

Understanding Baptism Part 1: September 9, 2020

New Class: Understanding Baptism

Today's The Big Idea: We need to understand the “spiritual anchors” that shape our view of important topics like baptism.

What is Baptism? While every church would define it in their own way, a broad definition that would probably apply to most churches might be this: *“A Christian rite of passage involving water that symbolizes a person’s entrance to the Christian faith.”*

Sources of Disagreement:

1. Symbol or Concrete?
2. Strictly Necessary?
3. Before or After Forgiveness?
4. Adults Only or All Ages?
5. Immersion Only or Dip / Sprinkle?
6. Single Dip or Triple Dip?

Biblical References: Acts 2:38, Romans 10:9, Acts 22:16, Romans 6:1-4

Spiritual Anchors

Why do Christians Disagree?

1. Different opinions on sources of **authority** (Bible vs. Tradition)
2. Different assumptions about **underlying theology** (Original Sin)
3. Different **interpretations** of relevant Bible verses

*Everyone has a “**spiritual anchor**”—Big ideas, passages, or assumptions that serve as a non-negotiable starting point for understanding our faith.*

Example: **Acts 2:38 and Romans 10:9**

*“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” **Acts 2:38 (NIV)***

*“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” **Romans 10:9 (NIV)***

Anchored in Acts 2:38: How does Romans 10:9 make sense in light of **what we know to be true** about Acts 2:38? We express our faith and give our confession during baptism, based on **Acts 22:16:**

*“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.” **Acts 22:16 (NIV)***

Anchored in Romans 10:9: How does Acts 2:38 make sense in light of **what we know to be true** about Romans 10:9? Baptism is the physical symbol of a forgiveness that has already been received.

Two Anchors in John:

Jesus is from God: “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.” (**John 3:2**, NIV)

Jesus is Just a Man: “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’ ?” (John 6:42, NIV)

Spiritual Anchors for the topic of Baptism

1. Original Sin vs. Age of Accountability
2. Church / Papal Authority vs. Sola Scriptura (Bible Alone)
3. Sola Fide (Faith Alone) vs. Precision Obedience
4. 5 Step Plan of Salvation vs. Sinners Prayer
5. Commend, Example, Necessary Inference vs. Historical-Critical

It's impossible to have a discussion about major theological issues without understanding the unspoken “spiritual anchors” beneath the surface.

The Three Major Branches of Christianity:

1. Catholic (1.3 billion adherents)
2. Protestant (900 million adherents)
3. Orthodox (280 million adherents)

Major Protestant Denominations / Affiliations: Pentecostal, Anglican, Nondenominational, Baptist, Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, African, Chinese, Seventh Day Adventist, Restoration, Anabaptists, many more.

The Catholic Teaching: Anchored in Original Sin, Papal Authority

1. Everyone is born guilty, so baptism is immediately necessary for everyone of all ages.
2. A holy sacrament with real effects.

The Orthodox Teaching: Anchored in Original Sin

1. Everyone is born into a fallen world, so baptism is immediately necessary to break them free.
2. A holy sacrament with real effects.

The Protestant Teaching: Varies based on the group.

1. Some baptize infants and adults, others just adults.
2. Some view it as a symbol, others as a concrete change.
3. Some emphasize the entrance to the community, others to a relationship with Jesus.
4. Some view it as necessary without exception, some necessary with exceptions based on God's grace, others view it as a command but not necessary for salvation.

Objectives and Roadmap

There are four **objectives** for our class on baptism:

1. Greater knowledge of what God teaches about baptism.
2. Greater love for God because of this gift.
3. Greater self-awareness about our spiritual anchors.
4. Greater empathy for how and why Christians disagree

Our Class Roadmap:

1. The symbolism of water in the Old Testament.
2. What Jesus does and teaches regarding baptism.
3. The nine baptism stories from the book of Acts.
4. The Apostles' teaching on baptism in the New Testament.

My Spiritual Anchor on baptism: Romans 6:1-4 (NIV)

> What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, **we too may live a new life. Romans 6:1-4 (NIV)**