

1 Peter 3:18-22 – The Baptism of Noah – Aug. 11, 2024

1. Exciting to see what God has been doing in this little church in such a short period of time
 - a. After this morning, we will have baptized a total of 29 people
 - i. Couples, teens, adults, new Christians
2. Baptism is a naming ceremony
 - a. Like adoption, a new name is put on these people as they publicly join themselves to Christ and His church
3. We live in a world of symbols
 - a. The spirit of our age has successfully taught us to see a world of facts and yet be blind to the world of meaning
 - i. Everything from architecture to last names to marriage is symbolic of a reality that is bigger than the symbol itself
 - b. As Christians who want to honour the supremacy of Christ over all reality, we have to start by honouring His Word as the ultimate standard
 - i. This means that we must see that the real historical world is full of symbols, as Scripture itself communicates
 - ii. Our temptation is to see our own lives as the ultimate standard and fulfillment of all things, and this cuts us off from seeing the story God is telling in history
 - iii. The signs, seals, and symbols of Scripture are not the result of God observing man and then repurposing our experience

1. Rather, our experiences are part of the story authored the God who has written all of human history, so our experiences are meant to point us to a reality that is much larger and much more solid than anything we can see or touch
- iv. We see, for example, that the marriage relationship between a man and a woman is symbolic of Christ and the church and then assume that God *discovered* something in reality (human marriage) and then used that kind of language to talk about His church
- v. This is exactly backwards. God had His church in mind before Creation, and so when He created man and woman and marriage, He created them *as symbols* of this reality that is far greater than them.
 1. The human experience isn't the standard, but the symbol which points us to the standard
 2. The things we experience on earth are copies of the heavenly template
- vi. Seeing the place of stories, parables, and symbols helps us to understand not just the content, but also the romance and the intrigue of biblical Christianity
- vii. To understand the big story, we need to see ourselves as smaller and God as bigger. He is not the supporting character in our drama. We are all real but small players in the long story He is telling.

- viii. The amazing thing about God is that when He wants to tell a story, it happens with real people, in real places, in actual history. God's stories have a way of coming alive.
4. So when we get to a passage like this that connects our practice of baptism to Noah's Ark, we shouldn't think that Peter just saw a common element of water and then connected these two things
 - a. Rather, God wanted to tell a story which would symbolize His plans for baptism, so He caused a real historical worldwide flood, and saved one real physical family
 - b. As real as Noah, the flood, and the ark were, God put them in the story so He could later on tell His people a story about the meaning of law and grace, death and resurrection, and how He seals it through baptism
 - c. In other words, baptism didn't develop by humans to re-enact Noah's flood, Noah's flood happened at least in part because God had *already decided on baptism* and He wanted to tell a real life story in history so we'd understand it better once we got to this chapter that includes water baptism
 - i. The Flood happened in part so that after 4000 years of talking about it, we'd develop a better picture of what our baptism means
 5. VV. 18-20 – *“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, 19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.”*

- a. The basis for the gospel, and for the way the gospel is symbolized here in baptism is the life, death, and resurrection of Christ
- b. Christ came as the mediator between God and man
 - i. It is in Christ that God and fallen man can make contact with one another
 - ii. Because Christ is *fully God*, He is able to earn the righteousness that we need
 - 1. Only God can satisfy God's demands, so for God to be satisfied with us, it will have to be Him providing the righteousness
 - iii. Because Christ is *fully man*, He is able to serve as a true representative for fallen humanity
 - 1. Only a man can retrace Adam's missteps and do it over properly on our behalf
- c. Because Christ is the place where God and man are able to touch each other, an exchange is made between "*the righteous and the unrighteous*"
 - i. A substitution takes place in which Christ takes the blow that we deserve
 - ii. All the curses that were built up in Adam and his children get put on Christ's shoulders, and in exchange, all the righteousness that Christ earned as a man walking the earth gets put on our shoulders like a robe of perfect righteousness. It is a two-way exchange
 - iii. This exchange is called "substitutionary atonement" and it is at the very heart of the gospel
 - 1. Each of these baptism candidates are up here this morning because they have had this atonement applied to them personally

2. They have been united to Christ so that they can truly say, like Paul in Galatians 2:20 *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*
 - d. V.19 is one of the most difficult verses in the NT, so we won’t go far into it, but what I think it’s saying is that while Christ’s soul did not go to hell during His death, as some believe; but that while in paradise (Hades), He preached across the wall in Hades that separates the just from the unjust, and announces His victory over death and Hades, before He is resurrected back to physical life
 - e. V.20 indicates that the spirits that were imprisoned here were those that perished in the days of Noah, and it’s interesting that these are the ones who are singled out, since Hades would have contained all the souls of the dead from all time periods
 - f. The end of v.20 shows the significance of this time period, since it talks about the 8 persons who were saved through water at this time
 - i. The souls in prison to whom Christ is announcing His victory are significant because they were the mockers and scoffers from Noah’s day
 - ii. Seemingly, this is the bottoming-out point of evil in the world
 - g. This is explained further in the next two verses
6. VV. 21-22 - *“Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of*

Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.”

- a. V.21 clearly connects baptism to the fact that Noah’s family was brought safely through the water
- b. The baptism doesn’t save in itself, as though the water itself does something
 - i. This is why it says “*not as a removal of dirt from the body*”
 - ii. Further, it says that this is “*an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*”
 - iii. This is further indication that the baptism doesn’t automatically do something magical, but that it is effective when it is done in faith
 1. These seven young people have clearly professed their faith in Christ, and this means that their baptism is a milestone or a landmark that they can look back on and appeal to so that they can know that they are united to Christ in His resurrection
 2. When Paul gets us to remember our baptism in Romans 6 and Colossians 2 the most important thing to remember is not that it happened, but what it meant
 - a. It is an acted-out sermon that reminds us in difficult seasons that we were buried with Christ and that we have also been raised with Him
 - b. *Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb? Were you there when the stone was rolled away?*

- i. Because of our union with Christ there is a very real way in which we can say a resounding “Yes”
 - ii. Galatians 2:20
- c. The point of the water is that it is a symbol which connects us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- d. V.22 *“who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.”*
 - i. At His resurrection, Jesus’s ministry is completely vindicated and the Father subjects everything to the Son
 - 1. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness and Satan offered Him the kingdoms of the world, Jesus refused
 - 2. This was not because He didn’t want these kingdoms, but because He was intent on taking them by victory instead of negotiation
 - ii. Peter is using the language of the Psalmist in Psalm 110:1 here, a thread that weaves all the way through the Bible
 - 1. It is no longer Satan, but Christ who is the ruler of this world
 - 2. And this applies at the personal level to you seven
 - a. Being baptised into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ means that it is no longer Satan but Christ who is the ruler of your life
- e. So, the whole thing could be summarized like this:
 - i. When God came to judge the world of Noah’s day, He used water
 - ii. This water was responsible for the death of the old world

- iii. Yet this same water is what kept the ark afloat so Noah's family could be saved
- iv. Christ follows the same pattern of Noah's flood
- v. He gets drowned by God's holy judgment and dies
- vi. But the same holy judgment that put Christ in the grave also raises Him back up, and He brings an entire church up with Him
- vii. After the resurrection, Christ takes His throne and is given all dominion over the cosmos
- viii. When we are baptized, we follow these same steps
 - 1. Going down into the water in judgment is a reminder that the old sinful man must die
 - 2. Once the old man has died at the bottom of the sea of God's wrath, the victory of Christ is announced, and the new man comes up out of the water of new birth
 - 3. The steps of immersion give us a picture of how we are saved – first by dying and then by being made alive as a new creation
 - 4. We are likewise united to Christ, seated with Him in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:6;
 - a. Also why we do law/gospel reading every Sunday
- f. Seeing baptism in this light also helps us make sense of other ways in which the Bible talks about water
 - i. Judgment

1. Jonah/Noah/Christ calming the sea/“the sea shall be no more”
(Rev.21)

- ii. Newness

1. Cleansing/birth/rebirth all happen through water

- iii. Both are also present in Moses and the Israelites going through the Red Sea

1. This baptism of Moses is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:2
2. The same water that destroys God’s enemies allows for safe passage of God’s people

- g. In the three days that Christ was dead, He was not in the process of decay or of losing. Rather, He walked through the waters of God’s judgment so we don’t have to

- i. Even when He appears to be at the bottom of this sea, He is announcing His victory to those ancient souls who are still at war with God

- ii. And when He comes back up, first to earth, and then ascending to heaven 40 days later, it becomes plain to all that, as v.22 says, he is seated at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers all having been subjected to Him

- iii. The old order of things went down in death and judgment, and a new born creation under the lordship of Jesus Christ came back up with Christ

7. For the candidates

- a. All of you are here because this spiritual death and resurrection has already happened to you

- i. You have been born again
- b. You have come to faith in Jesus because you were first born again
 - i. The old you has already died, and the new you is telling us about it today
- c. What we are doing now is sealing that reality with the sign and symbol of baptism
 - i. This is for the benefit of both yourself and for others who are here
 - ii. For you, this is something you can always look back on when you struggle or doubt. He *has* given you a new heart, He *has* given you the gift of faith, He *has* given you His name, and He is about to give you the symbol of baptism to remember it by, much like a couple will give each other a ring as a sign and a seal of their vows. Just like my ring reminds me of my wife, so your baptism reminds you that you belong to Christ and to His church.
 - 1. Like a wedding, in one way you walk out the same person, in another way everything has changed forever.
 - iii. For others here, this is a reminder that we are witnesses to this, and by being here, we are also showing a willingness to pray for these young people, to help mentor them, and to give guidance and correction when necessary
 - iv. Because baptism is a physical dramatization of the gospel, if you are a believer, you can be encouraged and strengthened as you recall that Christ went down in judgment on your behalf, and that He also came back to life on your behalf. His physical resurrection has paved the way out of the

grave for you. Your body will not stay in the ground forever, but will be resurrected just like Jesus' was.

- v. If you are here and you do not know Jesus Christ in a saving way, then you have encountered the gospel not only in spoken word, but also as a re-enactment to make it vivid and clear to your senses. If you want to live forever, the old you must die now. If the old you stays alive, you are going to a future where you will die forever.

1. *If you're born twice, you'll only die once. But if you're only born once you will die twice.*
2. Someone has to satisfy God's demand on you for perfect holiness
3. If you attempt this on your own, you will stay in the water of judgment. If you place your faith in Christ, He has faced this judgement on your behalf, so you can be raised back up out of this water with Him.

8. CHARGE

- a. *Baptism is a re-enactment, a symbol, a sign, and a seal. In baptism, we die in the waters of God's judgment, just like the wicked of Noah's day, or like Egypt in Moses' day. In baptism, we identify with Christ going into the heart of the earth. But just like Christ, our going down isn't the path of defeat, but of victory. Christ announces victory at the very bottom of His descent and then makes that victory visible to all when He comes back up, first to earth, and then to heaven. Because He has done that for us, our baptism demonstrates our connection to Him as the old man goes down, and the new man is born through this very same water.*

9. BENEDICTION

- a. Hebrews 13:20-21 – *“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*