

Believer's Baptism
Selected Scriptures
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INTRODUCTION

1. Last Sunday morning we looked at one of the ordinances of the church — the Lord's Supper.
2. This morning I would like for us to look at the second ordinance, which is baptism.
3. Since we have been together as a new church, the Lord has allowed us to baptize 12 people, of which 11 have been in the last 3 months.
4. There are many questions about baptism, like, "What is it?" "Is it commanded?" "Does it save you?" "Are infants to do it?" "Are you to be fully immersed or sprinkled?"
5. This morning we are going to look at a few of those questions, which, I believe will when properly understood will lay a foundation for the rest.
6. Baptism is mentioned over 100 times in the New Testament.
7. With that many references it is important that we understand its significance.
8. There are two common Greek words used for baptism

in the New Testament - baptisma and baptizo. A third word is bapto which is less common only occurring 4 times in the NT.

9. Early church history records various views and problems concerning the teaching of baptism.
10. These problems had to do with whether baptism could save you. This is called baptismal regeneration. The second had to do with whether infants were to be baptized.

Justin Martyr taught that, to obtain the remission of sins, the name of the Father should be invoked over the one being baptized (1 Apol.61).

‘After baptism, the Christian was supposed not to sin, and some sins, if indulged in after that rite had been administered, were regarded as unforgivable.’

Although this concept was not as emphatic among the apostolic Fathers, it became increasingly so in the following centuries.

Augustine, for instance, taught that original sin and sins committed before baptism were washed away through baptism. For that reason he advocated baptism for infants.

Augustine nonetheless emphasized the need for repentance and faith as the conditions whereby baptism might be received by adults.

Irenaeus and Origen both acknowledged the validity of infant baptism, but Tertullian opposed it.” (Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, p.427).

Martin Luther taught that the sacraments of baptism and Lord’s Supper are vehicles that communicate the grace of God. They are not dependent on the person’s faith or worth, but are dependent on God’s promise. Hence, Luther later taught that unbelievers profit from the sacraments.

Luther’s concept of baptism did not differ markedly from the Roman Catholic view; he retained much of the Roman ceremony connect with the rite.

Luther taught that baptism is necessary to salvation and, in fact, produced regeneration in the person. (He emphasized that baptism is an agreement between God and man in which God promises to forgive the sins of the person and continue to provide His grace while the person promises God a life of penitent gratitude.

Concerning baptism Luther stated: ‘It is most solemnly commanded that we must be baptized or we cannot be saved.’

Luther also upheld infant baptism, teaching that although infants are unable to exercise faith, God, through His prevenient grace, works faith in the unconscious child” (Ibid., Enns, p.453).

11. Having a bit of history and hearing what the problems were that existed, what is baptism?

I. The Meaning of Baptism (What does it mean?)

A. Three Words Are Used in the New Testament for Baptism

1. Gr.bapto (verb) is the less common. It is used only 4 times in the NT and it means “to dip into,” “to dip.” It was used for “dyeing” when you immersed something in a dye.” It is translated “immerse.”
2. Gr.baptizo is an intensified form of bapto — the Greeks had ways of sticking in a few extra letters and intensifying a word.

Baptizo (verb) occurs 80 times in 65 verses in the NT. It means “to dip completely” and it’s the Greek word for “drowning,” which shows how complete the dipping is. It is translated “to submerge or immerse.”

3. Gr.baptismas (noun) is used always in the book of Acts to refer to a Christian being immersed in water.

B. Baptism is a Ceremony By Which a Person Believes the Gospel and is Then Immersed into Water

Henry Thiessen, in his *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, writes: “It would seem that as the apostles preached the gospel and people responded, they were immediately baptized”

(p.324).

1. John the Baptist fully immersed believers in water upon their confession of sin - Mat.3:1, 5-6

(v.1) In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea.

(vv.5-6) Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

Marvin Vincent, in his *Word Studies in the NT*, tells us that the phrase “were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins,” means their “confession was connected to baptism. They were baptized while in the act of confessing.” It was “An open confession, not a private one to John.”

Lighfoot says, “Baptism, or the application of water, was a rite well known to the Jews, and practised when they admitted proselytes to their religion from heathenism.” (Quoted in *Barnes Notes on the NT*).

This was a 3 stage ceremony:

- a) The first phase was called mela and that amounted to circumcision. Because circumcision was a God-ordained sign,

any male who came in, even in an adult, would need to be circumcised. He would need, therefore, to identify himself with the people of God by this unique circumcision ceremony.

- b) The second thing that would happen to him, would be tebula and that was immersion.

He would be dunked in water, submerged in water, in order to demonstrate that they were dead to their old life. They were dead as to their old customs, their old habits, their old traditions, most of all their old idolatry, and their old iniquity. That was now gone; they were burying it. That submersion into water depicted the death of that old life. That would come out of that water, having arisen to walk in a cleansed and new life with God's community — God's family.

- c) The third part was called corban and it had to do with the sacrificial animal. They were to bring an animal to be slaughtered and the reason for the slaughtering of the animal was to remind the Gentile of the forgiveness of sin, their coming into the community of God's people and that the animal was the substitute to die for their sins.

In this 3 stage ceremony they literally passed on, as it were, the symbol of a substitutionary death to those Gentiles who came in, depicting the ultimate lamb who would come and truly take away sin. (Gleaned by John MacArthur's sermon *Baptism: A Matter of Obedience*, p.6).

“John's baptism confirms that he is calling for a once-for-all turning from the old way of life to the new, as when Gentiles convert to Judaism. Although Judaism practiced various kinds of regular ceremonial washings, only the baptism of Gentiles into Judaism paralleled the kind of radical, once-for-all change John was demanding” (*IVP Bible Commentary: Matthew*).

Tertullian writes: “They who are about to enter baptism ought to pray with repeated prayers, fasts, and bendings of the knee, and vigils all the night through, and with the confession of all by- gone sins, that they may express the meaning even of the baptism of John: "They were baptized," saith (the Scripture), "confessing their own sins” (*Compiled Allusions to the NT in the Ante-Nicene Fathers*).

2. Jesus was baptized by immersion in order to fulfill all righteousness - Mat.3:13-17

a) John resisted Jesus because it didn't make sense for Jesus to be baptized.

- (1) He had no old life to reject
- (2) He didn't need to repent of anything
- (3) He was sinless, holy, and undefiled
- (4) He didn't need to say no to the past and yes to the future — He was perfect!

b) Jesus tells John “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (v.15)

- (1) Jesus is saying that there is a standard of righteousness called baptism
- (2) By His submitting to baptism He is showing how critical obedience is, “even though there was no need for Him to go through any kind of cleansing, any kind of repentance, any kind of confession of sin” (Ibid., MacArthur, p.8).

3. The apostles followed this same pattern of baptism of repentance by immersion

a) At Jerusalem - Acts 2:38

Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name

of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Peter’s words are similar to John the Baptist’s connecting repentance with baptism — as that of a Gentile proselyte.

b) At Samaria - Acts 8:12

But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

c) At Gaza - Acts 8:26-39

d) The Apostle Paul - Acts 9:17-18

e) Cornelius the Centurion - Acts 10:47-48

f) Lydia and her household - Acts 16:14-15

g) The Philippian Jailer - Acts 16:31-33

h) The Corinthians - Acts 18:8

C. Baptism is Symbolic of the Believer’s Identification with Christ in His Death, Burial, and Resurrection

Henry Thiessen, again writes: “The ordinance of baptism is a symbol of the believer’s identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. In baptism the believer testifies that he was in Christ when Christ was judged for sin, that he was buried with him, and that he has arisen

to new life in him. It symbolizes that the believer is identified with Christ, for he is baptized in (or 'into') the name of the Lord Jesus. This was done while the penitent called upon the name of the Lord. There was an open and public confession of the lordship of Christ. But before water baptism must come instruction (Mat.28:19), repentance (Acts 2:38), and faith (Acts 2:41), for water baptism does not effect identification, but presupposes and symbolizes it" (Ibid., p.324).

John Piper says, "Baptism is a symbolic expression of the heart's "appeal to God." Baptism is a calling on God. It is a way of saying to God with our whole body, "I trust you to take me into Christ like Noah was taken into the ark, and to make Jesus the substitute for my sins and to bring me through these waters of death and judgment into new and everlasting life through the resurrection of Jesus my Lord." This is what God is calling you to do. You do not save yourself. God saves you through the work of Christ. But you receive that salvation through calling on the name of the Lord, by trusting him. And it is God's will all over the world and in every culture - no matter how simple or how sophisticated - that this appeal to God be expressed in baptism. "Lord, I am entering the ark of Christ! Save me as I pass through the waters of death!" Amen. (Sermon: *What is Baptism and Does it Save?*)

"Baptism portrays what happened to us when we became Christians. This is what happened to us:

we were united to Christ. His death became our death. We died with him. And in the same instant, his life became our life. We are now living out the life of Christ in us. And all this is experienced through faith” (Sermon: *What Baptism Portrays*)

1. Romans 6:3-6 - Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

2. Colossians 2:9-12 - For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. 11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

3. Galatians 3:27 - For as many of you as were

baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

II. The Command of Baptism (Is it commanded?)

A. It was Sanctioned by Christ's Submission to It

1. He set the standard of obedience to this ordinance - Mat.3:13-15 - Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. 14 And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" 15 But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.
2. The only difference of His baptism verses anyone else, He had no sin to repent of - Luke 3:21 - When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened.

B. It was Sanctioned by Christ Command for It

1. Jesus directly commissioned His disciples to "baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Mat.28:19).
2. Acts 2:38 reveals the Apostles' obedience to Jesus' command

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let

every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

3. Acts 10:48 reveals Peter's interpretation of his commission by Jesus

And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

CONCLUSION

1. So what is baptism?

Baptism is a ceremony by which a person is immersed into water in response to Jesus' command and example to be baptized. It is symbolic of His death, burial, and resurrection.

2. Are infants to be baptized?

The Scripture makes no mention of infant or paedobaptism. All the references to baptism indicate that a person receives Jesus Christ, acknowledges, and is baptized as a public statement of his faith.

John Piper says, "if you ask what the decisive, public way of taking a Christian stand was in the New Testament, the answer is, baptism" (Sermon: *I Baptize You with Water*).

3. Does baptism save you?

1 Peter 3:21 says, “There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

A.T. Robertson says, “The saving by baptism which Peter here mentions is only symbolic (a metaphor or picture as in Ro 6:2-6), not actual as Peter hastens to explain. Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh” (*Robertson’s Word Pictures*).

Jaimeson, Fauett, Brown Commentary writes:

“Water saved Noah not of itself, but by sustaining the ark built in faith, resting on God’s word: it was to him the sign and mean of a kind of regeneration, of the earth. The flood was for Noah a baptism, as the passage through the Red Sea was for the Israelites; by baptism in the flood he and his family were transferred from the old world to the new: from immediate destruction to lengthened probation; from the companionship of the wicked to communion with God; from the severing of all bonds between the creature and the Creator to the privileges of the covenant: so we by spiritual baptism. As there was a Ham who forfeited the privileges of the covenant, so many now. The antitypical water, namely, baptism, saves you also not of itself, nor the mere material water, but the spiritual thing conjoined with it, repentance and faith.”