

Sermons 2008

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Chapter 1. What Baptism?

READ - *Acts 19:1-12*

TEXT - *When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 19:5)*

THEME - A summation of what the Bible teaches about water baptism.

Introduction

ILLUS - The story is told about the baptism of King Aengus by St. Patrick in the middle of the fifth century. Sometime during the rite, St. Patrick leaned on his sharp-pointed staff and inadvertently stabbed the king's foot. After the baptism was over, St. Patrick looked down at all the blood, realized what he had done, and begged the king's forgiveness. Why did you suffer this pain in silence, the Saint wanted to know. The king replied, "I thought it was part of the ritual." (Knowing the Face of God, Tim Stafford, p. 121ff)

The king was a little confused about just what baptism is supposed to be. As are many even today. So many questions and disagreements exist over this matter:

- At what age should baptism be performed?
- Does a person need to be totally immersed, or can they be sprinkled?
- If immersed, are they to be immersed one time backward or three times forward?
- Is the formula "in the name of Jesus" or "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost?"
- What about this baby thing? Are we supposed to baptize babies?
- And most importantly, does baptism save us or not? If I die having not been baptized, will I go to hell? If I am baptized, does it assure me of heaven?

One result of all the confusion is that some just set it aside. Baptism, which is clearly taught as an important thing in the Bible, becomes unimportant, ignored, or sometimes even ridiculed. Those believers with this mindset are following a similar thought process to famed atheist Robert Ingersoll, who said:

QUOTE - "With soap, baptism is a good thing" (Robert G. Ingersoll, well known defender of atheism).

But I beg to differ with the wicked Mr. Ingersoll and his atheist views. The Bible teaches that baptism is a good thing (with or without soap), and a thing that all Christians should understand and practice.

Consider our text - and take note of what a wonderful illustration it contains - an illustration of exactly what we are about to witness here today.

Here was a group of people who had been baptized previously.

But they had not been baptized properly.

Once they understood the truth, they wanted to be baptized properly, and were.

In a few minutes we will see a group of people whose experience is quite similar - previously baptized, but not scripturally - now wanting to follow the Lord in believers' baptism. Glory!

Let's notice some truth today about baptism.

Baptism - what?

There is no need to spend a lot of time on this, for there is nothing more clear in the Bible. To baptize a person is to immerse them in water.

Chapter 1. What Baptism?

Note: We speak today of WATER BAPTISM, not baptism in the Holy Spirit, which is another topic for another day.

DEFINITION - Greek BAPTIZO - 1) to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk), 2) to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe, 3) to overwhelm

WORDS MEAN SOMETHING. If the Holy Spirit used a word that means to IMMERSE IN WATER - to COMPLETELY SUBMERGE IN WATER, then I humbly suggest that is exactly what He meant.

ILLUS - Alexander Campbell, one of the founders of the restoration movement from which this denomination sprung, - "I immerse you..." - Silly arguments and sparring broke out between Campbell and his baptist brethren because they insisted on the word "baptize" and he insisted on the word "immerse." BOTH MEAN THE SAME THING.

READ - *Acts 8:35-39* - Aside from the clear meaning of the word BAPTIZO which requires that the eunuch was COMPLETELY SUBMERGED, notice the imagery of this text - BOTH went down INTO the water.

ILLUS - Dr. Tom Malone's teacup ("I could baptize this entire congregation with a teacup of water.")

Baptism - when?

I saw a gospel tract once that was entitled, "What the Bible Teaches about Infant Baptism." Opening it up revealed a blank page - for the Bible teaches NOTHING about infant baptism. It is fiction.

ILLUS - Breakfast spent talking with a preacher friend who believes in infant baptism. He boldly proclaimed that the Bible teaches it, but could provide not one example from scripture of an infant baptism. BECAUSE THERE ARE NONE.

Baptism is only Biblical baptism if it takes place AS A RESULT OF saving faith. In other words, it has to happen AFTER a person places their faith in Christ.

REMEMBER - a person is not born believing in Christ. They are born LOST and become SAVED when they understand their lost condition, REPENT of their sin and BELIEVE that Jesus Christ paid the price for their sin.

as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (Romans 5:12) - You and I inherited a sin nature from our daddy Adam!

SONG - I once was LOST, but now am FOUND! (Amazing Grace)

ILLUS - In witnessing to others, we often ask the question, "When did you become a Christian? When were you saved?" And we sometimes hear the response, "I've always been saved." Of such, we can only conclude that they are NOT SAVED, for they don't understand the transactional aspect of it. There has to come a CHANGE, a CONVERSION, a point of going from LOST to SAVED.

And baptism, to be true Biblical baptism, cannot occur until after salvation.

ILLUS - Philip was clear in his explanation to the Ethiopian - you can ONLY be baptized if you are saved - ... *If thou believest with all thine heart... (Acts 8:35-37)*

Baptism - why?

1. Do we baptize in order to save?

NO. Let's be absolutely clear on that point. Baptism does not save the soul. A person who has been baptized is not guaranteed of heaven. And a person who has not been baptized is not necessarily denied heaven. Baptism is not a part of the "formula" for salvation which is given so many places in our Bibles:

Believe... Acts 16:31

For whosoever shall call... Romans 10:13

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth, and believe in thine heart... (Romans 10:9-10)

For by grace are ye saved... (Ephesians 2:8-9)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth... (John 3:16)

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

BAPTISM DOES NOT SAVE. TRUSTING CHRIST, BELIEVING ON CHRIST, ACCEPTING CHRIST (all terms describing the faith that saves) DOES SAVE.

There are many who have trusted Christ and never followed Him in baptism who will experience the joy of heaven. And there are many who have had been very very wet in the baptismal pool, but never trusted Christ in the first place. To die in such a state is to split hell wide open.

ILLUS - Thief on the cross - *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise. (Luke 23:42-43)*

Why didn't Jesus say, "I'd love to help you my friend, but I'm pinned up here and can't get to the baptismal pool. If only I could dip you in water, I could help you out. Sorry."

ILLUS - Alexander Campbell, introduced a lot of confusion about this issue in that he seemed to teach baptism was a requirement for salvation. He denied this when pressed, but yet the language of his writings has been interpreted by many for years to teach just that - you must be baptised in order to be saved. To die unbaptized is to die lost. If he believed that, he was in error.

2. We baptize to identify.

Jesus was baptized by John, whose baptism was meant to indicate repentance from sin.

Did Jesus have any sin? NO. But Jesus was identifying Himself with us sinners through baptism.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

In the same way, the Christian identifies him/herself with Christ in baptism. We speak of making a public profession of faith - baptism IS that public identification. It is saying to all - I am a Christian.

3. We baptize to symbolize.

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:12)

4. We baptize to obey.

QUOTE - "Our justification from sins takes place at the point of saving faith, not at the point of water baptism, which usually occurs later. But if a person is already justified and has sins forgiven eternally at the point of saving faith,

then baptism is not necessary for forgiveness of sins nor for the bestowal of new spiritual life. Baptism, then, is not necessary for salvation. But it is necessary if we are to be obedient to Christ, for he commanded baptism for all who believe in him. (WAYNE A. GRUDEM, Bible Doctrine)

Matthew 28:18-19 - BAPTIZING THEM is a command! If the church is commanded to baptize new believers, what does that mean to the new believers? Are they not also commanded to BE BAPTIZED?

QUOTE - Spurgeon: "... a thing which looks to be unreasonable and seems to be unprofitable, being commanded by God, is law, is law to me. If my Master had told me to pick up six stones and lay them in a row I would do it, without demanding of him, 'What good will it do?' Cui bono? Is no fit question for soldiers of Jesus. The very simplicity and apparent uselessness of the ordinance should make the believer say, 'Therefore I do it because it becomes the better test to me of my obedience to my Master.'" When you tell your servant to do something, and he cannot comprehend it, if he turns round and says, "Please, sir, what for?" you are quite clear that he hardly understands the relation between master and servant. So when God tells me to do a thing, if I say, "What for?" I cannot have taken the place which Faith ought to occupy, which is that of simple obedience to whatever the Lord hath said. Baptism is commanded, and Faith obeys because it is commanded, and thus takes her proper place.

A verse that convicts me constantly - *And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? (Luke 6:46)*

And how does a person justify proclaiming their allegiance to Christ, but refusing the very first command He gives?

We need no other argument. We need no other plea. OUR LORD AND KING SAYS TO DO IT, and therefore the question should be moot.

Conclusion:

What does this mean to you and I? Quite simply it means that those who have trusted Jesus Christ should be baptized - by immersion, after salvation.

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 19:5)

ILLUS - My personal experience - baptized as a baby in the Episcopal church. I was saved on May 3, 1970 in this church and learned from the good teaching of Pastor Roy Keener that that previous "baptism" (in quotes because it didn't even fit the definition of the word) didn't fit the Bible, and I needed to obey Christ. I then was baptized at the Christian Church in Ravenna, for this church did not then have a baptistry. I well remember the confusion of my episcopal relatives. "What are you doing? You were already baptized." But I had not been - not scripturally - and I wanted to obey my newfound Lord and King.

Some today will take that same stand. Blessings upon them for their example and their obedience to the Lord.