

A Comprehensive Study of Christian Baptism and Sacraments

This study guide examines the theological and practical foundations of baptism as presented in the sermon by Pastor Dustin Woolam on Sunday, May 3, 2026. It explores the definition of sacraments, the scriptural accounts of baptism in the New Testament, and the historical and symbolic significance of the practice within the Christian faith.

Part 1: Short-Answer Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in two to three sentences based on the provided sermon and/or transcript found at: <https://owcc.church/sermons/what-is-water-baptism/>

1. **What is the definition of a "sacrament" according to the sermon?**
2. **How does Pastor Dustin describe the concept of "High Church" in relation to sacraments?**
3. **What was the primary purpose of the baptism performed by John the Baptist?**
4. **How does the sermon explain the analogy of baptism as a "physical prayer"?**
5. **In the context of spiritual warfare, what specific renunciation was historically part of the baptismal process?**

6. **Why do some denominations, such as Methodists, practice sprinkling instead of immersion?**
7. **What does the story of the thief on the cross demonstrate regarding the necessity of baptism for salvation?**
8. **According to Romans 6, what is the symbolic significance of going under and coming out of the water?**
9. **What comparison does the Apostle Paul make between baptism and circumcision in Colossians 2?**
10. **What is the significance of "marking moments" in biblical history, as illustrated by the twelve rocks at the Jordan River?**

Part 2: Answer Key

1. A sacrament is defined as an outward, visible sign of an inward, spiritual grace. It represents a physical action taken by a believer to invite a spiritual response or meeting with God.
2. "High Church" refers to a more formal, liturgical style of worship, sometimes jokingly called "smells and bells." It is characterized by specific rituals and a formal atmosphere that differs from less structured denominations.
3. John the Baptist's baptism was a call for people to repent of their sins. It served as a way to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah and the kingdom of heaven.
4. Baptism is likened to a physical prayer because the believer performs a physical act while looking for a spiritual action from God. It is a moment where the physical and spiritual meet as the believer asks God to change their heart or respond to their faith.
5. Historically, a key part of the baptismal liturgy included the question: "Do you renounce Satan and all his ways?" This emphasizes baptism as a decisive moment where a believer says "no" to the devil and "yes" to Jesus.
6. The practice of sprinkling originated from necessity, such as when the Wesleys preached to prisoners who could not be fully immersed. While immersion is the preferred biblical method, alternative methods like sprinkling or pouring are used when physical limitations exist.
7. The thief on the cross was promised a place in paradise by Jesus despite having no opportunity to be baptized. This suggests that while baptism is a critical command for those who are able, it is not a strictly exclusive "ticket to heaven" for those physically unable to participate.
8. Baptism symbolizes being joined with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Going into the water represents dying to the old sinful self and being buried, while rising out of the water represents being raised to a new life through God's power.
9. Paul describes baptism as a "spiritual circumcision," which is the cutting away of the sinful nature by Christ. Just as circumcision was a physical sign of a covenant for Jewish boys, baptism is a sign of the promise and a seal of a believer's trust in God.
10. God has a history of commanding His people to create physical markers, like the pillar of rocks, so they can remember His works. These markers serve as prompts for future generations to tell the story of God's intervention and presence in their lives.

Part 3: Essay Questions

Instructions: Use the sermon to develop comprehensive responses to the following prompts.

1. **The Theology of Sacraments:** Analyze the different terms used for sacraments (such as "ordinances") and discuss how the message navigates the tension between baptism as a "literal" spiritual transformation versus a "symbolic" memorial.
2. **Scriptural Precedents for Immersion:** Compare the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3 with the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. Discuss what these accounts suggest about the presence of God and the physical method of baptism.
3. **Baptism and Salvation:** Evaluate the message's argument regarding "baptismal regeneration." Discuss the distinction made between salvation as a specific moment in time and salvation as an ongoing process involving baptism.
4. **Historical and Cultural Traditions:** Discuss the various historical traditions mentioned in the message, such as Roman soldiers leaving their "sword hand" dry or believers facing West and East during the ritual. What do these traditions reveal about how different cultures viewed the weight of the baptismal commitment?
5. **The Role of Physicality in Faith:** Explore Pastor Dustin's argument that physical actions—such as raising hands, bowing heads, or being baptized—assist humans in turning toward God. How does the "messiness of life" necessitate these physical interruptions to remember the divine?

Part 4: Glossary of Key Terms

- **Baptismal Regeneration:** The theological belief that a person is saved specifically at the moment of their baptism.
- **Christianese:** Jargon or specialized language used within Christian circles that may be difficult for those outside the faith to understand.
- **Covenant:** A spiritual agreement or promise between God and His people, often marked by a physical sign.
- **Didache:** An ancient Christian book or letter that provided early instructions on church practices, including guidelines for baptism by pouring water if immersion was impossible.
- **High Church:** A style of Christian worship characterized by formal liturgy, rituals, and a sense of solemnity.
- **Immersion:** The baptismal method of submerging a person entirely under water, mimicking a burial.
- **Liturgy:** A set of formal formulas or rituals used in public worship; the "script" followed during a religious ceremony.
- **Ordinances:** A term used by some denominations (like the Church of God) to refer to religious rites like baptism and communion.
- **Sacrament:** An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; a physical act intended to meet God spiritually.
- **Spiritual Circumcision:** A New Testament concept (from Colossians) referring to Christ's act of cutting away the believer's sinful nature, paralleling the Old Testament physical rite.
- **Statement of Faith:** A formal document on a church's website or in its literature that outlines its core beliefs and theological stances.