Jesus, we're corrupt, and we will face God's judgment.

We all need Jesus and forgiveness. We all need the Spirit and salvation. God's call was urgent then, and it is urgent today: Repent, believe, and be baptized.

Follow the example of the 3000 people in the crowd that day. The Bible tells us ...

*Acts 2:41 (CSB) So those who **accepted** his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them.*

It's your move. What will you do?

PERSPECTIVES ON BAPTISM

Baptism begins with a command. Jesus told His disciples: "*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*" (Matthew 28:19). Baptism is not optional. Throughout Acts, the pattern is consistent: people hear the gospel, believe, and are baptized — repentance and faith come first, and baptism follows as the public response (Acts 2:38–41).

Baptism does not save us. Salvation is a gift of God's grace alone received through faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). Baptism is God's confirmation of inward realities: our cleansing from sin, union with Christ, and new life, all by God's saving grace already received through faith. It is also a public sign of our repentance, faith, and obedience to Jesus Christ, which is why we practice believer's baptism.

Baptism in water is deeply significant. Paul writes that we are "*buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...we too might walk in newness of life*" (Romans 6:4). Going under the water pictures the death of the old self; coming up pictures resurrection. It is the gospel story enacted on the body of the believer.

Baptism is also a public declaration — our "I do" before God and His people. It is in the name of Jesus, the moment we say to the watching world: I belong to Jesus.

Questions about baptism? Please reach out to Pastor Peter — he'd love to walk through this with you.

Written with AI assistance.