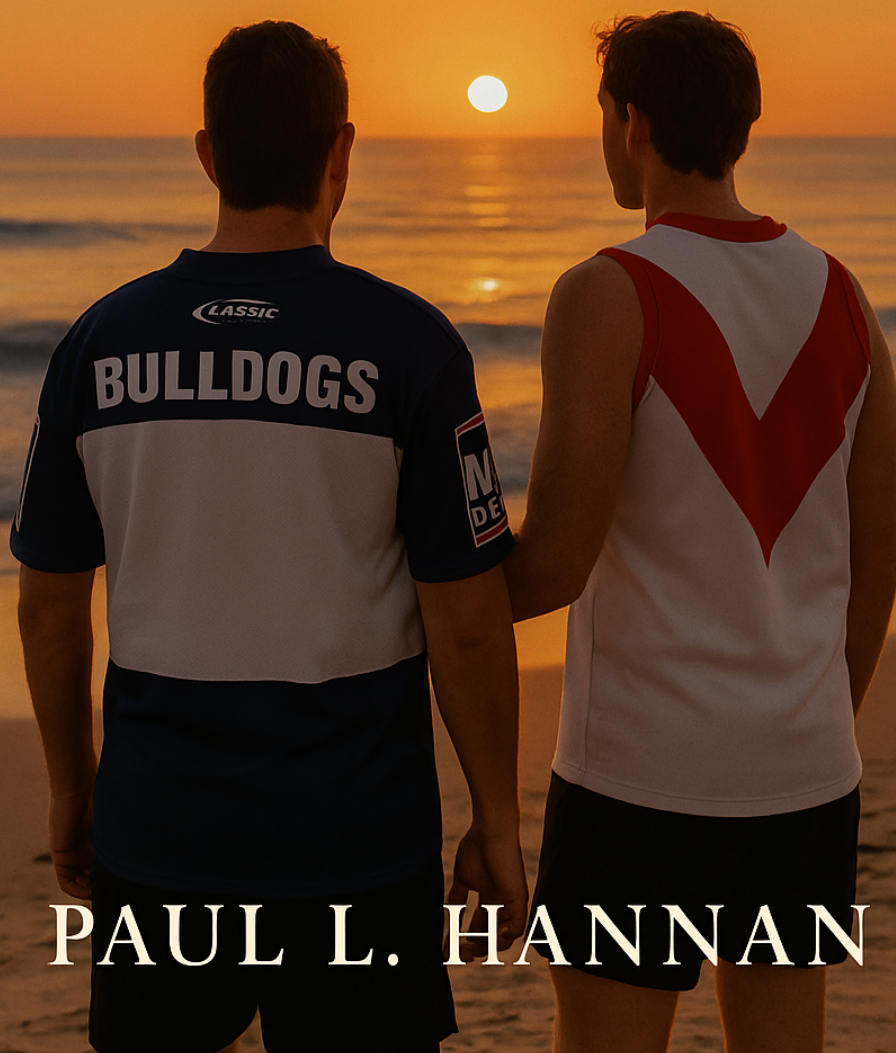


BORN *of* WATER

A STORY AND STUDY ON
NEW BIRTH AND BAPTISM



PAUL L. HANNAN

Born of Water

Foreword

The idea for this book was born out of a robust conversation with a good mate of mine—who just happens to be a member of the clergy. One Sunday morning, my wife and I sat stunned as we watched him sprinkle water over a young couple's baby during a church service. It wasn't judgment. It was just honest astonishment.

As we left that day, I couldn't let it go. My thoughts stirred. Questions formed. How did we get here—from the dynamic baptisms in Acts to a drop of water on a baby's head? And so began a deep dive. I started reading. Asking. Listening. Studying. What does the Bible actually say about baptism? What was the practice of Jesus and His apostles? What does it mean to be born again—really?

Australia has always shaped my lens. I love our coastline, our culture, and our fierce loyalty to truth that pulls no punches. Baptism, as I discovered, is a bit like our footy: it's not a spectator sport. It's full contact. Full immersion. And it leaves you forever marked.

Along the way, I talked with another mate—also a pastor—who said, “Paul, you should turn this into a book.” So I did.

What you're about to read is a journey through Scripture told alongside the fictional story of two Aussie mates, Latrell and Nathan. They're not theologians. They're just men searching for truth. As you follow their story, you'll find yourself engaging with the same questions they asked—and perhaps the same answers Scripture gave them.

This isn't a book to stir division. It's a call back to the clear, compelling pattern of the New Testament: faith, repentance, baptism, and new life.

So whether you've been sprinkled, immersed, confirmed, or confused—I invite you to come with us. To open the Word. To stand on the shoreline. To hear again the voice of Jesus:

“Unless one is born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

I hope this book challenges, encourages, and blesses you. **Paul**

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1. Two Mates and the Word

There were two men—Latrell and Nathan—who had grown up without much religion. They weren't hardened skeptics, just two ordinary Australians who'd spent most of life avoiding deep questions. But in their early forties, both had come to feel a stirring they couldn't quite explain—a restlessness, a hunger, a quiet invitation that neither could ignore.

One summer, over long walks and shared coffees, they began to talk seriously about faith. Not church. Not tradition. Just... God. And eventually, one day, they made a simple, sincere agreement: "Let's just read the New Testament. From start to finish. No podcasts. No clergy. Just the words."

They started in Matthew and took their time. Every evening after work, they'd meet at the same café near the beach with well-worn Bibles and quiet resolve. They read the life of Jesus—His miracles, His cross, His resurrection. Then they got to the book of Acts. That's when things changed.

"What do we do to be saved?" Latrell said one night, echoing the jailer from Acts 16.

Nathan answered slowly, "It seems like they all repented. They believed in Jesus. And then—they got baptised. Straightaway. In water."

They saw it over and over again:

- Acts 2:38 — "Repent and be baptised every one of you..."

- Acts 8 — The Ethiopian, hearing about Jesus, said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptised?"

- Romans 6 — Baptism was a burial. A resurrection. A death to the old.

They began to feel it—this wasn't a ritual. It was a response. An act of surrender. A declaration of new birth.

Neither of them had been raised to think that way. One had been sprinkled as a baby. The other had never been baptised at all. But as they read, something simple and profound became clear:

"To be born again," Latrell said, "means repenting, believing in Jesus, and being baptised into Him."

Nathan nodded. "That's what every believer did. That's what we should do."

They didn't know Greek. They didn't know church history. But they knew the simple story in the Bible. And they trusted the Spirit of God to show them what was plain.

The next Saturday, they went down to a quiet cove and baptised each other in the ocean. No ceremony. No platform. Just faith and obedience.

Later that evening, over dinner, Latrell looked up and said:

“Funny, isn't it? We spent our lives assuming it was more complicated. But it was all right there in the Book.”

Nathan smiled. “Not complicated. Just costly. Just beautiful.”

And so they walked home—not just believing in Jesus, but clothed in Him. Buried and raised. Born again.

2. What Must We Do?

Latrell's Question

It had been three weeks since the cove. Since the ocean. Since that moment where both Latrell and Nathan walked into the water with trembling hearts and came up gasping—not just from the chill, but from something deeper. Joy. Clarity. Peace.

Yet Latrell still had questions. One afternoon, back at the café, he looked up from his Bible and asked, “Nath, do you reckon we did it right? Like... what if we missed something?”

Nathan smiled. “Like what?”

“I don’t know... It just seems too simple. What must I do to be saved? I mean, I’ve heard preachers say all kinds of things. Say a prayer. Walk an aisle. Go through a course. But in Acts, it’s like... they just did it.”

Nathan leaned back, flipping to Acts 16. “Remember the jailer? Earthquake. Doors open. He freaks out. Paul says, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.’ But then—what happens?”

Latrell scanned the page. “They baptise him. That same hour.”

“Exactly. Belief was never just mental assent. It was trust. It moved people. And it led straight to baptism.”

They turned pages together, tracing the stories again. Acts 2. Acts 8. Acts 10. Always the same: people heard, believed, repented, and were baptised immediately.

Latrell nodded. “So the answer hasn’t changed, has it?”

“Nope,” Nathan said. “Still the same question. Still the same Jesus. Still the same response.”

The Biblical Pattern: Still the Same

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” —Acts 16:30

This was the jailer’s question. But in truth, it’s every heart’s question. And the Bible answers it clearly:

- **Acts 2:38** — “Repent and be baptised... for the forgiveness of your sins.”

- **Acts 8** — They *believed* and were *baptised*.
- **Acts 22:16** — “Rise and be baptised and wash away your sins.”
- **Acts 10** — Even after receiving the Spirit, Cornelius and his house were still *commanded* to be baptised.

Faith. Repentance. Baptism. Not steps on a checklist—but one unified surrender to Jesus.

Latrell's Reflection

Back at the beach that night, Latrell took a stick and scratched the word “saved” into the sand.

“Funny,” he said. “All those years I thought it was about praying the right prayer. But it’s not about saying something—it’s about doing something because you believe.”

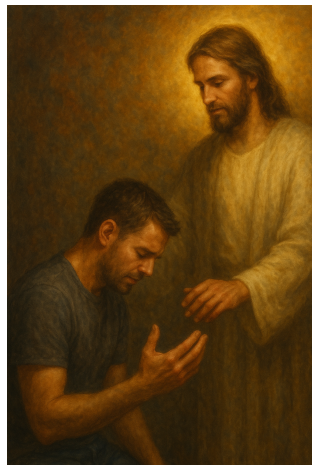
Nathan looked at him. “So what would you say now if someone asked you?”

Latrell grinned. “Simple. Believe in Jesus. Turn from your sin. Be baptised into Him. Just like they did in Acts.”

Summary: The Pattern of Salvation in Acts

- They **heard** the Gospel.
- They **believed** in Jesus.
- They **repented** of their sins.
- They were **baptised immediately**—by immersion, in water.

Not complicated. Just clear. Just costly. Just beautiful.



3. The Language of Baptism – Baptizō and the Apostolic Pattern

A Word That Sank a Boat

Latrell was the first to bring it up. “You ever wonder why they didn’t just translate the word?”

Nathan raised an eyebrow. “Which word?”

“Baptise. I looked it up. The Greek word is baptizō. Means to dunk. Immerse. Like when a ship sinks or when you dye a cloth.”

Nathan smiled, impressed. “Look at you, doing word studies.”

“I just wanted to know,” Latrell said. “Because if it means to immerse, why did my church sprinkle me as a baby?”

They sat in silence, the weight of the question lingering.

Baptizō—A Word That Means Immersion

The Greek word baptizō (βαπτίζω) isn’t vague. It doesn’t mean to sprinkle or to pour. It means:

- To immerse,
- To submerge,
- To dip under fully.

In ancient texts, baptizō described:

- A ship that sank beneath the waves.
- A cloth dipped in dye.
- A person drowning—completely surrounded.

The New Testament writers chose this word on purpose.

“As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water.”
(Matthew 3:16)

“They both went down into the water... and he baptised him.”
(Acts 8:38)

Why so much water? Because they weren’t performing a ritual—they were immersing people into Christ.

Nathan’s Note

Nathan brought his Bible close and read aloud:

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death...” (Romans 6:4)

“That’s why it matters, Latrell. A sprinkle doesn’t look like a burial. But immersion? It feels like one.”

They both remembered how it felt to go down under the surf that Saturday morning—cold, overwhelming, unforgettable.

“That moment,” Nathan said, “was us dying to the old. And rising into the new.”

A Word Left Untranslated

During the translation of the King James Bible, the translators didn’t render baptizō as “immerse”—they kept the word “baptise” to preserve tradition. But in doing so, they blurred its meaning.

And that decision, though political at the time, still affects millions today.

So, What Now?

If your baptism didn’t match the meaning of baptizō—if it wasn’t a personal, faith-filled immersion—then you’re not alone. Latrell had been sprinkled as a baby too.

But instead of arguing with the past, he asked a better question:

“Now that I see what it means... what should I do?”

Nathan poured the tea and sat down across from Latrell, the Greek New Testament still open on the kitchen table. The morning sun cast a golden light over the page.

"You said something last night that I couldn't shake," Latrell began. "You said the word 'baptise' doesn't mean sprinkle. I looked it up—and you're right. The Greek word is *baptō*, right?"

Nathan smiled. "Close. *Baptō* is one word, yeah. It literally means 'to dip' or 'immerse.' Like when a cloth is dipped into dye, or bread into wine."

"So it's never used for sprinkling?"

"Nope," Nathan said, picking up his Bible. "In fact, when Greek writers meant sprinkle, they had totally different words—like *rhantizō*. That's used for ritual sprinkling, like in the Old Testament."

Latrell shook his head. "So this whole thing about sprinkling babies—it's built on a word that never meant sprinkle in the first place?"

"Exactly. The word *baptizō*—the one used all through the New Testament—is an intensified form of *baptō*. It always implies full immersion. That's why they went down into the water and came up out of it."

Latrell sat back, eyes wide. "Man... no wonder it never made sense to me. I always thought baptism should feel like dying and rising again. Not a sprinkle. A burial."

Nathan nodded. "And that's exactly how Paul described it."

Latrell leaned forward, thinking out loud.

"But what about people who get cremated instead of buried in the ground? I mean... they're not placed in a tomb or under soil. Does that mess with the picture of burial?"

Nathan shook his head gently.

"Not really. Whether someone is laid in a tomb, buried underground, or even burned, the essence of burial is that the body is fully surrounded—enclosed. A grave surrounds you. A tomb encloses you. Fire consumes you. In every case, you're overtaken by something. That's what burial is. It's the end of the old."

Latrell nodded slowly.

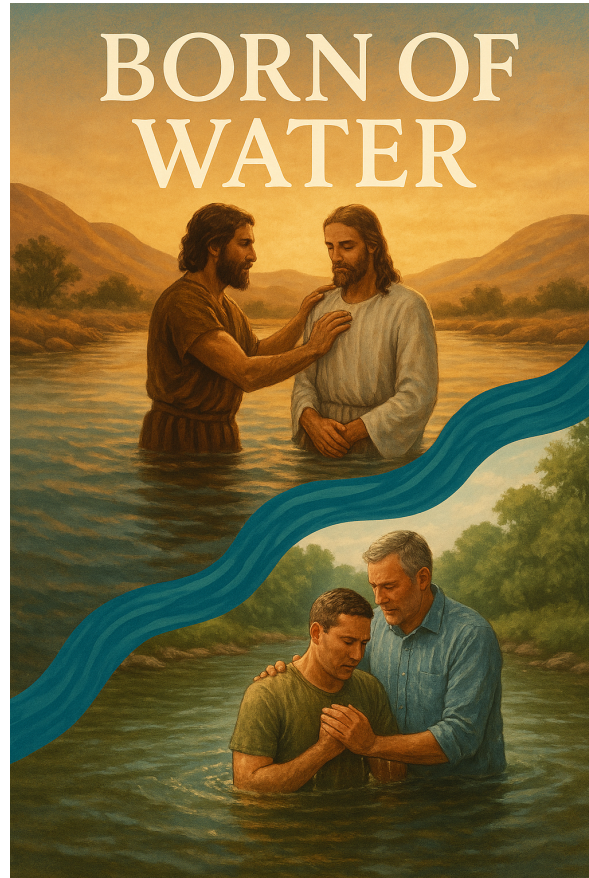
"So it's not about the *method*... it's about being overwhelmed. Covered. Gone."

"Exactly," Nathan replied. "And that's what baptism pictures. You go under the water—fully surrounded—just like in death. Then you rise out of it, brand new."

Summary: Baptizō Means Immerse

- The word baptizō means to fully immerse.
- Jesus, His followers, and every example in Acts involves going into and coming out of water.
- Immersion alone pictures the burial and resurrection we're called into.

Let the word speak. Let the water tell the story.



4. The New Testament Pattern

Faith, Repentance, and Immersion

Dinner and a Napkin

The café was closing, so Latrell and Nathan moved to a nearby Thai place. As they waited for their green curry and rice, Nathan grabbed a napkin and sketched three arrows.

“Okay,” he said, “this is what I see in the New Testament. Step one: someone hears the Gospel. Step two: they believe. Step three: they repent. Step four: they’re baptised.”

Latrell leaned in. “It’s not like a formula, though, is it?”

“Nope,” Nathan said. “It’s one response. One surrender.”

He drew a circle around all four words: Faith. Repentance. Immersion. New life.

The Pattern in the New Testament

In Scripture, when someone truly hears the message of Jesus, the reaction is immediate and whole-hearted. There’s no delay, no theological red tape—just action. Here’s the repeated pattern:

- Faith in Jesus as Lord.
- Repentance from sin and self.
- Baptism in water as the expression of both.

“But when they believed Philip... they were baptised, both men and women.”
(Acts 8:12)

“Repent and be baptised... for the forgiveness of your sins.”
(Acts 2:38)

“We were buried with Him through baptism into death... that we too may live a new life.”
(Romans 6:4)

Latrell's Lightbulb Moment

The waitress brought the food, but Latrell was still staring at the napkin.

“So it’s not three steps to salvation. It’s one movement of the heart and body. You hear, you believe, you turn, and you go under.”

Nathan grinned. “Exactly. No one in Acts ever got baptised months later. No one filled out a form first.”

Latrell laughed. “And definitely no one sprinkled a baby and called it done.”

Repentance: The Missing Word in Modern Faith

Many churches today talk about believing in Jesus. Fewer talk about repentance. But in the New Testament, the two are inseparable.

“Repent and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out.”
(Acts 3:19)

“Repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed...”
(Luke 24:47)

Repentance means turning—from sin, from self, from control. It’s not just remorse. It’s surrender.

Baptism: The Moment of Union

Nathan read aloud again:

“For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ.”
(Galatians 3:27)

“That’s the moment of putting Him on. Not before. Not after.”

Latrell chewed on his curry thoughtfully. “I reckon if more people saw baptism like that, we wouldn’t treat it like an optional ritual.”

What About the Thief on the Cross?

Latrell had heard the question before. “What about the thief? He wasn’t baptised.”

Nathan nodded. “True. But he lived and died before the New Covenant was even finished. Jesus hadn’t died or risen yet. Baptism comes after that.”

“No one in Acts points to the thief,” Latrell added. “They point to the water.”

Summary: The Pattern is Clear

- Faith hears and believes the Gospel.
- Repentance turns the heart to God.
- Baptism seals the response—death, burial, resurrection.

It’s not about performing a ritual. It’s about obeying the Gospel.

One Gospel.

One Lord.

One Faith.

One Baptism. (Ephesians 4:5)

Latrell folded the napkin slowly, the arrows and words now etched into more than just paper. “So John’s baptism was like the warm-up,” he said quietly, “and Jesus’ baptism—that’s the main event.”

Nathan nodded. “Exactly. One got you ready. The other gets you clean.”

They sat for a moment, letting the truth settle between bites of curry and the hum of the evening street.

Latrell looked up. “You reckon we could walk through both? Like, trace the journey from repentance to remission?”

Nathan grinned. “Mate, I thought you’d never ask.”

Bridge: From Repentance to Remission – Two Baptisms, One Journey

The story of salvation doesn’t stand still—it moves. In Scripture, we witness a journey: from hearing to believing, from turning to being washed. And at the centre of that journey stand two baptisms, each part of a single divine rhythm.

Baptism of Repentance

Before the cross, John the Baptist cried out in the wilderness, calling people to prepare the way of the Lord. His baptism was not about washing away sin itself—it was a sign of readiness, a prophetic act of turning the heart back to God. It marked repentance, not yet remission.

“John came baptising in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”

(Mark 1:4)

John's baptism was not the end of the story—it was the alarm clock before dawn. It readied people to receive the Messiah, but could not replace the power of the cross.

Baptism for the Remission of Sins

Then came Jesus—crucified, risen, and exalted. On Pentecost, Peter preached to a cut-to-the-heart crowd and gave them the Spirit-breathed response:

“Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”

(Acts 2:38)

This was not symbolic. This was covenantal. It was the moment their sins were not just acknowledged but erased. The Greek word for "remission" (*aphesis*) means full release—a legal pardon, a total cancellation of guilt. As though the sin never happened.

Baptism in the name of Jesus is not a ritual tacked onto belief—it's the God-ordained moment when the old is buried and the new begins. As Ananias told Saul:

“Rise and be baptised, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”

(Acts 22:16)

The Seamless Thread

One baptism prepared the heart.

One baptism purified the soul.

Together, they formed a highway for the grace of God.

The baptism of repentance was a shadow. The baptism of remission is the substance. John himself knew the difference:

“I baptise you with water for repentance... but He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

(Matthew 3:11)

It's not two gospels. It's one unfolding. One message. One Lord. One faith. One baptism—now complete in Christ.

If you're wondering what your next step is—maybe you already know.



5. Infant Baptism and Church Tradition

A Day Full of Questions

Latrell and Nathan had a packed day ahead. What began with an old photo and a deep question would unfold into comfort for a grieving mother, a challenge to popular teaching, and another step on their shared journey.

The Christening Photo

Latrell slid an old photo across the table. A baby in a white gown. A smiling priest. His mum and nan standing proud beside the font.

“That’s me,” he said. “Six weeks old. No memory of it, obviously. But Mum always said I was baptised.”

Nathan looked at the photo, then at his friend. “It meant something to her, didn’t it?”

“Yeah. It was about dedication. About tradition. About making sure I belonged.”

He paused.

“But now that I’ve read the New Testament... I’m wondering if I ever *really* got baptised.”

The Question of Tradition

Infant baptism is one of the most sacred and sentimental traditions in the Christian world. But sentiment alone doesn’t make something scriptural.

**The question is not, *Was it meaningful?*
The question is, *Was it biblical?***

What the New Testament Shows

Every single baptism in the Bible follows a personal response:

- They **heard** the message.

- They **believed** it.
- They **repented** of sin.
- They were **baptised** by immersion.

“Those who accepted his message were baptised...”
(Acts 2:41)

“But when they believed Philip... they were baptised, both men and women.”
(Acts 8:12)

“Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house... he and his whole household believed...”
(Acts 16:32–34)

In all these “household baptisms,” every member heard, believed, and responded. There is no example—none—of an infant being baptised.

Nathan’s History Lesson

They sat under a gum tree near the old walking track, Bibles open, phones off, just the wind and birds for company.

Latrell tilted his head. “So... some people say, ‘Where the Scriptures are silent, we must be silent.’ They use that to justify infant baptism—like, since it’s not forbidden outright, it must be okay.”

Nathan gave a slow nod. “Yeah, I’ve heard that too. But that logic’s upside down.”

Latrell raised an eyebrow. “How so?”

“Well,” Nathan said, tapping the open page in front of him, “silence in Scripture isn’t permission—it’s absence. Think about it. The apostles had every chance to mention babies getting baptised if that was the pattern. But not once. Instead, every time baptism is talked about, it’s in connection with faith, repentance, believing, or calling on the name of the Lord.”

Latrell leaned back against the tree. “So silence isn’t neutral?”

“No,” Nathan said firmly. “It’s revealing. When God gives a clear pattern over and over, and something’s *missing* from that pattern, that silence is loud. We don’t build doctrines or traditions on what’s *not* said—we follow what *is*.”

Latrell nodded slowly. “Makes sense. You don’t just fill in the blanks with tradition.”

“Exactly,” Nathan said. “The burden of proof isn’t on the one asking the question—it’s on the one adding something in.”

Latrell asked, “So when *did* baby baptism start?”

Nathan had done some homework.

“Tertullian—he was around 200 A.D.—argued *against* it. Said it was better to wait until someone could choose Christ for themselves.”

“Then why did it catch on?”

“Augustine came along in the fourth century, taught original sin meant babies needed cleansing. Fear and tradition took over. By the Middle Ages, it was the norm.”

Latrell shook his head slowly. “So the church changed the pattern?”

Nathan nodded. “But Jesus didn’t.”

Baptism Requires Faith and Repentance

“Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved...”
(*Mark 16:16*)

“Repent and be baptised...”
(*Acts 2:38*)

Faith is not inherited. Repentance is not possible without understanding.

An infant cannot believe.
An infant cannot repent.
An infant cannot choose Christ.

So what are we doing when we sprinkle a baby?

We may be blessing a child with love and tradition—but we are not following the pattern of Jesus and His apostles.

Completing the Journey

Latrell folded the photo back into his wallet.

"I'm not angry," he said. "I'm grateful for my mum's heart. But I want to *own* my faith now. And that means doing what they did in Acts."

Nathan smiled. "That's exactly what we did, mate."

Later that afternoon, they visited a grieving mother from church whose two-year-old had passed suddenly in her sleep. Her words still echoed in their minds:

"She never got baptised. Is she with Jesus?"

As they sat on the grass, Nathan finally broke the silence. "Mate... I didn't know what to say."

Latrell nodded. "I don't think she needs a theology lesson. But she deserves peace."

Nathan picked up a small stick and turned it in his fingers. "Is it wrong to believe that child is with God?"

"I don't think so," Latrell said. "There's a difference between being born with a sin nature and being judged as guilty under law."

He opened his Bible:

"Sin is not counted where there is no law." (Romans 5:13)

"Your children... who today have no knowledge of good or evil... they shall enter the land." (Deuteronomy 1:39)

Latrell continued, "God makes a distinction. Jesus did too—He said the Kingdom *belongs* to little children. Not that they *might* get in, but that it's already theirs."

Nathan nodded. "So you're saying there's an 'age of accountability'?"

"Not a specific age—but a moral threshold. Until a child understands sin and chooses it knowingly, God doesn't hold them accountable in the same way."

"And since baptism is for repentance and faith, and a baby can't do either... it wouldn't even make sense to apply it like a spiritual insurance policy."

Latrell's voice was firm but gentle. "God is not looking for loopholes to exclude children. He's the Father who runs to meet us. He gathers the lambs."

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God." (Mark 10:14)

Nathan smiled. "That's not sentiment. That's the voice of the Judge Himself."

What About the Little Ones? – Children, Baptism, and the Justice of God

Latrell and Nathan sat quietly after visiting a grieving mother from their church whose two-year-old had passed suddenly in her sleep. Her words still echoed in their minds:

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The Beach and the Preacher

The evening sun dropped low as rows of folding chairs lined the sand. Latrell and Nathan had come to support a friend being baptised, but also to hear the guest speaker—a thoughtful, Reformed pastor known for his depth.

Nathan nudged Latrell. "This should be good. He's got a reputation. Sound doctrine."

Latrell chuckled, "Yeah, but I hope he's not too sound that he drowns the Scripture."

The pastor stepped forward, Bible in hand, and began his message with gentle confidence. "Baptism," he said, "has long been a point of contention in the Church. But I want to show you today that infant baptism is not only historically grounded—it's deeply biblical."

Latrell stiffened. Nathan leaned forward.

The pastor spoke with eloquence, quoting Acts 2:39, "The promise is for you and your children..." and weaving a tapestry of covenant continuity from Abraham to Christ. He referenced the household baptisms in Acts, the sanctity of children in 1 Corinthians 7, and painted a pastoral vision of God's grace extending through family lines.

"We do not baptise infants because they are saved," he clarified. "We baptise them because they are part of the covenant community—just as circumcision marked the sons of Israel, so baptism now marks the children of believers."

The crowd nodded appreciatively. But Latrell's brow furrowed.

"Sounds convincing," Nathan whispered.

"It does," Latrell replied, "but I've **learned to check the pitch with the plumb line**".

"Let's pull up the Word."

Back at Nathan's house, the Bible was open. Laptops glowed with concordances and Greek tools. They laid the speaker's arguments beside the Scriptures.

1. Baptism and Faith

"Repent and be baptised... those who received the word were baptised" (Acts 2:38-41). Every baptism followed belief. Not once in the entire New Testament was baptism separated from repentance and faith.

2. Household Baptisms Re-examined

"He rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household" (Acts 16:34). Every 'household' baptism included hearing, believing, rejoicing. There's no indication infants were present, let alone baptised. Luke, who wrote with precision and care, never gave reason to assume otherwise.

3. Covenant Difference, Not Continuity

"Not like the covenant I made with their fathers..." (Hebrews 8:9). The New Covenant isn't a continuation of the old, but a transformation. Inclusion comes through personal knowledge of the Lord (Heb. 8:11), not birthright. The sign of the covenant—baptism—is now given upon faith, not descent.

4. 1 Corinthians 7 and the 'Holy' Children

Latrell read aloud: "...the unbelieving husband is sanctified... otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy" (1 Cor. 7:14). "But there's no mention of baptism here," he said. "Holiness here is relational—not salvific. It's about household influence, not covenant membership."

5. History and the Fathers

Nathan pulled up Tertullian. "He advised delaying baptism until personal faith was evident. The early church was not uniform in this. Infant baptism became normalized under cultural Christianity, not apostolic command."

They sat in silence.

"You know," Nathan said, "it's not about being against babies. It's about upholding the integrity of the gospel call. Belief, then baptism."

Latrell nodded. "Exactly. Otherwise we risk giving a sign that doesn't signify."

That night, Latrell typed up their findings into a letter for a friend who had asked about infant baptism. At the end, he added:

"We entrust our children to God's mercy. We teach them to pray, to love Jesus, to grow in faith. But we wait to baptize until their hearts, like Lydia's, are open to believe. Then, and only then, do we bury them with Christ in baptism and raise them to walk in newness of life."

He hit send. The debate was not over, but the Word had spoken.

"He who believes and is baptised shall be saved..." (Mark 16:16)

"When they believed... they were baptised, both men and women" (Acts 8:12)

"Can anyone withhold water for baptising these who received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (Acts 10:47)

And in that clarity, the little ones were still safe. And still loved.

Summary: What the Bible Teaches

- Every baptism in Scripture follows personal **faith**, **repentance**, and **immersion**.
- Household baptisms never imply infants—each person **believed**.
- **Tradition** is not equal to truth.
- Infant baptism may be heartfelt—but it's not the pattern of the apostles.
- Children who die before they understand sin are not condemned—God is just and merciful.
- Baptism is for the believer; the Kingdom belongs to the little ones.

If you were sprinkled as a baby, be thankful for the love behind it. But now, as an adult, step into the water by your own will, your own repentance, your own faith.

Let your obedience be your own.



6. The Symbolism of Burial and Resurrection

Wetsuits and Graves

It was early morning, and the tide was low. Latrell and Nathan stood at the same cove where they'd been baptised. They hadn't come to repeat anything—just to remember.

Latrell looked out over the calm water. “You know what stuck with me the most?”

“What's that?” Nathan asked.

“That moment underwater. It was only a few seconds, but it felt like... something ended.”

Nathan nodded. “It did. That's the whole point. It's a burial.”

They sat on the rocks as the sun broke through the clouds.

—

Baptism as Burial and Resurrection

Paul couldn't have been clearer:

“Don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead... we too may live a new life.”
(Romans 6:3–4)

Baptism is not just a public statement. It's a death. A burial. And a resurrection.

You don't sprinkle dirt on a coffin and call it a burial. You lower it all the way down. That's what baptism does. It takes the old life—and lays it to rest.

—

Dying to the Old Life

“Our old self was crucified with Him... anyone who has died has been set free from sin.”
(Romans 6:6–7)

In baptism:

- We bury our pride.
- We bury our guilt.
- We bury the false self.

The water becomes a grave. But also a womb. What dies there is replaced by something entirely new.

Latrell turned to Nathan. “So when I came up gasping that day... I was gasping as a new man.”

Nathan grinned. “Exactly.”

—

Baptism: The Gospel in Motion

Paul reminded the Corinthians of the essentials:

“That Christ died for our sins... was buried... and was raised.”
(1 Corinthians 15:3–4)

The Gospel has three parts. So does baptism:

- Death – Going down into the water.
- Burial – Fully immersed, the old life ends.
- Resurrection – Rising to walk in new life.

Baptism is the Gospel made visible.

It's not just a metaphor. It's participation.

—

Peter's Voice: Not Just a Symbol

Some argue that baptism is “just symbolic.” But Peter says more:

“Baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God.”
(1 Peter 3:21)

In the water, it's not just your body getting wet. Your soul is making a vow.

Not legalism. Not works. But surrender. And God meets us there with cleansing and new birth.

Resurrection Starts Now

“...that we too may live a new life.” (Romans 6:4)

Baptism isn’t just preparation for heaven. It’s transformation for now.

New identity.

New mission.

New Master.

Latrell stood up and looked again at the ocean. “I feel like that guy died out there.”

“He did,” Nathan said. “And this one—this new Latrell—he’s just getting started.”

Summary: The Symbol is the Story

- Baptism is a burial—your old life ends.
- Baptism is a resurrection—you rise in Christ.
- Baptism is the Gospel in motion—death, burial, and new life enacted.
- Baptism is not just symbolic. It’s a spiritual turning point.

Go down into the water. Lay the old life to rest. Come up clothed in resurrection.

Dead. Buried. Raised.

That’s the rhythm of salvation. That’s the miracle of baptism.



7. What About Sprinkling?

The Garden Hose Debate

It was a Sunday afternoon, and Nathan was watering his front garden when Latrell pulled up in his ute. He stepped out, stretched, and pointed at the hose.

“Think that counts as baptism?” he joked.

Nathan grinned. “Only if I hold you under for a few seconds.”

Latrell laughed, then got serious. “Actually... someone at work said their priest sprinkled them as a baby and called it baptism. They said the water doesn’t matter—just the heart.”

Nathan leaned on the hose reel. “I get that. But what if the heart says, ‘Jesus, I’ll obey You however You said to do it’? What if the right heart leads to the right action?”

What the Word Really Means

The word for baptism in the New Testament is baptizō. We’ve seen it already. It doesn’t mean:

- Sprinkle (rhantizō),
- Or pour (cheō).

It means:

- Immerse.
- Submerge.
- Dip under.

Every baptism scene in the Bible involves people going down into the water and coming up again.

“They both went down into the water...” (Acts 8:38)

“As soon as Jesus was baptised, He went up out of the water...” (Matthew 3:16)

Sprinkling is never used to describe baptism in Scripture. Not once.

Latrell's Picture

"I actually looked up the Greek," Latrell said, pulling out a printed sheet from his glovebox. "It's wild. They had a word for sprinkle. They just didn't use it for baptism."

Nathan whistled. "You're turning into a proper theologian."

"Just a bloke with questions," Latrell said. "And a Bible."

Why Sprinkling Emerged

Sprinkling came later in church history—long after the apostles:

- When adult baptisms were delayed to deathbed moments.
- When the climate made immersion hard.
- When infant baptism spread and immersion seemed too risky.

It was practical. It was easier - But it wasn't apostolic.

Losing the Symbol

Sprinkling changes the message.

Immersion pictures:

- Death—you go under.
- Burial—you're fully submerged.
- Resurrection—you rise again.

A few drops on the forehead doesn't show that.

"We were buried with Him through baptism..." (Romans 6:4)

You don't bury someone with a teaspoon of dirt. You immerse them in the ground. Same with baptism.

But Isn't the Heart What Matters?

Of course it does. But biblical faith doesn't say, "I'll obey halfway."

Jesus said:

“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46)

Real faith doesn’t pick the easiest path. It asks: What did Jesus teach?

Latrell’s Resolve

“So if someone was sprinkled, but now sees this...” Latrell said slowly, “should they be baptised properly?”

Nathan looked him in the eye. “Would you rather hold onto tradition—or walk in obedience?”

Latrell nodded. “That’s what I thought. The water’s waiting.”

Summary: Clarity Over Tradition

- Baptizō means immerse, not sprinkle.
- Every biblical baptism involved plenty of water and full immersion.
- Sprinkling arose later due to convenience, not conviction.
- True faith says, “Yes, Lord”—not “What’s the minimum?”

Don’t settle for a gesture when God has given you a grave and a resurrection.

Follow Jesus—not just in heart, but through the water.



8. Historical and Archaeological Evidence from Jerusalem

Stones That Speak

Nathan had an idea. “Mate, I’ve been watching a documentary on Jerusalem—turns out, the city’s got something to say about baptism.”

Latrell raised an eyebrow. “How so?”

“Well,” Nathan said, pulling out his laptop, “you know how in Acts 2, three thousand people were baptised in one day? Ever wonder where that happened?”

“Yeah,” Latrell said, intrigued. “I always pictured some kind of river queue, but that sounds nuts.”

Nathan grinned. “Not a river. Right at the base of the Temple Mount. Mikva’ot—Jewish immersion pools—already built and ready.”

Baptism on Pentecost: Where Did It Happen?

Acts 2 tells us that on the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached, and:

“Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” (Acts 2:41)

That’s not symbolic. That’s logistically stunning.

But archaeology shows us it was entirely possible. Just south of the Temple in Jerusalem, dozens of mikva’ot (ritual immersion pools) have been unearthed—step-down stone baths used by Jews for ceremonial cleansing.

They were deep enough for immersion. Large enough for adults. Familiar to every Jew.

It makes perfect sense: thousands heard the Gospel, repented, and were immersed—right there in public.

Latrell's Mind Blown

“So you’re telling me,” Latrell said, looking at the images on Nathan’s screen, “the early church didn’t have to invent anything new. They just used what was already there?”

“Exactly,” Nathan replied. “The pools were there. The water was ready. The people were cut to the heart.”

What Were Mikva’ot?

- Pools carved into stone.
- Steps going down and back up.
- Used for ritual purity under the Law.

Now picture this:

- You walk down into the water: death.
- You’re immersed: burial.
- You rise up the steps: resurrection.

Sound familiar?

Even before the apostles preached, God had prepared the setting.

Baptistries in the Early Church

As the Gospel spread beyond Jerusalem, early Christians built baptistries—not fonts for sprinkling, but walk-in pools for immersion.

From the 3rd to 6th centuries, across North Africa, Italy, and the Middle East, archaeology shows:

- Deep step-down designs.
- Walls painted with scenes of Christ’s baptism.
- Instructions for confessing faith before immersion.

Immersion wasn’t a fringe practice. It was the norm.

Early Christian Writings Agree

The Didache (early 2nd century):

“Baptise in living water...

Justin Martyr (mid-2nd century):

“Those who believe are brought where there is water... and are regenerated.”

Tertullian (early 3rd century):
“We are immersed three times...”

Even when allowances were made, immersion was the assumed standard.

Latrell's Realisation

“So, archaeology backs it up. Church history backs it up. The Bible speaks plainly,” Latrell said.

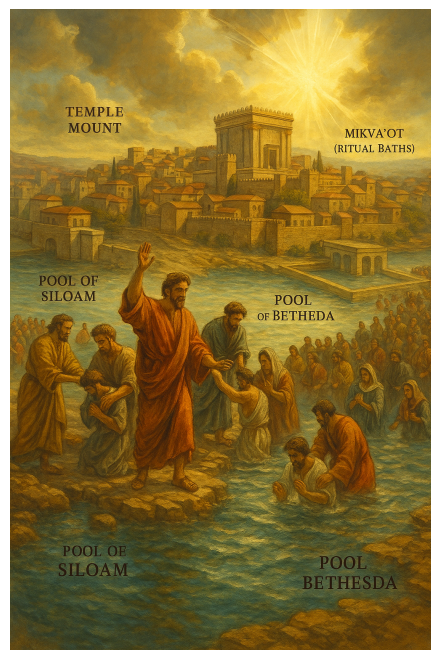
He looked up from the screen, eyes a little wide. “Honestly, Nathan, it’s like the stones are crying out.”

Nathan nodded. “Exactly. You can argue with tradition. But you can’t argue with rock.”

Summary: Confirmation from History

- Mikva’ot near the Temple make mass baptisms in Acts 2 totally realistic.
- Early church baptistries were built for immersion, not sprinkling.
- Historical writings confirm immersion was the expected norm.
- The practice of the apostles lines up with the architecture of the time.

The Bible is enough. But history joins its voice—confirming that the early church didn’t just preach immersion. They practiced it.



9. Responding to the Westminster View

Latrell Meets Calvin

Latrell showed up to their next coffee catch-up with a worn paperback in hand. He dropped it on the table.

“Guess what I borrowed from my uncle?”

Nathan picked it up. The Westminster Confession of Faith.

“I figured if people I love believe in infant baptism, I should at least understand why.”

Nathan nodded slowly. “Fair enough. So... what did you think?”

Latrell flipped to a page he’d dog-eared. ““Baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace... not only for those who profess faith, but also for the infants of believing parents.””

He looked up. “That sounds sincere. But does it match the Bible?”

The Westminster View—What It Teaches

The Westminster Confession, written in the 1600s, argues that:

- Baptism has replaced circumcision as the new covenant sign.
- Just as infants were circumcised under the Old Covenant, they should be baptised under the New.
- Baptism welcomes them into the covenant community.

It’s a thoughtful position, rooted in tradition and theological logic.

But we must always ask: does it follow the apostolic pattern?

Nathan’s Response

Nathan pulled out his Bible. “Let’s compare the logic with the Scriptures.”

“In Him you were also circumcised... having been buried with Him in baptism... raised with Him through your faith.”
(Colossians 2:11–12)

“See that?” he said. “Circumcision was inherited. But baptism is through faith.”

Latrell nodded. “So the Bible doesn’t say baptism replaces circumcision—it says it’s something totally different. A response, not a rite.”

A Different Covenant

Jeremiah prophesied it:

“I will make a new covenant... not like the one I made with their ancestors... I will write it on their hearts.” (Jeremiah 31:31–33)

In the New Covenant:

- You’re not born into it by ancestry.
- You enter it by new birth.
- Everyone who joins must believe and obey.

There is not one case in Acts, not one sentence from Peter or Paul, where infant baptism is even hinted at.

What the Apostles Actually Did

“Those who accepted his message were baptised...” (Acts 2:41)

“When they believed Philip... they were baptised...” (Acts 8:12)

“He was baptised at once, he and all his family...” (Acts 16:33)

Every baptism follows the same pattern:

- Preaching
- Believing
- Repenting
- Immersion

If infant baptism were truly part of the apostolic pattern, we’d expect to see:

- At least one clear command to baptise infants.
- At least one example of it happening.

We have neither.

Latrell's Clarity

“So maybe Westminster got it wrong,” he said carefully. “Not because they didn’t love Jesus—but because they tried to force an Old Covenant framework into a New Covenant world.”

Nathan smiled. “That’s a good way to say it. They weren’t malicious. Just mistaken.”

Unity Without Compromise

It’s not about disrespecting our Presbyterian or Reformed brothers and sisters. Many of them treasure Scripture and revere Christ.

But love must be honest. And truth must be clear.

We can honour people’s sincerity while gently but firmly returning to the pattern Jesus gave us:

“Go and make disciples... baptising them...” (Matthew 28:19)

Disciples first. Baptism next.

Summary: A Better Covenant, A Clearer Call

- Westminster sees baptism as replacing circumcision.
- The New Testament teaches baptism follows faith and repentance.
- The New Covenant is entered by choice, not inheritance.
- Every biblical baptism involves a personal response.
- We don’t need to reject our past—but we do need to realign with Scripture.



God’s covenant isn’t passed down in the flesh. It’s received in the heart.

And baptism isn’t a sign of who you’re born to—but of who you now belong to.

10. A Call to Return – Simple Obedience to a Clear Gospel

The Bonfire

The sky was dark now, and a small bonfire crackled in Nathan's backyard. A few of their mates had joined for grilled sausages and cold drinks, but most had gone home.

Latrell stared at the glowing coals, thoughtful.

"You know, Nath... this all started with a walk. Just you and me. Just that question: 'What must I do to be saved?'"

Nathan smiled. "And the answer was right there the whole time."

"Yeah. But how did we miss it for so long?"

Nathan stirred the fire with a stick. "Tradition. Assumptions. Life. I think most people just never read Acts like it was meant to be obeyed."

Latrell nodded slowly. "I'm glad we did."

—

The Gospel Is Still Clear

"Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." (Acts 2:38)

That was Peter's answer on Pentecost. No fog. No delay. No debate.

- Believe in Jesus.
- Repent of your sin.
- Be baptised—immersed in water, in His name.

That was the first Gospel sermon. And the call hasn't changed.

—

Nathan's Reflection

Nathan flipped to Acts 8 on his phone.

“Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptised?” (Acts 8:36)

He held it up. “This is what I want people to say when they read the New Testament. Not ‘What does my denomination say?’ Not ‘What about my family history?’ Just: What hinders me now?”

We’ve Drifted From the Simplicity

Modern Christianity has added layers:

- Courses instead of conversion.
- Symbolism without surrender.
- Infant rites in place of adult faith.

We’ve invented questions the early church never asked. But the Gospel remains simple.

“Follow Me.” —Jesus

“Repent and be baptised.” —Peter

Not complicated. Just costly.

Latrell’s Decision

As the fire died down, Latrell looked up.

“I reckon a lot of people are ready. They’ve seen the truth. They just need permission.”

“Not from me,” Nathan said. “Or any voice that does not keep it straight and simple. Just from Jesus.”

Latrell grinned. “Exactly. So maybe we help them hear Him again.”

It’s Your Turn

This isn’t about water. It’s about Jesus.

- The One who died.
- The One who rose.
- The One who calls.

And the response He asked for still stands:

- Faith that repents.
- Repentance that obeys.
- Obedience that is buried in water—and raised into life.

“And now, why do you wait? Rise and be baptised and wash away your sins, calling on His name.” (Acts 22:16)

Summary: Return to the Waters

- The early church preached a clear Gospel.
- The response was always immediate and obedient.
- Baptism is not an optional ritual—it’s the first act of surrender.
- We don’t need to reinvent the message. We need to return to it.

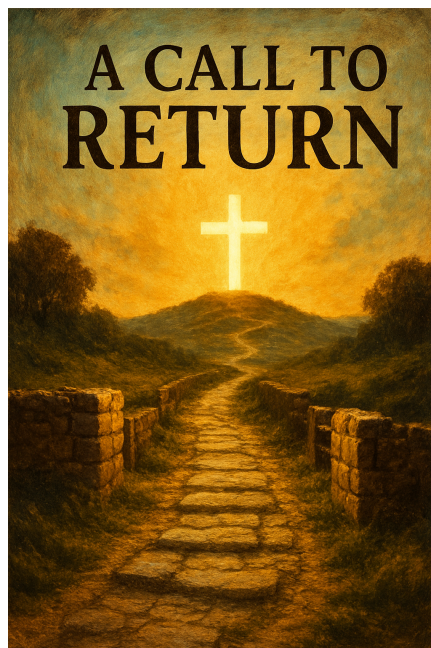
So come.

Come back to the clarity.

Come back to the simplicity.

Come back to the water.

And rise again — clean, forgiven, alive.



11. The Name Above All Names – Baptized into Christ Jesus

The Dog Tag

Latrell pulled a small metal tag from his wallet. It was old, scratched, and barely legible.

“What’s that?” Nathan asked as they sat in the café again, the late morning light slanting through the windows.

“My grandfather’s World War II dog tag. Has his name, serial number, and allegiance stamped into it.”

Nathan studied it. “So even if they didn’t know him, they knew whose he was.”

Latrell nodded. “Exactly. That’s what baptism feels like now. It’s not just something I did—it’s about whose name I carry.”

—

Baptised Into a Name

In the New Testament, baptism wasn’t performed in vague terms. It was always into a name—a declaration of authority, ownership, and allegiance.

“Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”
(Acts 2:38)

“They had simply been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.”
(Acts 8:16)

“So he ordered that they be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ.”
(Acts 10:48)

The apostles didn’t invent that formula. Jesus Himself commissioned them:

“Make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”
(Matthew 28:19)

But notice—name, not names. One name. One divine identity.

And what name did they use in Acts? The name of Jesus.

Nathan's Insight

Nathan turned his Bible to Philippians 2.

“God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name...” (Philippians 2:9)

“So,” he said slowly, “being baptised into the name of Jesus isn’t a magical phrase—it’s a transfer of identity.”

Latrell added, “It’s like spiritual adoption papers. You now belong to Him.”

In the Name Means Under His Authority

In the ancient world, to do something in someone’s name meant:

- With their authority.
- Under their covering.
- As their representative.

When we are baptised into the name of Jesus:

- We come under His rule.
- We receive His righteousness.
- We declare our allegiance.

It’s not just about salvation—it’s about citizenship.

A Unified Pattern

Some worry about Matthew 28:19 versus Acts 2:38. But there’s no contradiction—only completion.

- Jesus gave the authority structure in Matthew: Father, Son, Holy Spirit.
- The apostles applied it by baptising into the revealed name: Jesus Christ.

It’s the same God. The same Gospel. The same covenant name.

“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven... by which we must be saved.”
(Acts 4:12)

Latrell's Conviction

“I used to think baptism was about me showing my faith,” Latrell said.

He tapped the dog tag again.

“But now I see—it’s more about showing whose I am. I carry His name now. That’s everything.”

Nathan raised his coffee cup. “To the name above all names.”

Summary: Baptised Into the Name

- The apostles baptised into the name of Jesus, fulfilling Jesus’ command in Matthew 28:19.
- “Name” signifies authority, identity, and covenant allegiance.
- To be baptised in His name is to come under His Lordship and receive His salvation.
- The name of Jesus is the centre of the Gospel—the name by which we are saved.

So when you step into the water, you’re not just getting wet.

You’re being marked. Named. Claimed.

And Heaven Knows Whose You Are.



12. Clothed with Christ – The New Identity

The Jersey

It was game day. Nathan's nephew had a footy final, and the park was packed. As they leaned on the fence, Latrell pointed to a kid walking past in full team colours.

“See that? That jersey says everything—what team he's on, who he plays for, and what side he's fighting for.”

Nathan nodded. “And he didn't just say he was part of the team. He put it on.”

Latrell smiled. “Kind of like what Paul said—‘clothed with Christ,’ right?”

Baptism and Identity

Paul writes it plainly:

“For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”
(Galatians 3:27)

Baptism isn't just about what we leave behind—it's about who we now carry forward.

It's more than forgiveness. More than cleansing.

It's identity.

When we're baptised into Christ, we put Him on—like a garment, like a team jersey, like a new skin.

Nathan's Analogy

Nathan leaned on the fence, watching the game.

“You don't join the team and then debate whether you'll wear the jersey. You put it on. With pride.”

“Yeah,” Latrell said. “It doesn't mean you're the best player. It means you belong.”

That's baptism.

It's not about perfection. It's about position.

You are now in Christ. And Christ is on you.

Who You Were... Who You Are

Before baptism, we're described in Scripture as:

- Dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1)
- Strangers and aliens (Ephesians 2:12)
- Far from God (Colossians 1:21)

But after baptism?

- New creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Adopted children (Galatians 4:5–6)
- In Christ (Romans 6:11)

The moment you rise from the water, God no longer sees your guilt.

He sees His Son.

Not Just Forgiven—Transformed

Paul doesn't say, "You're now behaving better."
He says, "You are now clothed with Christ."

And that means:

- You walk differently.
- You speak differently.
- You see yourself differently.

You wear Him wherever you go.

Latrell's Reflection

Later that evening, Latrell stood in front of the mirror at home, still in his team shirt from the game.

He thought about that jersey. That name. That covering.

Then he whispered, "I'm not just trying to be like Jesus. I'm wearing Him."

He smiled.

And for the first time in a long time, he knew exactly who he was.

Summary: Baptism and Identity

- Baptism is not just a cleansing—it's a clothing.
- When you're baptised, you are clothed with Christ—your new identity.
- You're not defined by your past, your performance, or your struggle.
- You are defined by the One you now wear.

So don't go back to the old clothes. Don't pick up shame again.

You've been robed in righteousness.

Live like it. Walk like it. Remember who you wear.



13. Obeying from the Heart – Baptism and the Good Conscience

The Wedding Ring

At a weekend wedding, Latrell leaned over during the ceremony and whispered to Nathan, “It’s funny—everyone talks about the vows, but no one misses the moment they put on the rings.”

Nathan smiled. “Because the ring says what the heart means.”

Latrell nodded. “Kind of like baptism, eh?”

Nathan didn’t even need to reply.

More Than Water

Peter writes one of the most powerful summaries of baptism in all of Scripture:

“Baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God.”

(1 Peter 3:21)

This isn’t about taking a spiritual bath. It’s not about going through a motion.

It’s about the heart.

Baptism is the moment when someone says with sincerity, “I’m done running. I surrender. I want to be washed clean—not just outside, but deep inside.”

Nathan’s Explanation

As they walked out of the church into the late afternoon sun, Nathan said, “That’s why it’s so much more than a ritual. Baptism is where the inside and outside line up.”

Latrell added, “It’s where my conscience stops fighting—and starts obeying.”

The Conscience Responds to Truth

**A “good conscience” in Scripture doesn’t mean guiltless perfection.
It means clear alignment with God.**

Baptism is where that happens:

- The conscience says, “Yes, Lord.”
- The body goes into the water.
- The soul is washed by grace.

It’s a pledge. A vow. Not unlike a wedding. You’re not just receiving Jesus privately—you’re making it known publicly.

Not Magic. Not Legalism.

Some accuse baptism of being “legalistic.” Others act like it’s a magic ritual.

But Peter destroys both extremes. He says:

- It’s not about removing dirt (so not mere symbolism).
- It’s about a pledge from the heart (so not empty ritual).

It’s the sincere obedience of faith.

Paul echoes this in Romans:

“You have obeyed from the heart that form of teaching to which you were entrusted.”
(Romans 6:17)

Latrell’s Commitment

Later that evening, he pulled out a journal he’d been quietly keeping since his baptism. On one page, he wrote:

“Today I was reminded that I didn’t just obey a verse. I gave my yes to the King. And I meant it.”

He paused.

Then underlined it twice.

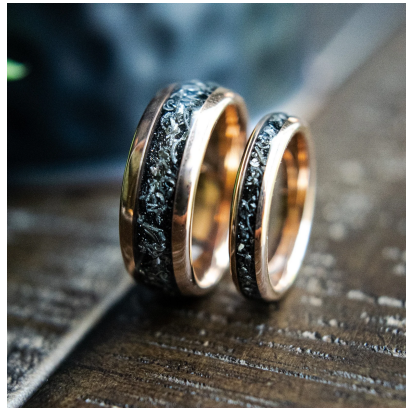
Summary: Baptism and a Clear Conscience

- Baptism is not a ritual—it's a response from the heart.
- It's not just water—it's the moment when the conscience says yes to God.
- It's not about earning—it's about obeying from faith.
- It's not about guilt—it's about grace meeting sincerity.

If your heart is stirring, if the truth is becoming clear... then don't just believe it.

Obey it.

Not out of fear. But from the deepest place of love and conviction.



14. Disciples, Not Decisions – The Life That Follows Baptism

The Finish Line Illusion

Latrell stood at the end of a local fun run, holding two bottles of water. As the last runners crossed the line, he spotted a teenage boy collapse and shout, “I made it!”

He handed the kid a drink and grinned. “Well done.”

Then under his breath, he muttered, “If only he knew the real race starts after the line.”

Nathan heard him. “That’s exactly what most people miss about baptism, isn’t it?”

Latrell nodded. “It’s not the end. It’s the beginning.”

Go and Make Disciples

When Jesus gave the Great Commission, He didn’t say, “Go and get people to make decisions.” He said:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

(Matthew 28:19–20)

Baptism isn’t a graduation. It’s enrolment!

It’s not the final act of conversion. It’s the first act of discipleship.

Nathan’s Coaching Analogy

On the way back to the car, Nathan put it this way: “When a kid signs up for footy, the first practice isn’t the win—it’s the welcome. That’s baptism. A public signing-on.”

Latrell laughed. “So baptism’s like pulling on the jersey—discipleship is getting out on the field.”

What the Early Church Did

Acts shows us that baptised believers didn’t just “make a decision”—they stepped into a new way of life.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

(Acts 2:42)

That word—devoted—is powerful. It means ongoing. Continuous. Intentional.

- They grew together.
- They listened.
- They prayed.
- They shared life.

They didn’t just say “yes” to Jesus. They followed Him.

Discipleship Is a Daily Choice

Jesus was clear:

“If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

(Luke 9:23)

Baptism is the crossing over. Discipleship is the walking forward.

Every day, the baptised believer:

- Dies to self.
 - Listens for Jesus’ voice.
 - Chooses obedience—again.
-

Latrell's Reality Check

"I used to think discipleship was for pastors and missionaries," Latrell confessed. "But now I see—it's the normal Christian life."

Nathan added, "Exactly. Baptism is just day one of the rest of your life in Christ."

They walked home in silence for a bit, then Latrell chuckled.

"I reckon we've been in training camp ever since."

Summary: Baptism Begins the Journey

- Baptism is the beginning of discipleship, not the end of salvation.
- Jesus didn't call us to decisions—He called us to follow.
- The early church devoted themselves to learning and growing together.
- Discipleship is a daily surrender, not a one-time event.

So if you've come up out of the water — beautiful. That's your first "yes."

Now, keep saying yes. Keep walking. Keep growing.

You're not just a believer.

You're a disciple.



15. Buried with Christ – The Power of Union

The Memorial Stone

It was a quiet Saturday morning. Nathan had invited Latrell to walk with him through a nearby cemetery—not out of morbidity, but reflection.

They paused beside an old gravestone—worn, moss-covered, forgotten.

Nathan broke the silence. “You know... that day we got baptised, it was like our names were etched onto something like this.”

Latrell tilted his head. “A tombstone?”

“No,” Nathan said. “A marker. Of death. But also of resurrection.”

—

Buried with Christ

Paul writes it boldly in Romans:

“We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised... we too may live a new life.”
(Romans 6:4)

Baptism isn’t just symbolic. It’s participatory.

In the water, the believer:

- Joins Jesus in His death.
- Is buried with Him.
- Rises with Him into new life.

It’s not pretend. It’s not poetry. It’s union.

—

Latrell's Realisation

As they walked on, Latrell whispered, “So when I went under... I wasn’t just reenacting the Gospel. I was joining it.”

Nathan nodded. “That’s it. You died that day, mate.”

“And rose again,” Latrell said, smiling.

The Old Self Crucified

“Our old self was crucified with Him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with...”

(Romans 6:6)

What dies in baptism?

- Guilt.
- The dominion of sin.
- The false identity we wore.

The “old man”—that inner self that walked apart from God—is crucified. And when we come up, a new creation steps forward.

Baptism: The Cross Applied

The cross is where sin was paid for.
The resurrection is where new life began.
Baptism is where that becomes ours.

It’s where the Gospel moves from history... to experience.

Nathan put it this way:

“Jesus didn’t die instead of us so we wouldn’t have to—He died with us, so we could die to sin and live in Him.”

Resurrection Now

Romans 6:5 gives the promise:

“If we have been united with Him in a death like His, we will certainly also be united with Him in a resurrection like His.”

Not just someday in heaven. Now.

Baptism is your resurrection day. Your spiritual rebirth. Your rising from the grave of sin into a new life—free, forgiven, Spirit-filled.

Latrell's Note

That night, back home, Latrell added one more line to the inside of his Bible cover:

“I was buried with Christ—October 14. I'll never forget the grave I left behind.”

Summary: Union with Christ

- Baptism is where the believer is buried with Christ and raised to new life.
- The old self dies. A new creation rises.
- It's not a symbol alone—it's a moment of union with Jesus.
- In the water, the Gospel becomes yours—not just something to believe, but something to experience.

So if you're still clinging to your old life, let it die.

Step into the water.

And rise with Him.



16. Raised to Walk – Living in Resurrection Power

The Cold Shower

It was Monday morning, and Latrell had just jumped into a freezing shower.

He let out a yelp, then laughed. “That’ll wake the dead.”

Later that day over coffee, he retold the moment to Nathan.

“Made me think of something,” he said. “We talk a lot about dying with Christ. But I don’t want to live like a half-dead Christian. Where’s the power? Where’s the walking part?”

Nathan grinned. “You’re not meant to just get wet. You’re meant to get up—and walk in newness of life.”

Raised to New Life

Paul says it clearly:

“We were buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised... we too may walk in newness of life.”
(Romans 6:4)

Baptism is not just about leaving something behind—it’s about stepping into something new.

- A new identity.
- A new direction.
- A new power.

The same Spirit who raised Jesus now empowers the believer to live like Him.

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Nathan's Encouragement

"That verse used to scare me," Latrell admitted. "Like if I still struggled, maybe I wasn't really new."

Nathan shook his head. "You are new. But learning to walk is messy. Even toddlers fall. But they're still alive. Still growing."

"Yeah," Latrell said, "but resurrection power isn't just crawling forward, is it?"

"Nope," Nathan replied. "It's standing up and moving forward. In grace. In freedom."

What Resurrection Power Looks Like

1. Freedom from Sin's Control

"Sin shall no longer be your master..." (Romans 6:14)
You may still stumble, but sin is no longer your identity.

2. Empowered to Live Righteously

"Offer yourselves to God... as instruments of righteousness." (Romans 6:13)
You're not just forgiven—you're empowered.

3. Life by the Spirit

"The Spirit of Him who raised Jesus... will also give life to your mortal bodies." (Romans 8:11)
You don't walk this path alone.

Latrell's Turnaround

Later that week, Latrell was tempted to respond harshly to a coworker. But something held him.

A memory. A promise. A presence.

He breathed deep.

"I'm not who I was."

And he didn't speak a word. He just smiled and walked away.

New Life, One Step at a Time

Walking implies movement. Progress. It doesn't mean running a perfect race.

It means:

- You're not who you used to be.
- You don't think like you used to.
- You don't react like you used to.
- And when you fall, you get up—because you can.

That's resurrection power.

Summary: Living What You Rose For

- Baptism buries the old—but also raises the new.
- The Christian life is not just about forgiveness—it's about walking in freedom.
- Resurrection power means you are no longer ruled by sin, but filled with the Spirit.
- You're not just saved from something—you're saved for something.

So walk. Not in fear. Not in shame.

Walk in joy. In power. In resurrection.

You've been raised.

Live like it.



17. One Body, One Baptism – The Unity of the Immersed

The Team Photo

Latrell sat flipping through an old footy team photo. Jerseys muddied. Smiles wide. Arms slung over each other's shoulders.

He passed it to Nathan and said, “We weren’t all mates before that season started. But by the end—we were brothers.”

Nathan studied the image. “Same training. Same uniform. Same goal. That’ll do it.”

Then he looked up.

“You know, that’s what baptism does too. It puts us on the same team. For good.”

One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism

Paul writes this powerful call to unity:

“There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism...”
(Ephesians 4:4–5)

In other words:

- You weren’t just baptised into Christ—you were baptised into His people.
- You don’t just walk as an individual believer—you walk as part of His body.

You are now part of something bigger than yourself.

Nathan’s Reminder

“You and I,” Nathan said, “didn’t just get baptised beside each other. We got baptised into the same thing.”

Latrell nodded. “The body of Christ.”

“That’s why we’re brothers now. Not because we agree on everything. But because we share the same Lord. The same faith. The same water.”

Baptism and Belonging

“For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free...”

(1 Corinthians 12:13)

Baptism crosses every boundary:

- Race.
- Class.
- Culture.
- Past mistakes.

The water doesn’t just wash away sin—it washes away division.

A Family of Equals

In Christ:

- There are no “better” or “lesser” Christians.
- No one gets a private baptism for their own brand.
- The same death. The same burial. The same resurrection.

And that means:

- You belong.
- You are needed.
- You are part of us.

The church isn’t a building. It’s a baptised people walking forward together.

Latrell’s Aha Moment

That Sunday, as he looked around the communion table, Latrell noticed something.

Different faces. Different accents. Different stories.

But all had one thing in common: they'd gone into the same water.

And come up new.

He whispered to himself, "One Lord. One faith. One baptism."

And then added, "One family."

Summary: Baptism Builds the Body

- Baptism isn't just about the individual—it's about entering the body of Christ.
- In Christ, all believers—no matter their background—are united by the same baptism.
- There is no superiority in the kingdom. Just brothers and sisters.
- The waters of baptism wash away not just sin—but separation.

So if you're in Christ, you're not alone.

You're part of a people. A family. A body.

One Lord. One faith. One baptism.



18. The Water and the Witness – Telling the Story of New Birth

The Ocean and the Crowd

It had been months since that morning at the cove.

Latrell stood again on the shoreline—but this time, not to be baptised.

This time, he watched someone else. A teenager from their church named Ava, stepping into the waves, surrounded by cheers and tears.

Latrell's voice caught in his throat.

“That was me,” he whispered. “That’s my story too.”

Nathan patted his shoulder. “And now it’s hers. And every person on this beach just heard it.”

—

A Visible Gospel

Baptism is not just an inward experience—it’s a public declaration.

When someone goes under the water and rises again, they are proclaiming:

- That Jesus died, was buried, and rose.
- That they have died to sin and risen with Him.
- That new birth has taken place—and new life has begun.

“For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ.”
(Galatians 3:27)

It’s a sermon you can see.

—

Baptism as Testimony

Peter declared boldly on Pentecost:

“Repent and be baptised... for the forgiveness of your sins...” (Acts 2:38)

And three thousand people didn’t just believe—they acted. In public.

Baptism has always been part of a visible Gospel.

Not because it’s theatrical. But because it’s transformational.

The world needs more than arguments.

It needs witnesses.

Nathan’s Insight

“You know what I love about baptism?” Nathan said, handing Latrell a towel.

“It tells the story—without a word. People see it, and they know: this person has changed.”

Latrell nodded. “And they’re not ashamed to say it.”

A Line in the Sand

Baptism is where the believer says:

- “I’m not hiding anymore.”
- “I belong to Jesus now.”
- “You can mark this day as the turning point.”

And yes—it can feel vulnerable. Public. Raw.

But it also becomes one of the most powerful tools for Gospel witness.

Not just a private memory.

But a public milestone.

Ava's Words

Back on the sand, Ava spoke just six words into the handheld mic.

“I belong to Jesus. That’s all.”

The crowd clapped.

Latrell wiped his eyes.

Nathan whispered, “That’s all you ever need to say.”

—

Summary: Baptism as Witness

- Baptism is a public testimony of faith and new birth.
- It tells the Gospel story—visibly, powerfully, unmistakably.
- It is a moment of boldness, not secrecy.
- The world doesn’t just need theology—it needs transformation on display.

So let your baptism be your testimony.

Let the water do the preaching.

And let your life confirm the message:

Dead. Buried. Raised. New.



19. Born of Water and Spirit – Jesus and the New Birth

A Late-Night Conversation

They were back on the balcony where it all began. Two mates. Two Bibles. One moonlit sky.

Latrell flipped slowly to John 3.

“You ever wonder what Nicodemus felt that night?” he asked. “A teacher of Israel, and Jesus says, ‘You must be born again.’”

Nathan nodded. “He came looking for answers. And Jesus gave him a mystery.”

You Must Be Born Again

Jesus said it straight:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

(John 3:5)

To Nicodemus—and to every seeker since—Jesus made it clear:

Being born again is not optional. It’s essential.

And it involves two elements:

- Water — tangible, visible, unmistakable.
- Spirit — unseen, supernatural, life-giving.

What Does It Mean?

Theologians have debated it. But the early church didn’t.

They practiced it.

From Pentecost onward, everyone who believed:

- Was baptised in water.
- Received the Spirit.

It wasn't mystical. It was obedient.
It wasn't mechanical. It was spiritual.

Jesus wasn't talking about physical birth or poetic symbolism.

He was laying out the entryway into the kingdom.

Nathan's Observation

"Funny," Nathan said, looking out toward the dark ocean, "Jesus said this before the cross, before the Spirit was poured out. But He already knew: the new birth would come through the water and the wind."

Latrell replied quietly, "That's what we experienced, isn't it? The water. The Spirit. The change."

Spirit and Water Together

- The water washes the old life away.
- The Spirit fills the new life with power.

They are not in competition. They are in concert.

Titus 3:5 calls it:

"The washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit."

And in Acts 2:38, Peter didn't separate them:

"Repent and be baptised... and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

A True Birth, Not a Symbol

Jesus said:

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6)

The new birth is not:

- A feeling,
- A tradition,
- Or a label.

It's a supernatural act of God, ignited through simple, trusting obedience.

Latrell's Revelation

“I used to think ‘born again’ was a churchy phrase,” he said. “Now I see—it’s a Jesus phrase.”

Nathan nodded. “And once you’re born again, you can’t ever go back. You’re not who you were.”

Summary: Born of Water and Spirit

- Jesus said the new birth requires both water and Spirit.
- The early church understood that as baptism and Spirit-filled life.
- This is not optional—it’s the way into the kingdom.
- New birth is not just emotional—it’s transformational.

So if you want to follow Jesus, you don’t just need a new mindset.

You need a new birth.

And it starts where He said it would:

In the water. By the Spirit. For real.



20. Now Why Do You Wait? – The Invitation of the Gospel

The Beach, One More Time

The sun was setting again over the same cove. The tide whispered on the sand. Latrell and Nathan stood where it all began—where the ocean met obedience.

No words. Just a moment.

After a while, Latrell finally said, “This water hasn’t changed. But we have.”

Nathan nodded. “And now we know why.”

The Gospel Is Still an Invitation

The book of Acts ends the way it begins: with the Gospel being proclaimed and people invited to respond.

And the call still echoes:

“And now, why do you wait? Rise and be baptised and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”

(Acts 22:16)

It’s the same Gospel.

- Jesus died.
- Jesus rose.
- Jesus reigns.

And the response has not changed.

- Believe.
- Repent.
- Be baptised.
- Receive the Spirit.
- Walk in newness of life.

No Special Qualifications

You don't need to:

- Fix your life first.
- Understand every doctrine.
- Wait for a perfect day.

You just need an honest heart, an open Bible, and the courage to trust what God has already made clear.

Like the Ethiopian in Acts 8 who said, “Look! Here is water. What’s stopping me?”

The only answer?

Nothing.

Latrell's Words

That night, as the stars came out, Nathan asked, “If someone asked you what they should do... what would you say now?”

Latrell didn't hesitate:

“Believe in Jesus. Turn from your sin. Be baptised in His name. And let Him raise you.”

Then he smiled. “That’s what I did. That’s what they did. That’s what you can do.”

The Water Is Still Here

Maybe you've been reading this book because you're searching. Maybe you're tired of tradition, weary of opinions, and ready to just hear from Jesus Himself.

Well—now you've heard.

And if your heart is stirring, don't wait for permission.

Jesus already gave it.

Summary: Don't Wait

- The Gospel invites a response—faith, repentance, baptism, and new life.
- You don't need to be perfect—just willing.
- You don't need to delay—just obey.
- The New Testament is clear. The Spirit is calling. The water is waiting.

So... why do you wait?

Rise. Be baptised. Wash away your sins. Call on His name.

And never be the same again.

Final Words from Latrell and Nathan

“We started this journey just wanting to understand what the Bible really says,” Latrell wrote in his journal.

“We didn't set out to start a movement, join a denomination, or win a debate.

We just wanted Jesus.

And when we listened to His words... He led us into the water.

And He raised us into life.”

Born of Water. Filled with Spirit. Walking in grace.



Now it's your turn



My Key Baptism Points – Scripture, History, and Practice

Baptizō Means Immerse

- Baptizō = immerse/submerge; baptō = dip briefly (e.g. food).
- NT baptism always uses baptizō.
- Mark 1:10, Acts 8:38–39 – 'went down into' and 'came up out of' the water (so they could sprinkle)???

Baptism Was Logistically Possible in Jerusalem

- Over 100 mikva'ot around the Temple.
- Pools of Siloam & Bethesda large enough for full immersion.
- 3,000 people could be immersed in under 5 hours by 12+ leaders.

Jesus' Baptism Set a Model

- Matthew 3:15–16 – 'to fulfill all righteousness,' He was immersed.
- Pattern of obedient, public identification.

All NT Baptisms Follow Repentance

- Acts 2:38, Acts 8:12, Acts 16:31–34 – believe → baptize.
- No infant baptisms are described or commanded.
- Household texts (e.g. Cornelius, Lydia) include faith or rejoicing.

Westminster Upholds Sprinkling, Not Apostolic Practice

- WCF 28.3 allows pouring/sprinkling but doesn't deny immersion was the NT norm.
- Reformers retained infant baptism from Catholic legacy, not Scripture.

Immersion Has Global Support

- Practiced by 300–400 million Christians: Baptists, Pentecostals, Churches of Christ, Evangelicals.

This Is Not a Romans 14 Issue

- Baptism is a command of Jesus (Matt. 28:19), not a disputable matter like food or feast days.
- Paul ties baptism to the gospel itself (Rom. 6, Gal. 3:27).



Final Thought:

This isn't about preference—it's about returning to the apostolic pattern: a believer responding in obedience, immersed into Christ, proclaiming His death and resurrection.