

Back to Basics part 3
“How Important is Baptism?”
Acts 10:44-48

Introduction

As we continue our series “Back to Basics – What is Christianity all about?”, today’s topic might be one that you would not think to be included in such a series, but I believe you will see from God’s Word today why baptism is an important basic in the Christian life.

Now I realize we are talking about a subject today in which Christian churches hold a variety of views on:

Catholics and Lutherans believe in baptismal regeneration – that the infant is saved at their baptism.

Methodists practice infant believe it is more of a dedication

Presbyterians practice infant baptism but see it as replaces OT circumcision and see it bringing the child into the covenant of faith.

Baptists and many other non denominational churches practice believer’s baptism and believe it should come after one receives Christ

Church of Christ says it is so important that it is really necessary for salvation and if you are not baptized for the remission of sins you are not a Christian.

Lots of believes and practices out there, huh? So what is one to believe? Well, this shows how important it is that we be like the **Bereans** in Acts 17:11 in which it said that they examined daily the things Paul said to see if it was in line with the Word of God.

It is so important that we see what God’s Word teaches and that we place the Word of God above our tradition, the way we were raised (Lutheran in my case), what some church or denomination says, what some pastor says (including me), or what some book says. What does the Word teach??? This

Because of the nature of this topic I am going to approach this in a very simple and straightforward manner, and that is to just go through as many passages as we can and look plain and simply at what the Word teaches, because this is the final authority, and this is where our doctrines and beliefs and practices should come from.

TS So take our your bibles and let’s go through some passages today. Get ready to do some page turning. I purposefully do not have some neat outline or even main points because what we are going to do is just go from one passage to another and try to give you as best as I can the overall view of the NT on this:

John the Baptist

Mt. 3 the first record of baptism comes when John the Baptist is baptizing people in preparation for Jesus beginning His public ministry. Here we see a baptism in water and of repentance. What is important to note here is

Connected with repentance and a changed life

Mt. 3:6-8 produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Jesus' Baptism

Then we have Jesus being baptized: in water to fulfill all righteousness

Mt. 3:13-15

I find this very interesting that Jesus was baptized, not because He needed to be in any way connected with salvation or the forgiveness of sins, for He was sinless and He came to die for our sins, but the significance of this I think is that Jesus did this as an example for us of how important baptism is, and as an adult, not as a child (he was taken to the Temple to be dedicated as a child), and that this is to fulfill all righteousness. Jesus was already righteous on the inside but his baptism was to somehow show on the outside his inward righteousness. Same for us perhaps.

You know, we talk of being a follower of Jesus, a disciple, as someone who is to increasingly become like Jesus, which means that we are to do as Jesus did.

1 John 2:6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

Jesus was baptized, and so should we be baptized as His follower. If you get baptized for no other reason than the fact that Jesus was baptized and you want to be like Jesus, I think that is reason enough frankly.

To follow Jesus' example and to fulfill all righteousness

The next mention of baptism comes in the middle of the Gospels to speak of a metaphorical baptism and not a water baptism. You might call this a **dry baptism**.

That is what we see in

Luke 12:49-51

Jesus said he had a baptism to undergo. He had already been water baptized, so this one is a baptism of suffering. So, it means to be identified with or immersed in something.

Mark 10:37-40

Baptism of suffering is what Jesus was referring to here.

Ex. *Baptism of fire:* We use the word this way today: someone's first day as a paramedic let's say and they have to literally save someone's life we would say, "Wow, you really got a baptism of fire"

This is important to note, and that is each time the word baptism is used in the Bible is not necessarily to speak of water baptism as we observe now, but rather some uses are where the word baptism talks of an identification with someone else, because the word literally means to be immersed or dipped or identified with something. In secular use, the word was used for the sinking of a ship or the dying of a clothe. And that is the meaning of the root word "bapto" from which we get baptism.

Identification with something

(To show how this is root meaning, in 2 verses the greek word bapto is translated “dip” instead of baptize: in **Jn. 13:26** (he who dips the bread in the dish) and **Rev. 19:13** (dressed in a robe dipped in blood).

The point here is that baptism literally means to dip or immerse or to identify with something, and that each use of the word is not necessarily speaking of a water baptism.

This is also the way the word is used when the bible speaks of the **baptism of the Holy Spirit**: not a water baptism but being immersed and identified with the Holy Spirit. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the same as the filling of the Holy Spirit which we will learn about next week. It means to be immersed and empowered and identify with the Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives.

Now turn to Romans 6 because this is a very popular passage when it comes to baptism and yet, again, I don’t think this passage is so much about water baptism as it is about our identification with Christ at salvation.

Romans 6:3-5 is describing the salvation experience with references to baptism. We identify with Christ’s death and resurrection when we die to self and receive Christ by faith. Romans 5:1, 9 make this clear. So in Romans 6 when he uses baptism he is using it in the sense of an identification with Christ when we are saved and not a water baptism necessarily, although I wouldn’t doubt if water baptism is in mind here because of what a wonderful picture it is of our death to self (when you go down into the water) and raised to new life in Christ (when you come out of the water). Baptism by immersion is a beautiful picture of this.

Ex. In **England** some of the baptisteries in the old churches were 8 sided to look like a coffin, to symbolize this idea of death to the old.

The final use in the Gospels comes in:

Mt. 28:18-20 as part of the Great Commission. This is very important because here we have Jesus’ last words before He leaves and this commission is what we are all called to be a part of. This commission and been the church’s marching orders for over 2000 years. This one passage has lead to great missions enterprises all over the world.

The way this is written in **Greek** is significant: one verb: make disciples modified by 3 participles: going, baptizing, teaching. How do you make disciples? By going, by baptizing, and by teaching, and I think in that order: go to the lost, win them to Christ, have them baptized, and then teach them to follow and obey Jesus.

Part of being a disciple of Jesus

And that is exactly what we see as we go to the book of **Acts**, so let’s go now to Acts, because that is the book of the bible where baptism is talked about the most.

Right away as people are coming to faith in Christ (week one of our series) and growing in love with Jesus (week 2 of our series), what do we see? We see baptism! And that is

why we are doing this topic in week 3 of this series. As we go through many verses here, note how quick they were to be baptized after getting saved:

Immediately after salvation

Acts 2:41 accepted the message and baptized

Acts 8:12 believed ... baptized

Acts 8:34-38 Philip shares with the eunuch and he wants to get baptized right away.

Acts 9:18 Paul is saved and baptized

Acts 10:47-48 saved, HS indwelling them, spoke in tongues ... baptism. This to me is one of the clearest verses that baptism is not necessary for salvation. A Christian doesn't need to get baptized to be saved but if you are saved you need to be baptized.

You just don't find any unbaptized Christians in the book of Acts. And there shouldn't be any today as well.

Ex. Couple can get married without a public **ceremony** (i.e. elope; Justice of the Peace) but you kind of feel like something is missing. Baptism is like the wedding ceremony. The ceremony doesn't marry them, their vows and the legal issue is what marries them – heart and commitment issue, but the ceremony provides the public proclamation and celebration and sure makes it feel real official. Baptism is like that as well.

Publicly proclaiming one's allegiance to Christ

Acts 16:33-34 whole family baptized. **Does this support infant baptism?** No, because look at **v. 34**: the entire household believed. We always see faith present when one is baptized. In every case but one where it mentions household baptisms, it mentions the entire household believing.

Quote Grudem: p. 978

I really recommend you read the chapter on baptism from Grudem in his ST ... available in the lobby today.

Acts 18:8 believed and were baptized

Acts 22: (Paul is blinded on his way to Damascus): **v. 12** (receives his sight – saved!)

v. 16 immediately baptized.

Now this phrase “wash your sins away” might be confusing for some of you. It almost sounds like baptism is that which washes your sins away, and it is verses like this that some take to mean you must be baptized to be saved.

What is going on here is this: because the NT pattern is Word preached, people saved, and then baptized, in that order and very quickly in most cases, because of that you have baptism sometimes spoken of in a way that sounds like you can't have one without the other.

Ex. Walk the aisle. During college I was involved in a church that often said “come forward and get saved; or walk the aisle and get saved. Walking the aisle doesn’t save you but because that was such a common part of the culture of the experience, it was said together.

Look at this verse, too:

1 Peter 3:21

21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also-not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

You see he is saying that the actual water baptism does not save you but rather the work of Christ at the cross and our heart response to God: coming in your heart to Christ with repentance and faith and receiving Christ.

So you can see from all of these passages how the **pattern** is Word preached, people believe and get saved, and then they are baptized. Why do anything different today?

And yet, so many churches practice infant baptism and even tell the people that this baby is now a child of God, his sins are forgiven and he has eternal life.

(So why do so many practice infant baptism? Church tradition and fear of what if my baby dies. Many believe that infant baptism takes care of original sin. I wish it did, but anyone who has a baby and has had it baptized know that that baby still sins, so it didn’t take care of original sin.

The reason infant baptism came into play in Christianity is because many did not know what to do with babies who died and so baptism was a way for many to believe that through baptism original sin could be taken care of. The problem is there is no biblical support for infant baptism and actually just the opposite: everyone being baptized in the NT are those who are doing so after they repent and believe and receive Christ. So, why do today what is not in the NT???? I know for some of you this is a real challenge and you have a hard time going against your church tradition or the way you were raised, but folks, we need to do with this topic as we do with all topics, and that is ask ourselves: What does the Word of God teach? Let us not do be guilty of what Jesus warned against in

Mk. 7:6-9

The bible teaches that if an infant dies they will go to heaven, based on the passage when David loses the baby Based on the mercy and grace of God and not based on baptism.

2 Sam. 12:23

Quote by Lutzer p. 134

Back to infant baptism: An infant is not able to understand and thus exercise repentance and faith, which we learned week 1 is necessary for salvation to be present, so why baptize an infant when faith on the part of the infant is not able to be present? It reverses the biblical order: faith then salvation then baptism. Not baptism and then faith and salvation. Plus infant baptism often creates a false assurance of salvation, especially when a pastor proclaims that the baby becomes a Christian at infant baptism. Very unbiblical and misleading. Furthermore, in some churches today, you here words like this at a funeral, when the person may not have ever been a follower of Jesus.

Words from funeral service

But what about the faith of the parents? We are never told that one can be saved on the basis of the faith of another.

(Now I am going to have us look at some more **difficult verses**, verses that at first reading seem to almost indicate that if you are not baptized, you are not saved:

Mark 16:16

16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Acts 2:38-39

38 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.

Let me say this: I do not want to water down these verses. They certainly show again that infant baptism is out of the picture. Let me take them one at a time:

Mk. 16 questionable part of scripture, not sure it was in the original. Anyway, notice believe and baptized, not baptized and then believe. Also, the second ½ does not include baptism.

Acts 2:38 the word for can be translated because

Close connection with salvation but not necessary for salvation

This should show how important it is. I do not believe that baptism is necessary for salvation; however, if I were not baptized, I would sure look at these verses and say to myself "with verses like this, how could I not be baptized, and if I refuse to be baptized, can I really be sure I am saved?" I know that sounds strong but I really want all of us to look at what the Word says and I think we have seen today how important baptism is for someone who is truly a follower of Jesus.

Conclusion:

So, what have we learned today? Baptism is very important. Look at all of this:

Give the entire lists of statements on one slide

For me, the biggest one is that Jesus was baptized and so should we as ones who are to do as He did. And He wasn't baptized as an infant.

Chall. If you have received Christ and are a follower of Christ, have you been baptized since you have been saved? If so, praise God. If not, why not? What is it that is keeping you from being obedient to the clear teaching of God's Word?

Why would you not be baptized?

- a. I am afraid to give my testimony. I understand. The #1 fear in Amer. is public speaking. We simply ask you to write it out and you can just read it. After all, the bible says in Rom. 10 if you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth... saved. Baptism can be a great way to confess with your mouth. Furthermore, and I don't want to sound hard here but Jesus

Mark 8:38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.

- b. Fear of water. We can work through that. I have seen many experience God's power to help them with this one. **2 Tim. 1:7** God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love and sound mind.
- c. Physically cannot be immersed. Perhaps in a wheelchair or have health issues. OK, we will pour water over you. We have done that before.

If possible: Picture of Zimmer's baptism where we were pouring water over their head

There is so much beautiful symbolism in it. Why would you not? But I already have been as a baby? But now that you have more knowledge and truth about it, don't you see that you need to be since you have been saved?

Acts 19:4 they had further light and were re-baptized.

So, Pastor David, when can I get baptized? Well, I am glad you asked, because in just 3 weeks we have a very special annual event coming up at Goose Island where you can get baptized.

Pictures of baptisms

Information packets on a table in the lobby Explain testimony, etc.

Prayer

Response: this should all be done for the honor of Christ's name.