



ROSE VISUAL  
BIBLE STUDIES

6 SESSIONS

# JOURNEY TO THE RESURRECTION

*Bible Study*





## *Confession*



# Dust and Ashes

*Ashes to ashes and dust to dust . . . in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the dead.*

You have probably heard these words spoken at a funeral or burial service. As a pastor, I've spoken them many times. They are words intended to benefit the living, not the dead. We remember that our lifetime will come to an end, but also that hope for the life to come can shape and provide direction for the way we live right now. When we begin with the end in mind, all of our actions, decisions, and attitudes help us intentionally make progress toward our anticipated final destination.

Jesus began his public ministry with a clear-eyed vision directed toward his final destination. He knew exactly how the story of his public life and ministry would end, but he also believed that the end of his story would be the beginning of new life for him and for all who trust in him. His public ministry, which would lead to a cross and an empty tomb, began with his baptism.





## Read It

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### Key Bible Passage

For this session, read the story of Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:1–17.

### Optional Reading

See how the apostle Paul connects our baptism with Christ's death and resurrection in Romans 6:1–11.

“Confessing their sins, they were baptized by [John] in the Jordan River.”

MATTHEW 3:6





## Explore It

### Baptism

John the Baptist's practice of baptism grew out of the Jewish tradition of ritual washing. We can learn more about the significance of baptism by exploring these ancient practices.

To baptize (*baptizō* in Greek) means to dip or immerse and refers to ritual and spiritual cleansing that comes from an act of washing in water. In the Old Testament, baptism or ritual washing was used by priests for sacrifices and to maintain ritual purity.

- New priests were washed when beginning their office (Exodus 29:21; Leviticus 8:6).
- Priests washed their hands before completing sacrifices (Exodus 30:17–21).
- The high priest washed himself before and after sacrifices on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:1–28).
- Ritually unclean people and objects were washed (Leviticus 11:24–40; 12–15).

Both before and after the time of Jesus, various types of baptism were practiced.

- The Qumran community was a separatist, Jewish sect living near the Dead Sea around 100 BC. They believed that they were the only surviving remnant faithful to God's covenant and practiced daily baptism or ceremonial cleansing as part of their covenant community.



Medieval Mikvah (Jewish ritual bath)

- Judaism permitted gentiles to convert by following certain guidelines: studying the Hebrew Scriptures, becoming circumcised (for males), and completing several ritual obligations that culminated in a ritual bath (baptism) to leave impurities behind and be reborn into the Jewish faith. Baptism for gentile converts likely began near the end of the first century AD.

John's baptism was available to all "who repent of their sins and turn to God" (Matthew 3:11 NLT). Crowds visited John in the wilderness by the Jordan River to confess their sins and "wash away" the impurities in their lives. They would rise up out of the water and symbolically leave their sin, shame, and guilt behind.



Jordan River

Jesus had no sins to repent of or turn away from, yet he insisted on being baptized. Part of the significance of Jesus' baptism is that all of the sins left behind by people (in fact, all humanity) were received by and placed on Jesus.

Baptism also represented death (being laid down in the water) and resurrection (being raised out of the water). Jesus' ultimate aim—becoming our sin substitute and making new life possible for all who believe—is foreshadowed in his baptism at the very beginning of his public ministry.



## Spiritual Discipline: Confession

Practicing spiritual disciplines in the weeks leading to the celebration of Jesus' death and resurrection can prepare our hearts to fully embrace the significance of those moments.

We often think of confessing our sins only as part of the beginning of our relationship with Jesus, where we acknowledge our failure and turn to faith in the finished work of Jesus. Confession does not end with our conversion, but continues throughout our life to keep leading us to the freedom we enjoy in Jesus. Confession involves your entire being: mind, heart, and soul. It includes thoroughly examining yourself, feeling the emotional response of sorrow because of sin, and then determining to turn away from those sins with the power of the Holy Spirit.

### Ash Wednesday

Many Christians begin Lent by observing Ash Wednesday. This is a day to intentionally turn away from our failings and lesser pursuits that sometimes cause us to miss the best that God has planned for us.

The palms used to celebrate Palm Sunday from the previous year are burned, and the ashes kept. On Ash Wednesday, they are used to place the sign of the cross on the foreheads of worshipers. This is a reminder that our life here is temporary. We are made of dust and will return to dust, but through Jesus we also receive the blessing of life beyond this life.



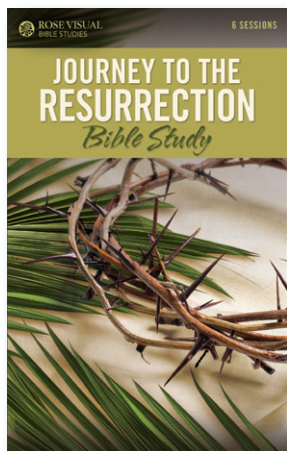
Here is a guide for confession for you to consider:

1. Write down the sins you are guilty of: pride, greed, anger, fear, laziness, gluttony, lust, hate, etc.
2. Confess (speak out loud) these sins to God.
3. Remember the promise: “If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness” (1 John 1:9 NLT).
4. Tear that paper into as many pieces as possible and throw it away, or, if you prefer, burn it.
5. If you have a trusted friend, you can confess your sins to that person and involve them in this process. There is something liberating about bringing our sins out from the dark and into the light, and feeling God set us free.

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for taking all of my sin on yourself, becoming sin for me, and giving your life so I can enjoy new life. Give me the grace to live in this new freedom and in victory over the power of sin. Amen.



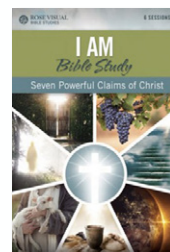


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