

Baptism

Mat. 3:13-17

JOKE - Son of a Baptist Pastor was watching his dad baptize some people and he decided he wanted to be a preacher also. So he went home and decided to practice. He found an old tom cat and decided baptizing that tom cat would be good practice. It went about like you would expect, with every attempt that Cat had a fit. As a matter of fact he tried it 10 times. On that last try the cat jumped up out of the water and scratched the boys face and bolted out of the room. The boy said, "Fine be a Methodist if you want to".

Now let me ask you a question – should that be our attitude? Is baptism really that important? Should we say, "Oh well to each his on"

- Does it matter how we are baptized?
- Does it matter when we are baptized?
- Does it matter why we are baptized?
- Does it matter who baptizes us?
- Is your baptism biblical and in its proper order?

What is baptism?

The word baptize means immersion.

- Actually, it is an untranslated word (or transliterated word) in the King James Version. In 1611, when old King James of England was going to have the Bible translated from Greek into English, the scholars he hired came to the Greek word baptizo. Unfortunately, King James didn't believe in baptism by immersion, because the tradition in his day was to sprinkle people with water. So those scholars, in order to save the king embarrassment, decided not to translate the word. They just used the Greek word because they didn't have the courage to translate it. But any Greek scholar can tell you the word means "to immerse."
- Immersion was practiced in the early Christian church, and if you visit the ancient cathedrals of Europe built before the thirteenth century, you'll find they all have baptisteries. As a matter of fact one that I have seen a picture of had an inscription that it was donated by a certain deacon.
- The method of baptism is important, because the method is tied to the meaning. **Therefore, if you change the method, you change the meaning.**

It is the Greek word baptize which literally means, "to immerse to the point of drowning" It was a word used for dying cloth.

Notice how it is used in the Bible.

- **Matthew 3:6**, John the Baptist, "They were being baptized by him in the Jordan River." They came down into the river and they were baptized there. The river was not taken to them; they were taken to the river.
- **Matthew 3:16**, "After being baptized, Jesus, went up immediately," literally, "out of the water."
- In **John 3**...when John the Baptist was doing this baptism, he picked a place at the Jordan River that was deep. It says in **verse 23 of John 3**, "John was baptizing in Anon, near Salem." Of all the spots you could stop along the Jordan River, he picked that one because "there was much water there" which is simply another way of saying the water was deep. There was enough water there to get people under it—that was the whole point.
- In **Mark, chapter 1, verse 5**, same thing, "All the country of Judea was going out to him and all the people of Jerusalem, they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River"... "in the Jordan River."
- You remember in **Acts, chapter 8**, when Philip came across the Ethiopian eunuch, you remember the statement in **verse 36**, "Look, water! What prevents me from being baptized," **verse 38**, "he ordered the chariot to stop, they both went down into the water, and he immersed him."

So Baptism is not a sprinkling of water or a dabbling on the brow, it is literally a burial and a resurrection from the water.

You might be thinking – Where did sprinkling come from?

- The first recorded case in all of early church history was that of **Novatian** in 251 AD, who lay sick on his bed and water was poured on him.
- It was legalized by the Catholic Church at **the Council of Ravenna in 1311 AD** by Pope Clement the 5th
- The **Reformers didn't reform this** – Baptist did. We required adult converts to be re-baptized. That's what brought persecution on our forefathers.

Now that we are clear on what baptism is, let's look at what it means...

Matthew 3:1–17 (ESV)

¹ In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ² "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

That is to say that God's Kingdom is so close you can reach out and touch it. Both in time and space - that Kingdom the Patriarch's looked forward to is now here!

³ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’ ” ⁴ Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

Now for years I imagine John with Cricket Legs in his teeth and honey dripping down from his mouth. But we discovered in Israel that the Locust is a type of bean that is similar to chocolate and they are all over the wilderness of Israel. He would take this locus pods and honey and make a type of energy bar out of them and that was his diet. Very vegan friendly.

⁵ Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Historically Baptism was only performed on Gentiles who were coming into the context of Judaism. That’s why it was shocking when John preached that the Jews needed baptism. He was saying that they were outside the family of faith. What was even more shocking was that some of them came for baptism. They were admitting their separation from the Covenant community.

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹ “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

John was speaking of the Messiah - the Lord Jesus Christ. Obviously, John had a massively high opinion of the Messiah. SO you can imagine his surprise when Jesus came to be baptized.

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, “**Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.**” Then he consented.

The Baptism of Jesus was very significant. Jesus is saying - I have become like one OUTSIDE the covenant community in order to bring many INTO the covenant community.

¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Believer's Baptism Became THE single act of obedience that delineated those who followed Christ from the rest of the World. Think of it for 2,000 years people of every tribe and tongue all over the world who follow Jesus Christ have begun their journey by baptism.

Baptist accomplished three things:

1) Baptism Associates us with an Event in History

The first public act Jesus did in his ministry was to proclaim the last public act of his earthly ministry. Jesus proclaimed his death burial and resurrection.

Jesus's baptism pointed toward the cross. Our baptism points back to the cross.

Romans 6:3-4 (ESV)

³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Biblically – Baptism is your profession of faith.

When you are baptized you are associating yourself publicly with an event in history.

That is why sprinkling does not constitute baptism. To change the MODE is to change the MEANING.

Some of you were sprinkled as a baby. Friend, please understand that was an act that demonstrated your parents faith - not your's. You were a passive participant. If you were sprinkled and never of your own accord came for baptism, you have, in fact, never been truly baptized.

2) Baptism is our First Act of Obedience

Just after the resurrection of Jesus...

Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV)

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

That leads me to another issue, that leads me to the next message, why is there so much confusion on this? Well, I think Satan wants to break the pattern of obedience at the very start, so there are a lot of attacks on baptism.

- You know, there are churches that teach that it’s not for us—that it’s a Jewish ordinance that doesn’t belong to the church, Quakers, Friends Churches, Salvation Army.
- Others say: you’re saved by water—the Christian Church, the Churches of Christ, Disciples of Christ—have taught baptismal regeneration through the years: that you can’t get to heaven without going through the water.
- And then there are those, who, like the Mormons who have baptisms for the dead—in one year over 2.5 million Mormons are baptized—proxy-baptisms for dead people.
- And then you come to the Roman Catholic Church which the only baptism they have is the sprinkling and it’s infants that are sprinkled—the Roman Catholic Church has an infant baptismal regeneration belief that water cleanses the baby from original sin and results in regeneration.

ILLUSTRATION: Baptism is a sign of the covenant we have with God. It’s much like the rings that are given at a Christian wedding ceremony - the stand as an evidence that the covenant was made. AND as a sign to others that this person is in a covenant relationship. If you take the ring off it doesn’t make you single, but what would it communicate if in the middle of the wedding ceremony the bride said, “Uh, I’m not wearing that... my parents got me a ring as a baby... it’s really inconvenient... I don’t have to wear that to be married”. You see?

3) We are Baptized for Identification as Christ Followers

Matthew 3:16–17 (ESV)

¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

There is something about when you stand proclaiming your fidelity to Christ - the Father also proclaims His fidelity to you!

Matthew 10:32–33 (ESV)

³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

ILLUSTRATION: Many years ago I read about a Pastor Daniel Kirby - Daniel Kirby was a minister back in the horse and buggy days. He took what he had, a horse, a pen, he preached, he wrote books... but sometimes he wondered if it was doing any good.

Then one night he had a dream. In this dream he stood before the Judgment Bar of God. He said that as God's presence was revealed he fell down into a fetal position, gripped with fear. His arms wrapped around his knees.

Suddenly he heard a loud voice from the throne cry out - WHO ARE YOU AND WHY ARE YOU HERE? But Kirby said he could hardly breath much less speak... then he heard the voice again - - WHO ARE YOU AND WHY ARE YOU HERE? Again, terrified he could not answer... a third time more fiercely the voice asked - WHO ARE YOU AND WHY ARE YOU HERE? And again he was helpless to respond.

About that time he felt two hands reach under his arms and lock at his sternum. He noticed that the hands were nail scarred. It was Christ. Jesus lifted him up and hung there limp and helpless... Jesus looked boldly into the face of the Father and said, "This is my servant Daniel Kirby - he confessed me before me, now I confess him before you.

Baptism is your first sermon... it's your proclamation that you are trusting the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

Here are Excuses I sometimes Hear about Baptism:

1. **People say, "It's not that important..."** If you won't obey God in this one small step, why do you think you'll obey God in the other areas of your life? That's a terrible way to start your Christian life. That's like telling your wife on your wedding night you're going to go out with some old single friends to a club. Not the way to start your marriage. The way to start your walk with Jesus is not by postponing what he's clearly told you to do.
2. **You say, "I was baptized as a baby."** Again, no offense, but baptism is presented in the Bible as your own profession of faith. When you were baptized as a baby, that was a statement of your parents' faith... and thank God for that. But now it is time to ratify their decision and declare your own faith in Jesus!

3. **You say, "I'm not prepared."** We have a change of clothes for you... all sizes. Dark colored T-shirts and towels and hairdryers and personal stylists to get your hair back to the exact form you put it in this morning. (Kidding about that last part... but we have the clothes and towels and hairdryers.)
4. **You say, "Well, it's really inconvenient."** Don't want to go over the top here... but Jesus hung on a cross naked for 6 hours for your salvation, and getting wet in a pool of warm water is too inconvenient for you.
5. **You say, "But I want my cousins, aunts, uncles, grandma, all here to see."** Listen... here is what happens. They all come and sit on the front row and try to get an iPhone video. We are using professional cameras from multiple angles - we will give them a much better experience today than for you to DISOBEY Jesus over something that you may never be able to pull together. And think about it - it's far more important to your family that the SEE YOU OBEYED IMMEDIATELY WHEN GOD SPOKE,.