The craze of the ’90s was Magic Eye posters. They were famous but frustrating optical illusions with multicolored patterns scattered across the poster with a 3-D shape hiding behind them. You can’t immediately perceive the image but know it’s there. It required focus. You could only see the image if you knew how to look at it. Likewise, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are pictures of the gospel. But you can only see their meaning and promise if you know how to look at them.

**1st. The Picture of Baptism**.

Baptism depicts five essential truths of the Christians’ life. **First, baptism represents a believer’s connection with Jesus in His death and resurrection**. Paul writes in Romans 6:3-5, “*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*.” Immersion under the waters of baptism signifies complete identification with Christ's death and resurrection, i.e., the gospel.

The gospel teaches that the guilt of sin destroyed our fellowship with God and led to our ultimate demise of death. But God sent His perfect Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior and to restore the life we squandered and lost. For our sake, the King of the Universe allowed Himself to be nailed naked onto a wooden cross and die. There and then, Jesus bore the pain and punishment of our sins as God concentrated His full wrath upon Him. He drowned in the judgment for our sins so that we might be washed clean by His blood.

Water symbolizes God’s judgment, as in the destruction wrought by the worldwide flood in Noah’s day or the drowning of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. In both narratives, God judged some with death and saved the lives of others. The water of baptism signifies death and judgment on sin and salvation of sinners. Jesus suffered under our deserved condemnation of death but emerged alive from the waters of judgment! Therefore, baptism by water dramatizes the gospel. By their union with Christ and His power, believers come out of the waters of judgment into newness of life.

Therefore, two of the three necessary elements for a proper baptism are 1. The Triune gospel, and 2. Water. Furthermore, the proper administration of baptism generally necessitates the immersion of a person underwater. Our baptism depicts all these realities as a symbol of *Christ’s work* and His grace in our lives. Baptism declares the gospel––that the saved do not offer their work for salvation but wholly identify with Christ’s work! So, first, baptism represents a believer’s connection with Jesus in His death and resurrection.

**Second, baptism signifies the baptized born-again status as children of God**. Galatians 3:27 says, “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*.” This metaphor of “*putting on Christ*” describes the total transformation that takes place when one enters into a saving relationship with Christ. “*Putting on*” Christ means taking on a new life, being born again into a new status. What status?

Paul writes in Galatians 3:26, “*For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith*.” Baptism is a picture and profession of faith. It outwardly declares their acceptance as sons of God and heirs with Christ. The preposition “*into*” expresses that, though believers had first been lost outside of God like the prodigal in the far country, being baptized, they are now found *in* Christ. Believers must be baptized *into* Christ to put on Christ; i.e., only believers should be baptized. Therefore, the only proper subjects of baptism are those who personally profess repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The three necessary elements for baptism are 1. The Triune gospel, 2. Water, and 3. Faith. There is no when the baptized do not profess faith.[[1]](#footnote-1) So secondly, baptism signifies the baptized born-again status as children of God.

**Third, baptism signifies God’s promise to forgive and cleanse you with the Holy Spirit.** Water also depicts our salvation, as Noah and his family were saved from the catastrophic flood. The waters of the flood also cleansed and recreated the world. *1 Peter 3:21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*…”[[2]](#footnote-2) The immersion underwater makes the symbolism of cleansing from sin unmistakable. God promised in Ezekiel, “*I will sprinkle clean water on you…and a new spirit I will put within you*... Baptism pictures (but does not produce) God’s promise to forgive sins and cleanse his people with his Holy Spirit.

God declares in baptism that Jesus’s work is for *us.* As in a wedding ceremony, God takes our hand in baptism and places the ring on our finger. The ring symbolizes assurance of our promises, as is baptism. God declares, “*Yes! I have washed you and forgiven you. You will not drown in judgment. I will raise you to eternal life*. *You can trust me*!” So thirdly, baptism signifies God’s promise of forgiveness and cleansing.

**Fourth, baptism is the believer’s pledge of faith in and obedience to Christ**. Jesus taught, “*Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven*” (Matt. 10:32). Also, Jesus commands his church, “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them inthe name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*.” (Matt. 28:19-20). Those receiving baptism do so as a profession of faith and a pledge of obedience to Jesus.

In baptism, a disciple declares their faith in the Triune God and the work of Christ. For example, at Pentecost, Peter preached to the Jewish crowds that this same Jesus rose from the dead. The people were cut to the heart and asked, “*Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you.*. *So those who received his word were baptized*.” (Acts 2:37-41). [[3]](#footnote-3) Baptism distinguishes and distances those who believe from those who don’t. Peter called them to trust Christ, a decision publicly and visibly declared by baptism that resulted in the Jerusalem church (Acts 2:42-46).

Jesus commanded his church to baptize *“inthe name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*.” Those baptized also receive the very name of God, signifying a new personal and public identity. It is like how a woman “marrying into a family” traditionally takes a new public name that publicly represents her belonging to a new social group that severs *ultimate* commitment to all other prior relationships and identities. Accepting God’s covenantal name requires a disciples’ comprehensive identification and obedience. Thus, baptism is the willing disciple’s public profession of faith and their conscientious pledge of obedience to Christ.

Baptism is a ceremonial signpost in one’s life wherewith one publicly identifies with Christ by faith and visibly dedicates themselves to life under His supreme Lordship. Jesus commands baptism. He does not say, “*Be baptized if you feel like it.*” Instead, God requires all who believe to be baptized. So fourthly, baptism is the believer’s pledge of faith in and obedience to Christ.

**Fifth, baptism is a public declaration of the church, which incorporates the baptized into the body of Christ.[[4]](#footnote-4)** 1Cor. 12:13 “*For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slavesor free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”* Water baptism signified what happened in the Spirit’s baptism (here, Paul emphasizes that “*all baptized into one body”*). People are baptized *into* the body of Christ as members of local churches.

We gather in the name of God just as we baptize in the name of God. Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, “*For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them*.” Jesus grants these churches gathered in His name the authority to baptize into His name. This is one reason the Constitution combines baptism with the church’s corporate affirmation. Here, a vote of the membership results in the affirmation of baptism and the reception into membership.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Therefore, the church pledges care and support for the individuals they baptize. Moreover, water baptism is a visible sign of our oneness in Christ and equal status as divine heirs. Baptism reminds us that none of us have any inherent ground to boast over any other, whether for our race, social class, intellect, gender, financial situation, educational achievement, or biblical knowledge. Therefore, whenever we celebrate a baptism, renew your own commitment to boast only but often about what the Lord has done for you…. (repeat the five essential truths).

**2nd. The Picture of the Lord’s Supper**.

The Lord’s Supper is a perpetual remembrance and display of the sacrifice of himself in his death. When the church celebrates the Lord’s Supper, the realities of the past, present, and future exist simultaneously. The Lord’s Supper *re-presents* Christ’s crucifixion, reenacts our conversion response to his gospel, and represents his coming messianic banquet. Matthew 26:26-29.

*Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.**I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom*.

(Passover may need a brief explanation) **The night before Jesus was crucified, he celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples and transformed the meal into something new**. The Passover meal would no longer reflect Israel’s deliverance from Egypt accomplished by the Exodus. It will now depict the deliverance from sin achieved on the cross. Jesus supplants the Passover with a new memorial focused on Himself; “*Do this in remembrance of me*” (Luke 22:19). Jesus recasts the bread to symbolize his broken on the cross. The cup of wine represents the blood that poured out from *his* broken body. The Lord’s Supper brings two significant truths to the forefront of our memories.

**First, the Lord’s Supper reminds us that the body and blood of Jesus atone for our sins**. Atonement means that Jesus’ sacrifice makes amends for our offenses and reconciles us to God. His blood is “*poured out for many*.” This language alludes to Isaiah's prophecy centuries earlier of God’s suffering servant (Isaiah 53:12) that *“poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many*.” He was numbered with the transgressors, that the transgressors may be counted as righteous. He bore our sins in his body, taking responsibility and making atonement for them. The phrase “*for the forgiveness of sins*” makes that explicit.

**Second, the bread and the wine are signs and emblems of our glorious New Covenant reality**. **Jesus' death marks the inauguration of the New Covenant**: “*my blood of the covenant*.” Everyone in this new covenant would know Him personally because He would have personally forgiven their iniquity and forgotten their sin. The Lord’s Supper symbolizes and celebrates our eternal relationship with God with each remembrance. Like the Passover (Israel constituted as a nation), the Lord’s Supper has formed a new community defined and distinguished by Jesus’ sacrificial blood. The Lord’s Supper draws a boundary between the people of God and the world.

**Think again about the symbolism of wedding rings. On my wedding day, my wife and I exchanged rings. These rings symbolize our promise to love and cherish one another until death does us part**. As often as we look at our ringed fingers, we are compelled to remember that we belong to one another and realize our commitment. The Lord’s Supper compels to remember God’s covenant commitment and that we belong to Him. Now, how should we partake in the Lord’s Supper?

**First, looks back. Communion retells the story of the gospel.** The meal reenacts the gospel as it sets his death before us just as if we had seen it with our own eyes. It reminds us that Jesus completed the work of salvation. The Lord’s Supper proclaims a finished salvation and is Jesus’ pledge of forgiveness. It reminds us that Jesus’ death will never, in all eternity, lose its power.

**Second, look within.** 1 Cor. 11:27 says, “*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup*.” Lord’s Supper is a time to slow down and examine yourself. This call is not an examination of whether you are worthy but whether your attitudes and behaviors proclaim the worth of the gospel. Remember, only his mercy makes us worthy. This examination also fences the table to preserve it as a meal for believers only.

Furthermore, eating and drinking serve as metaphors for our faith. The Lord’s Supper repeatedly reenacts your response to the gospel. By it, Christ strengthens us for the journey of faith. The Lord’s Supper reminds us that our sin is forgiven, our guilt removed, our disobedience forgotten, and our fellowship with God restored.

**Third, look around.** 1 Cor. 10:17 says, “*Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread*.” experience. This meal joins us to one another as a church. 1 Cor. 11:29 says, “*For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself*.”You must discern his body when you partake in the meal. This verse is one reason why our church limits partaking in the meal to members of evangelical churches. We remember that Christ died for all his people. We must consider whether we show the same care and love for one another. Even as we confess our sins, we must also commit to godly repentance.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Fourthly and finally, look forward**. Matt. 26:19 says, “*I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom*.” The Lord’s Supper manifests our future in the present. In the Lord’s Supper, we anticipate His imminent return. Jesus promises not to drink the cup of consummation until we are all in His presence, where He personally spreads a royal feast before us. The Supper is a foretaste of a coming eternal feast. Like an appetizer, it’s a pledge of future and more excellent courses to come.

**Conclusion**. Baptism is the one-time declarative ordinance for confessing faith in Christ and is required for church membership. The Lord’s Supper is celebrated frequently by the assembled church until He comes (1 Cor. 11:26).

1. We never “re-baptize.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. God does not literally save people through the waters in the baptismal tank. 1 Peter 3:21 references the person’s internal appeal (appeal for a good conscience) and names the resurrection as the power that saves. Therefore, Peter uses the word “baptism” to group all the realities and marks of conversion (repentance & faith). In other words, baptism dramatizes our pledge of faith and pictures God's new covenant blessing of a cleansed conscience based on Christ's resurrection.  [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A note about the baptism in Acts and their timing: “Three features characterize the baptisms in Acts: 1. The baptisms recorded all involve “first converts” in a historically-redemptively significant setting. 2. Nearly every (save two) baptism is accompanied by supernatural acts of the Holy Spirit. 3. Each baptism takes place in response to believing the Apostolic message… Generally speaking, these baptisms, like the book as a whole, follow the steps outlined in Acts 1:8: “And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” None of the baptisms in Acts can be properly described as “ordinary…” Two baptisms leave out any mention of visible supernatural work: the baptism of Lydia and her household at Philippi (Acts 16:14–15), and the baptism of the Corinthians who “believed and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). Here’s where it gets interesting: it just so happens that these two baptisms *also* leave out any mention of the *timing*of baptism." Caleb Morell, <https://www.9marks.org/article/does-the-book-of-acts-teach-spontaneous-baptisms/#_ftn12>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Jesus appointed baptism as part of *the church's* mission (Mt. 28:19-20) to formally and publicly endorse someone’s claim to be a Christian (Mt. 10). Baptism is the sign of membership in the church (Acts 2:38-41; Rom. 6:1-4; Matt. 28:18-20; Gal:26-28). Therefore, the church must likewise voice their affirmation for a baptism to occur with public affirmation. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Why can’t those sprinkled as infants join our church? One person’s conscience (those sprinkled as infants) does and should not to bind the church regarding its explicit Commission to baptize disciples. The church is not bound that person’s conscience because baptism is a church act and central to its mission. Therefore, while Baptism is secondary, it is not a Romans 14 issue. The church is bound to please the Lord is to be bound to his judgment. The church cannot affirm the profession someone hasn't made. Baptism is that public profession. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The Lord's supper is for all Christians. Christians are affirmed by baptism and church membership. Therefore, the Lord's Super is for those who have been baptized and are for members of churches. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)