

Understanding Baptism Part 4

September 30, 2020

Resources on Baptism

1. *Down in the River to Pray* by John Mark Hicks and Greg Taylor
2. *Baptism: What the Bible Teaches* (free eBook on renew.org)
3. A Student's Guide to Baptism (free study guide on TeachOneReachOne.org).
4. Free Bible Study put together by Bryan

Recap:

Old Testament Stories: The waters of Creation, the Flood, the Red Sea, the Jordan River.

Spiritual Anchors: Big ideas, passages, or assumptions that serve as a non-negotiable starting point for understanding our faith.

The Baptism of Jesus: Four ways of understanding the story:

1. **Trinity**—The revelation of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit.
2. **Sacrament**—The blessing of the waters by Jesus institutes the sacrament of baptism.
3. **Story**—Jesus' baptism is a major turning point in the grand narrative of God's redemptive work.
4. **Example**—Jesus sets us an example to follow by doing what he commands us to do.

Tonight's Class

1. What is the best way to understand the book of Acts?
2. What is the significance of the nine baptism stories in Acts?

***The Main Idea:** Baptism highlights the expanding nature of God's Kingdom and represents the fulfillment of God's longstanding promise to bring all nations together into his Kingdom.*

The Big Questions About Baptism in Acts:

1. Who is getting baptized?
2. What do they know about Jesus?
3. When do they receive the Holy Spirit?
4. How long do they wait?

What's the Theme, Purpose, and Genre of Acts?

The *genre* determines how we read a particular work of literature.

1. **Blueprint**— Is Acts a precise set of guidelines and rules that we are to follow?
2. **Newspaper**— Is this an objective, chronological history focused on the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How?
3. **Biography**— Is this a narrative of select stories from the early church curated to highlight important themes about God and his Kingdom?

My Take: Acts is best understood as a *Spiritual Biography*.

"The consistent witness of scripture... is that God's intention is to form a people, a community, a visible body." -Robinson & Wall, **Called to be Church**

Background: God Has Always Had a Heart for the Whole World:

*"The Lord had said to Abram... **all peoples on earth** will be blessed through you."* -**Gen. 12:1,3**

*"Let all the earth fear the Lord; let **all the people of the world** revere him."* -**Psalms 33:8 (NIV)**

*"He did this [Crossing the Jordan] so that **all the peoples of the earth** might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God."* -**Josh. 4:24**

*"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you **a light for the Gentiles**, that my salvation may reach to **the ends of the earth.**"* -**Isa. 49:6**

Solomon's Prayer for the Temple: *"...that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other."* -**1 Kings 8:60 (NIV)**

*"He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to **the ends of the earth.**"* -**Micah 5:4 (NIV)**

The Overall Theme of Acts is the Fulfillment of This Divine Promise. *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to **the ends of the earth.**"* -**Acts 1:8 (NIV)**

Luke Focuses on Jesus' Ministry to the Outsiders in the Gospels.

A few stories that are unique to the Gospel of Luke highlight Jesus' love for outcasts and outsiders:

- 10 Lepers
- Prostitute anoints Jesus' feet
- Zacchaeus
- Women Supporting Jesus
- Good Samaritan
- Great Banquet
- Lost Sheep / Coin / Son
- Thief on the Cross

“Luke’s two accounts are narratives, not church manuals or directories, and certainly not ‘systematic theologies’ of baptism. Baptism does not function independently in the narrative, but serves the larger concern that drives Luke’s Gospel story.”

Hicks & Taylor, *Down in the River to Pray*, 48

Baptism: An immediate response to believing the Gospel, illustrating the fulfillment of God’s promise to restore Israel by bringing all people together into the Kingdom.

*14 “Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. 15 **You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard.** 16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’” -Paul, describing his baptism in Acts 22:14-16 (NIV)*

The Nine Baptisms in Acts:

	Chapter	Background	Location	Age	Spirit	How Long?	Message
1. Pentecost	2	Jewish	Jerusalem		During	Immediate	Gospel
2. Samaritans	8	Samaritans	Samaria		After	Immediate	Good News
3. Ethiopian Eunuch	8	Jewish Convert	Gaza Road	Adult		Immediate	Good News
4. Saul	9, 22	Jewish Pharisee	Damascus	Adult		3 Days	Jesus is Lord
5. Cornelius	10	Gentile	Joppa		Before	Immediate	Good News
6. Lydia + Household	16	Roman Woman	Philippi	Family		Immediate	Paul’s Message
7. Jailer + Household	16	Roman Official	Philippi	Family		Immediate	Jesus is Lord
8. Corinthians (Crispus + Household)	18	Greeks, Synagogue Leader	Corinth	Family			Jesus is Lord
9. Disciples	19	Unknown	Ephesus		After	Immediate	Christian Baptism

Nine Other Conversions

In addition to the nine baptisms, there are nine other instances of a person or group of people believing the Gospel without explicitly being baptized. Each of them corresponds to a demographic that has already been baptized in Acts:

Baptized: Devout Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 2)

1. Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 4)
2. Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 5)

Baptized: Samaritans / Eunuch (Acts 8)

3. Jews in Joppa (Acts 9); outside of Jerusalem.

Baptized: Cornelius (Acts 10)

4. Greeks in Antioch (Acts 11)
5. Proconsul (Acts 13)
6. Jews / Greeks in Iconium (Acts 14)
7. Jews / Greeks in Thessalonica (Acts 17)
8. Jews / Greeks in Berea (Acts 17)
9. Athenians (Acts 17)

Conclusion:

Baptism in Acts is best understood as a sign of God's expanding kingdom. As the Gospel expands, more and more people from all backgrounds are baptized into the Kingdom of God. Peter's explanation of Cornelius' baptism is a great example of viewing baptism through this lens:

“So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?”¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.” -Acts 11:17-18 (NIV)