



BAPTISM COMMANDED BY THE LORD

“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”
(John 3:5)

Baptism began with John the Baptist, preparing the way for the Lord. He baptized people in the Jordan while encouraging them to repent—to cleanse their lives of evil. John told people, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matthew 3:11). Through baptism, John prepared people to receive the Lord as their Messiah. When the Lord came to be baptized by John at the Jordan, John protested. But the Lord insisted. The voice from heaven and descent of the dove make it clear that His baptism was unique. Baptism symbolizes the potential people have to be purified and regenerated by means of Divine Truth. This process takes a lifetime and can only be done with the Lord’s help.

PROJECT: Waters of Jordan *(for older children and up)*

The waters of the Jordan symbolized truths that help people learn about the Lord, preparing them to look to Him. As a family or class, make a collection of passages from the Word that teach us about the Lord. Make a poster or bulletin board display with a picture of John baptizing people in the Jordan River that is constructed with quotes from the Word.

PROJECT: Picture the Lord’s Baptism (Matthew 3:15-17) *(for preschool or primary)*

Use felt tip markers to draw a picture of John baptizing the Lord in the Jordan River. Then dip a paintbrush in water and go over the picture to give the effect of watercolor.

ACTIVITY: Dove Poster or Mobile *(older children and teens)*

The dove seen by Jesus and John symbolized purification and regeneration by Divine Truth. Make a poster with a dove at the top. (Use the picture provided or if you prefer, use dove stamps or stickers to decorate the page.) Below the dove, put truths which can help us “clean up” our lives.

OR

Use the picture of the dove (or a 3 dimensional dove purchased from a craft store) to make a simple mobile with a string of the truths which show us how to cleanse our lives.

SING: “You Are My Beloved Son” by Lori Odhner

PROJECT: The Lord's Baptism *(for preschool)*

Put together this project to make a picture of the Lord that can be moved to show Him going into the waters of the Jordan to be baptized.

BAPTISM AND THE CHURCH

By baptism...every Christian is let into and introduced into what the church teaches from the Word respecting the other life, all of which forms the means whereby a person can be prepared for and led to heaven (True Christian Religion 721).

Baptism has continued to be an entryway to the Christian church largely because of the Lord's direction to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

PROJECT: Two Gateways

Baptism and Holy Supper are two gates through which a person can approach the Lord. Baptism is an introduction into the church and the Holy Supper is an introduction into heaven or a heavenly state (see *True Christian Religion* 721). With this project, children can set up two gates and move a person through the gates and toward the Lord.

Journal: "Go therefore and make disciples..." *(for teens and adults)*

The Lord tells us to go and make disciples, teaching them to observe His commandments (see Matthew 28:19-20). A disciple is anyone who follows the Lord, loves Him, and obeys His commandments. How can we follow this directive in our lives?

THE BAPTISM OF CHILDREN

*As soon as infants are baptized, angels are appointed over them, by whom they are kept in a state to receive faith in the Lord.
(True Christian Religion 677:5)*

When parents bring a child to be baptized, they promise to teach their child about the Lord and guide him to obey the teachings of the Lord's Word. The Lord wants all of us to become angels someday, and baptism gives a child a good start along the pathway to heaven. The parents express their desire to help this child come to know the Lord and follow Him. The Word and the church can help them with this goal as the child grows. But baptism also has an immediate effect, for the Lord gives the child special angels to look after him—angels who deeply love the Lord Jesus Christ. All babies and children have angels watching over them—as do adults—but when someone is baptized the Lord provides that these are Christian angels.

READ: "The Purpose and Meaning of Baptism" by Rev. Grant Odhner

Explains how baptism creates an inner link to the Lord through the angels and an outer link via the Word and the church.

READ: "Baptizing a Baby" a family talk by the Rev. Kurt Asplundh

This illustrated talk gives a lovely introduction to baptism.

COLORING PAGE: Baptism of an Infant by Robert Glenn

PROJECT: My Baptism Book *(for primary level)*

This book from the Pittsburgh New Church teaches children about baptism as they write about their own baptism. Each page has simple text with spaces for children to fill in the blanks or make illustrations.

PROJECT: Children Are a Heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127:3)

Make a picture of parents and their child(ren) with the Lord smiling down on them. Or use a photograph of parents with children and write the quotation from Psalm 127 beneath it.

COLORING PAGE: Parents with Baby

PROJECT: “He shall give His angels charge over you” (Psalm 91:11)

How comforting it is to think of the angels with us, taking care of us. The Lord sends the best angels to take care of children. Using a photograph of a child and color pictures of angels (provided here), make a collage showing the child with two beautiful guardian angels.

ACTIVITY: Making Promises at Baptism and in the Holy Supper

A simple introduction to the promises and symbols used with baptism, the Holy Supper, and other church ceremonies.

AFTER THE BAPTISM OF A CHILD

*Teach me Your way, O Lord;
I will walk in Your truth....*

(Psalm 86:11)

How can parents help their children come to see the Lord and love Him? Look at the promises parents make during the sacrament of baptism of a child in the New Church:

- To lead the child to acknowledge the Lord God Jesus Christ as his God and Father.
- To teach him the Lord’s Prayer that he may be introduced into the worship of the Lord.
- To teach him the Ten Commandments that he may learn to shun evils as sins.
- To instruct him in the Holy Scripture and in the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem that he may be prepared for regeneration (or spiritual rebirth).

If parents fulfill these promises, guiding their child to know and follow the Lord, they are promoting his happiness in this life and in heaven.

READ: “Keeping the Promises Made in Baptism” by Rev. James Cooper

READ: “The Promise of Baptism” by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss

Activity: Learning the Ten Commandments

Take 10 beautiful stones and use a permanent marker to write a number (1-10) on each one. As a family activity, pick up a stone and see if you can say the commandment that goes with that number. Note: If the stones are somewhat flat, you could write a key word on the other side of the stone and use that word as a prompt.

ACTIVITY: Dove Chart (*preschool and primary*)

Help your children work on developing good habits. Let them put dove stickers in a square when they follow through on the desired behavior.

SPIRITUAL WASHING

The Lord washes or purifies a person by Divine truth and the Divine good....
Water symbolizes the truth of the Word, which becomes good by a life according to it.
(Apocalypse Revealed 378:3)

The Lord gives us the truths of His Word to help us distinguish between what is good and what is evil. These truths help us identify the evil in our lives so that we can turn to the Lord for help in resisting it. As we seek to do what is good and resist what is evil, the Lord is able to help us cleanse our lives. The work of repentance can only truly begin when we reach adulthood, but we can help our children reflect on their behavior and try to obey the Lord's commandments.

PROJECT: Wash Yourselves, Make Yourselves Clean

This project uses black and white hearts to illustrate Isaiah 1:16-18.

SING: "Wash Yourselves" by Lori Odhner

THE PROMISE

"I will come again and receive you to Myself;
that where I am, there you may be also."
(John 14:3)

The promise of baptism is a happy life in heaven. To be achieved, we must look to the Lord in His Word and obey His commandments. Then He will be able to help us cleanse our lives so that we can be spiritually reborn or regenerated. Parents can help their children learn about the Lord and encourage them to live a good life. But when the children reach adulthood, they are in freedom to keep the covenant with the Lord or not.

With adult baptism, a promise is given "to renounce the love of self and the world that you may love the Lord above all things and your neighbor as yourself." This is a real commitment to spiritual growth.

The effect of baptism starts when we look to the Lord's Word and our church to help us learn about the Lord and follow Him. It is fully realized when we are regenerated or spiritually reborn.

JOURNAL: I Believe....

One of the uses of baptism is that people may know and acknowledge the Lord as their Redeemer, Regenerator, and Savior. Write a personal statement of faith, such as: "I believe the Lord is with me in all things," "I believe the Lord loves me as an individual," *etc.*