

Baptism As Ordained By Christ - 2024-05-05

originally preached as "The Church's One Baptism - Ordained By Christ" 2015-06-28 during exposition of Ephesians; reworked for the occasion of Michael van Eck's baptism

INTRODUCTION

As you know, today we have the privilege of baptizing a boy who has credibly professed his faith in Jesus Christ and asked to be baptized. Upon hearing what he was ready to say, and after questioning him on several points, I found his profession perfectly believable. Additionally, I already had observed a change in his behavior some time back, a very noticeable change for the better.

It has been good to hear children presenting themselves as candidates for baptism tell simply that they want to obey Jesus. Jesus has commanded that His disciples be baptized, so they want to be baptized.

Let us maintain that child-like simplicity of mind regarding baptism. He has commanded; we will obey. Consider that with me just now---that we baptize and submit to baptism because our Lord Jesus has commanded it. We do what we do because He ordained that we do so.

The baptism we will observe this afternoon is the ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our baptism is the baptism ordained by Christ.

TEXT

Matthew 28:18-20

BODY

Our baptism is the baptism ordained by Christ.

- I. Our Lord Jesus Ordained Baptism; It Is an Ordinance Established By Him
See how clearly He ordained baptism; how plainly He issued the ordinance establishing the ordinance of baptism
- A. He sent one before Him, to prepare the way for Him, by having him baptize
 - 1. John 3:23 Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.
 - B. He demonstrated it by submitting to baptism Himself, at the beginning of His earthly ministry
 - 1. in the Jordan river
 - 2. going down in
 - 3. coming up out of the water
 - C. At the end of His earthly ministry, He ordered His church to do it, in a word impossible for the church to misunderstand: baptize
 - 1. Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, **immersing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.
 - 2. Calvin, *Institutes*: "it is evident that the term *baptise* means to immerse"
 - a) French *plonger*
 - b) Latin *mergere / mergendi* forms of *mergo* ([link](#))
 - D. By His apostles, He commanded all of His disciples to submit to it
 - 1. Acts 2:38 Repent, and let every one of you be baptized
 - 2. Acts 10:48 he commanded them to be baptized
 - E. He caused examples of it being obeyed to be recorded in the bible
 - 1. some examples where the details are given, showing immersion in water
 - 2. some examples where details are omitted as to how it was done, but descriptions are given as to who was baptized
 - a) both men and women
 - b) both Jews and Gentiles
 - c) Africans, Asians, and Europeans
 - d) individuals and crowds of thousands
 - e) both adults and inf. . . oh, wait a minute; not both adults and infants; but that is for another time

Our Lord Jesus ordained baptism; it is an ordinance established by Him

II. Consider the Implications of That for How We Understand Baptism Itself

Since baptism is ordained By Our Lord Jesus Christ, there are some things we can know to be true about that ordinance

- A. The ordinance establishing baptism is set, it is fixed, it is not subject to change
 1. ordinances that we have set in human governments we can repeal or amend, but
 2. the ordinances set by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords cannot be repealed or amended by anything we here can do;
 - a) if the Supreme Court voted 9-0 to overrule an ordinance of the Lord Jesus establishing baptism, it would not be changed;
 - b) if the United Nations voted unanimously to change the Lord's ordinance of baptism, it would not then be changed;
 - c) if all the churches on earth submitted to the government of one man in Rome, and said that when he speaks *ex cathedra*, he speaks infallibly, still, when he spoke declaring a change to our Lord's ordinance of baptism, it would not be changed
 3. if the church's one baptism is the baptism ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ, then it is fixed; it is not subject to change
- B. There is no *good* reason to change it anyway; it already is the best it can be; it is incapable of being improved upon; if a command has been issued by a perfect commander, then it is a perfect command, and any change we could make to it would not be neutral, and would not make it better, but would necessarily make it worse; if we were to change it, no change we made would be an improvement
 1. its effectiveness as a means of grace cannot be increased
 2. its suitableness as a symbol cannot be increased
- C. It is a commission to do a certain thing, not a license to do a range of related things; our Lord Jesus Christ has ordered that His church baptize His disciples
 1. this is not a license to sprinkle, pour, or wipe His disciples with water, as long as some water is applied to the body somehow
 2. this is not a license to baptize people who might later become disciples, or the infants of His disciples
 3. this is not a license for it to be an option, so that some in the congregation baptize His disciples, and others sprinkle their infants
- D. It is not overruled by previous ordinances that have been revoked or abrogated
 1. there have been many ordinances for religious ceremonies in old testament times
 - a) circumcision
 - b) animal sacrifices
 - c) holy days
 - d) human priesthood
 2. the ordinance of baptism is not to be understood as subordinate to any of these or equal to any of these, as if the terms of any of these should modify the Lord's ordinance of baptism

- E. Illustration: the Lord's Supper; for some reason, it can be easier to grasp these concepts if we talk about our Lord's other ordinance, The Lord's Supper
1. we are commanded to eat the bread; what if we crumbled the bread and sprinkled it on our heads instead? what if the pastor told you to do that, or that you might do that if you want to?
 2. we are commanded to drink from the cup; what if we dipped our finger in the cup, and made the sign of the cross on our babies foreheads instead? what if the pastor told you to do that, or that you might do that if you want to?
 3. if the pastor commanded you to do those things, or if the worshipers next to you in the assembly tried to do those things, what might your objections be?
 - a) that's not what the Lord said to do!
 - (1) and if they replied, "we changed it"
 - (2) you might object, "you can't change it; you can't change what the bible says!"
 - b) that's not how you take the Lord's Supper
 - (1) we do it this way because it's better like this
 - (2) no, it's not! you can't make the Lord's Supper better!
 - c) you're supposed to eat the bread and drink the cup!
 - (1) well, we have given ourselves the liberty to eat and drink the Lord's supper in a variety of ways: crumbling, pouring out, and finger painting; and we don't see why you get upset with us for this, and insist on only eating and drinking the Lord's supper
 - (2) the Lord didn't give you that liberty, and you have no right to take that liberty for yourself
 - d) you're supposed to eat the bread and drink the cup!
 - (1) well, anyone who would like to eat and drink them may do so, and others may prefer to crumble and pour them; the bible does not say we should not crumble the bread
 - (2) no, it doesn't have to say that you may not crumble; it says to eat the bread, and so the congregation shouldn't do both that and something else
 4. what if the deacons, when they passed you the cup, told you to go sprinkle it on the doorpost of the building?
 - a) wait, no, that's from the old testament; that's from passover
 - b) yes, but the Lord's Supper has replaced the passover in the New Covenant, so we infer from the ordinance of the passover how we should observe The Lord's Supper
 - c) no, the Lord Jesus told us to drink the cup, so it's not like the passover in that way

5. what if the church elders told you that we will observe the Lord's Supper on the 14th day of the first month; for the week before that, you are to remove all yeast of any kind from your house; then, when we eat the bread, we will eat it in haste, with our car keys in our hands
 - a) if you have read Exodus 12 lately, you would object: wait, no, that's from the old testament, from passover
 - b) we would answer: yes, but the Lord's Supper has replaced the passover in the New Covenant
 - c) no, the Bible says that the church of Jesus Christ met on the first day of the week to break bread, not the 14th day of the first month; and the Lord Jesus told us simply to eat the bread and drink the cup; the Lord's Supper is not like the passover in those ways
- F. since the church's one baptism is the baptism ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ, we can know some things about the ordinance of baptism
 1. it cannot be changed by us
 2. it could not be improved upon by us, even if we could change it
 3. it is not a license to do a variety of things
 4. it is a prohibition against doing other things as an option to baptism
 5. it is not overruled by any previous ordinance, even from the Old Testament

Our Lord Jesus ordained baptism; it is an ordinance established by Him

Since baptism is ordained By Our Lord Jesus Christ, there are some things we can know to be true about that ordinance of baptism

- III. Consider the Implications of That for How We Understand Ourselves in Regards to Baptism
Since our baptism is the baptism ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ, there are things we can know to be true about ourselves in relationship to that ordinance of baptism
- A. We do not naturally feel moral compulsion for the exact terms of the ordinance, so we must not deal with the ordinance according to that
 1. difference between “Honor your father and your mother” and “Immerse disciples” Your dealing with the baptism ordinance is not on the basis of the natural right or wrong of it, but on the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ has ordained it.
 - B. If our idea of what the ordinance should be is not the same as what it actually is, we must consider ourselves, not Christ’s ordinance, to be mistaken
 1. you may be tempted to think there should be flexibility in the baptism ordinance, so that the subject might be someone other than a disciple of Jesus Christ, or the mode might be something other than immersion; that it would be better that way than as it is stated by the Lord in the Bible
 2. but there you would be mistaken; the Lord Jesus is a perfect lawmaker; any ordinance He has issued is the best it can be; it could not be improved upon
 - C. If we do something else besides baptism, we are then obeying the ordinance of someone other than Christ
 1. if what Christ commanded is the baptism of His disciples, and men are doing something else, they are obeying the command of men rather than of God
 2. Mark 7:7-9 AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.' (8) For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men-- the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." (9) He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.
 - D. We are obliged to obey it
 1. He is the Lord, and we are His domain
 2. He is the King, and we are His subjects
 3. He is the Master, and we are His servants
 4. He is the Creator, and we are His creatures
 5. He is God, and we are not

- E. We love true baptism for Christ's sake; we want to obey His ordinance out of love for Him
1. He is the very Son of God, all lovely, all majestic, infinitely worthy of love
 2. Think of what He has done for us
 - a) He took on our flesh
 - b) He came down here for us
 - c) He suffered and died for our sins
 - d) He was buried
 - e) He rose again
 - f) He appeared to us to show Himself alive
 - g) He sent His church to go all over the world with His gospel---all the way over here to North America
 3. Oh, what love we have for Him because of what He has done for us!
 4. What do we do with that love? He has told us:
 - a) John 14:15 If you love Me, keep My commandments.
 - b) Oh, yes, we do love You, and it is our joy to keep Your commandments
 5. When He had done all of this for us, He commanded that we as individual disciples be baptized, and that we as a church baptize His disciples
 6. and so we love the church's one baptism, and the ordinance by which the Lord Jesus ordained that baptism, because we love Him, and we obey it out of love for Him
- F. The church's unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace is to be found where baptism is observed according to the ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ.
1. where people are flexible as to who gets water put on them, and how the water is applied, there is a kind of unity and a sort of peace
 2. but it is not the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace commanded by our Lord's apostle
 3. it is a carnal, worldly, shallow, useless unity; it is not worth being wrong, so long as everyone is wrong together

Our Lord Jesus ordained baptism; it is an ordinance established by Him

Since baptism is ordained By Our Lord Jesus Christ, there are some things we can know to be true about that ordinance of baptism, and some things we can know to be true about ourselves in relationship to that ordinance of baptism

IV. APPLICATIONS

- A. Let us always wish for the genuine institution of baptism to be maintained, rather than a counterfeit to be substituted
- B. Let us prefer to struggle much, to be persecuted much, to lose much, rather than to lose the baptism ordained by our precious Lord Jesus
 - 1. not: “yes, I know immersion is baptism; but it’s not worth trouble, not worth conflict, not worth losing anything to keep that”
 - 2. instead: “I am willing to lose everyone and everything in this world, if only I can follow Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior.”
- C. Let us not grant to ourselves a liberty that the Lord Jesus has not granted us.
- D. Let us consider it right, not wrong, to reject whatever tampering people do with the baptism ordinance. If we do not accept their altered version, let us be confident it is their wrong, not ours.
 - 1. We are not, by pointing out their error, causing a problem with unity
 - 2. They, by their disobedience to the ordinance of Christ, are causing a problem with unity
- E. Calvin: “let us learn that there is nothing holier, better, or safer than to be contented with the authority of Christ alone.”
 - 1. Isn’t it holier to be broad-minded?
 - 2. Isn’t it better not to be so insistent?
 - 3. Isn’t it safer not to rock the boat?
 - 4. No, “there is nothing holier, better, or safer than to be contented with the authority of Christ alone.” And in His authority, He has ordained the church’s baptism

CONCLUSION

Our baptism is the baptism ordained by Christ.

The baptism with which I was baptized in 1979 is the baptism ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ. The baptism with which we will baptize Michael this afternoon is the baptism ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord grant that the last baptism we perform before our Savior comes back will be the baptism He has ordained.

Andrew - Call to Worship and Opening Prayer - 1 Chronicles 29:11-13

Nathan - Scripture Reading - Deuteronomy 4:1-9

Thad - Congregational Prayer

Benediction - Ephesians 3:20-21

Ava - Prelude

Haven - Trinity 402 “Amazing Grace” - Alvin lead

Haven - Trinity 125 “My Heart Doth Overflow”

Audrey - Trinity 178 “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded”

JRY:

The church's one baptism is something we do because the Lord Jesus Himself told us to do it, not because of anything derived from

-general revelation or

-old testament ordinances or

-not by the command that Abraham and his descendents circumcise their baby boys

-man-made traditions or

-our own imagination.

And so if someone does something and calls it "baptism," but it is not what the Lord Jesus himself ordained, then it is not the church's one baptism.

JRY:

See how clearly He ordained it

1. He demonstrated it by submitting to it Himself
2. He ordered His church to do it
3. He commanded us to submit to it
4. He caused prominent examples of it being obeyed to be recorded

Calvin:

[comments on Acts 8:38] We ought rather to fight even an hundred times to [the] death for the ceremony . . . of baptism, ~~inasmuch as~~ [since] it was delivered [to] us by Christ, than that we should ~~suffer the same~~ [allow it] to be taken from us.

Calvin:

Whether the person baptised is to be wholly immersed, and that whether once or thrice, or whether he is only to be sprinkled with water, is not of the least consequence: churches should be at liberty to adopt either, according to the diversity of climates, although it is evident that the term *baptise* means to immerse, and that this was the form used by the primitive Church. *Institutes* chapter 15 Of Baptism; paragraph 19

Hiscox:

And yet it [sprinkling of infants] was not instituted by Christ . . . It is for this reason that Baptists utterly reject and condemn the custom, as . . . without authority . . .