

Baptism in Water (Video)

by Anton Bosch

This sermon delves into the significance of baptism, emphasizing the importance of belief and repentance as prerequisites for baptism. It clarifies that baptism is a symbolic act representing the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and it is a public declaration of faith. The sermon also addresses the issue of re-baptism, highlighting that a valid baptism occurs when a believer is immersed after repentance and faith, and re-baptism is necessary if the initial baptism was not based on genuine belief.

Scripture: Hebrews 6:1, Acts 8:36, Mark 16:16, Luke 23:43, Acts 2:38, Matthew 28:19, 1 Corinthians 10:2, John 3:23, Acts 2:41

Topics: "Baptism", "Faith and Repentance"

Description

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Transcript

Hebrews chapter 6, as we continue speaking about the first principles, or the foundation, or the milk of the word. In Hebrews chapter 6, we'll read verses 1 through 8. We're dealing with the doctrine of baptisms, and this evening we'll speak about water baptism. So let's read Hebrews chapter 6, verses 1 through 8. Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

And this we will do if God permits. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain, that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God.

But if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected, and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burnt. So the first principles in verse 1, the foundation of repentance from dead works, number 1, and then faith towards

God, number 2, doctrine of baptisms, number 3 in verse 2. And we said that it's clearly in the text, the doctrine of baptisms, plural, and so there are four baptisms. Last week we looked at baptism into Christ, this week we're going to look at baptism in water.

Now, there are those online who have been buying the book, Building Blocks for Solid Foundations, and for their sake I'm following the outline in the book, so it's not something I do comfortably. I prefer to speak as we go, but I'm sticking to the outline in the book for those who are following in the book. So let's begin with the recap of saying what is baptism.

Baptism, we said, is immersion. The word means to dip or to immerse, and so we are immersed into Christ, we are placed into Christ. And as we look at water baptism today, we're immersed in water.

So the question then, obviously, is why do we baptize? We baptize because it is a command of the Lord Jesus. The Great Commission in Matthew 28, and also in Mark 16, we're going to look at Mark 16. I'm going to look at some of these verses, I think one of them three times, we come back to them because we want to look at different aspects of those same verses.

But Matthew 28, verse 19, "...go therefore and make disciples of the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." And so it is a specific command of the Lord Jesus. The problem is that we say, well, you know, we must preach the gospel, but we don't have to baptize. Baptism is not essential for salvation, and I'm going to address that later on.

And baptism is not essential for salvation. But at the same time, it is a specific and a clear command of the Lord Jesus. Particularly if you consider that this is what we call the Great Commission.

This is what He says we are to do until He comes again. And there are obviously many commands, but this is one of the things where He gives us a very, very specific command, and that is to preach the gospel and to baptize the converts. And then in the New Testament, we see that all believers in the New Testament were baptized.

And in the book we go through, we have probably seven or eight different scriptures from the book of Acts where people were baptized. We're not going to go through all of them, just this one in Acts 2, verse 41. Then those who gladly received His word were baptized, and that day about 3,000 souls were added to them.

And so this is Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost, of course. 3,000 people respond to the gospel, and all 3,000, it seems, are baptized. So this was a practice of the New Testament church.

We've been speaking on Sundays about the Lord's table from the gospel of Luke, and that was one of the commands. Jesus says, do this in remembrance of me. And so they continued to break bread, and they continued to baptize.

So we do it because it is a command, and we clearly see the New Testament saints continuing in the practice of baptism. Now, 1 Corinthians chapter 15, when we ask the question, well, what does baptism mean? And I think the problem here is that if you ask people, they'll say, well, baptism is when you become a member of the church. Now, that is an error which is not just part of high church, but it's also a part of many churches that baptize.

There are many churches that do not regard you as saved unless you've been baptized. And as I said, we're going to deal with this doctrine called baptism or regeneration in a moment. Others will say, well, you're saved, but you can't take communion.

You can't be a member of the church unless you've baptized. Well, that's not in the Bible. The point of the first baptism, baptism into Christ, is that when I get saved, I get made part of the body of Christ when I'm saved, not when I'm baptized.

And so the meaning of baptism is not making members of the church. The first meaning of baptism, well, the first important thing concerning baptism is that it is symbolic of the death, the burial, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and of us. This is the heart of the gospel.

1 Corinthians chapter 15, we've gone through this so many, many times. Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preach to you, which also you received and in which you stand. So he says, I'm going to tell you, this is the gospel by which also you were saved.

It's the gospel that saved you. If you hold fast that word which I preach to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first, now here's the gospel that he preached.

This is the gospel that they were saved by, and he says this is the gospel by which they are kept. And so, first of all, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. So Paul says this is the gospel.

Now, not only did Christ die, but remember that we said last week that we were in Christ. So when he died, we died with him. We were effectively buried and raised with him to walk in newness of life.

We covered that all last week. And so, when we baptize someone, we are showing forth that process. When the person is put under the water, they are effectively dead.

If the baptizer doesn't bring them back up again, well, then you can call the hearse. But he brings them back out again, and so it's a form of a grave, it's a watery grave. They are brought, they die, they come back up again.

So the death, burial, and the resurrection of Jesus, but also of the saint. So that is the first meaning of baptism. In 1 Peter 3, verse 20, is a verse that I'm going to come back to maybe again.

He's speaking about Noah, and the ark, and the flood, and he says, those who perished in the flood, or sorry, those that Jesus preached to, were formerly disobedient when once the divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which few, that is eight souls, were saved through water. They were saved through water. Now remember, it wasn't the water that saved them, but they were effectively dead, but God put them in the ark, and they come out on the other side a year later, and they're alive.

So they are brought through the water, in a sense. Those who were not in the ark ended up dying, and of course the whole world died except those eight. Now verse 21, there is also an antitype.

Remember this word antitype? So we have types and antitypes. The type is the picture or the shadow in the Old Testament. The antitype is the reality in the New Testament.

So the Passover lamb is a type of Jesus. The Passover lamb is the type, Jesus is the antitype. The problem we have with this word is we get the idea that this word anti- means opposed to, like the Antichrist.

But the word doesn't just mean opposed to, it also means in the place of, or the opposite. So you have the shadow, and you have the opposite of the shadow, the reality. You have the type, and you have the antitype.

You have the pictures, and you have the fulfillment of those pictures in the New Testament. So the reality of the ark, he is saying, there is also an antitype which now saves us. The same way as those people went into the ark, they went through the flood, and the rain, and all of the water that came out the other side, saved.

Not saved in an eternal sense, but saved from the flood. So baptism, then, not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now he says two things here that are important.

The first is that it refers to washing. I suppose that if we ask somebody, what is water used for, we would have two answers. The one is that we use it to drink, and the other is we use it to wash.

Obviously it has many other purposes. But one of the main purposes of water is to wash. And so here he's making reference to washing.

So the water of baptism, he says, does not wash away the filth of our flesh. But again, it is symbolic. And we must remember that these things are powerless in themselves.

They are not the reality. Baptism is a picture of the reality that happened inside of us. We're going to see this on Sunday when we come to the Lord's table, where you have exactly the same problem, because there are those who say, well, the bread and the wine is the literal body and blood of Christ.

No, they are symbolic of the body and the blood of Christ. We'll deal with that on Sunday. The same way as water baptism doesn't wash me clean.

It may rinse some of the worst dirt off if I wasn't too clean to start with. But that's not the point. It's not the cleansing of the filth of the flesh, but it is a picture of the washing that came as a result of the blood of Jesus Christ.

And so, again, symbolically, you go into the water dirty, you come out of the water clean. Now, I know that should be true of adults. It's not always true of children.

I know my grandchildren oftentimes go into the water and come out just as dirty as they went in. But the idea is that you go in dirty, you come out clean. So what we're showing is what happened when we were washed in the blood of Christ.

And so it is a picture, then, of death, burial, and resurrection. It's a picture of washing and of cleansing. But then he gives another answer here.

He says it is the answer of a good conscience towards God. Now, that's a complicated idea, and I don't want to get stuck there because we're running out of time. But it deals with two things.

The first is that by being baptized, I am making a declaration that my conscience is right with God. Why? Because I've been washed in the blood. Not because I'm righteous in myself, but because of what happened when I got saved.

When I got born again, my sins got washed away. And so not only my sins washed away, but my conscience is cleansed. So I come to God with a good conscience because of what Jesus' blood does for me.

And so it's a declaration of a good conscience. But it also deals with the fact that it is showing forth that I am keeping a good conscience with God. One of the things we're going to see, or we've already touched on, we're going to come back to, is that baptism is a step of obedience.

We do it because he tells us to do it. It's not whether we like it or not. It's being obedient.

Now, if I'm being disobedient, whether in baptism or any other area, do I have a good conscience? No, I don't. I may think I have, because I've become so blasé, so blind or deaf to the promptings of the Spirit, but if I am sensitive to God and I'm disobedient, my conscience immediately worries me. I've done something I shouldn't do, or I've not done what I should have done.

And so when God prompts us to be baptized and we don't, it affects our conscience. It affects our relationship with God, because we're disobedient. And so by being baptized, we maintain a good conscience with God.

Now, in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 2—and remember, in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul draws the analogy, again, the types and the antitypes, the analogy or the picture of Israel coming out of Egypt, that they were under slavery in Egypt, the same way as we were under slavery to sin. They come out of Egypt, God sets them free, and he brings them through the water of the Red Sea, through the cloud baptized—and we'll come back to that at another stage—and then through the wilderness into the Promised Land, a picture of salvation and our journey of faith. And so they were all baptized, it says, into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

Now, don't get too hung up about into Moses. What he's saying is Moses was the baptizer, in a sense. And remember, the baptizer is not that important, other than it helps us to understand what baptism we're talking about.

And so they were baptized into Moses in the cloud, picture of the baptism of the Spirit, which we will talk about next week, and they were baptized in the sea. We say, well, when were they baptized in the sea? Well, when they came through the Red Sea. So in Exodus chapter 14, verse 22, so the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right and on their left.

And so they are—again, this is symbolic. They didn't get wet, but they were going through the water. And again, the same picture.

If the water had closed in on them, they would have died, like the Egyptians. So again, it's a picture of burial, and they come out alive on the other side. At the same time, Egypt is now cut off.

They're cut off from Egypt. I'm going to come back to that in a moment. But so they are baptized effectively in the sea.

Now, what was the reason why God took them through the Red Sea? Now remember that he could have taken them another route. There's a way around the Red Sea, and it doesn't go that—it's not that far. It's quite easy to get around, because it's like a tongue that goes in between Africa and Arabia.

And so they could have gone around. But God takes them through the Red Sea. Well, obviously, there were two reasons.

The first was because God was going to now finally deal with the Egyptians as they drown, as the army drowns in the Red Sea. But he was also teaching them a lesson, and the lesson was that the way back was now cut off. And again, obviously, they could find a way around and go back to Egypt.

Remember, they wanted to do that over and over. But what God was saying is, you've now burnt the bridges. There's no going back to Egypt, because the Red Sea has been closed, and you're on this side, and Egypt is on that side.

Now you need to go on. And that's effectively what we're doing also when we are baptized. So we're declaring all of these things, and amongst them we're declaring that I've died to the world, that the world is behind me.

I'm no longer going back there. And in fact, the way back to the world is now finally cut off. Now obviously some people find their way back again to the world.

But remember that—and I'm going to come back to this idea also in a moment—and that is that if you were a Jew, remember that the writer here in Hebrews is writing to Hebrew, to Jewish believers. When they got baptized, it was a very serious step. Today in America and in Western countries, baptism is not that serious, because everybody is baptized.

Well, I guess not everybody, but most people, either baptized as infants, which we'll talk about, or baptized as an adult. It's no big deal. But if you are a Jew, and you get baptized, it's a serious thing, because the family will tolerate your dabbling in Christianity, until the day you get baptized.

But the day you get baptized, it's a serious statement of saying, I'm done with Judaism. I am now a Christian. I'm identifying with Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.

And at that point, they will cut you off. The same is true of a Muslim. For Muslims to be baptized, it's very, very serious.

They can be a secret follower of Jesus. Their family will tolerate the fact that they worship Jesus, but it's not that serious. But the moment they get baptized, that's the final burning of the bridges.

It's the end of the road, as far as the world is concerned. And so, it is a statement that there is no going back. It is a sign of obedience.

Jesus said in John 14, 15, if you love me, keep my commandments. Many people don't get baptized, because they say, well, it's not a big deal. Well, if it's not a big deal, well, why don't you just do it? I mean, it's that simple.

Is it a command of the Lord Jesus? Clearly, it's a command of the Lord Jesus. And we say, well, you know, I still don't want to do—well, if you love him, you need to keep his commandments. And that doesn't just apply to baptism.

It applies to any of all sorts of things that God speaks to us about, that he wants us to do, and that we simply ignore, and we say, well, I don't have to do this, I don't have to do that, I don't have to do that. These things, we say, are not essential for my salvation, so it doesn't matter if I don't do them. It does matter, because it goes to the issue on the point of obedience.

So, that's the other reason why we need to be baptized, and the meaning of baptism. So, here's the other point. Jesus was baptized.

Now, remember, and we, again, don't have the time to get into John's baptism in comparison to Jesus' baptism. They are different baptisms, but there are, again, similarities. Remember, there were baptisms in the Old Testament, which we'll talk about in a moment.

And so, there were Old Testament baptisms, there's John's baptism, and then there is New Testament believers' baptism, and they all have certain things in common, but they are not the same. The same way, as we said on Sunday, concerning Passover and communion, there are similarities. The communion has its roots in the Passover, but they are not the same thing.

They are, in fact, totally different. The one speaks about deliverance out of Egypt, the other one speaks about deliverance out of the world and the body and blood of the Lord Jesus. But Jesus is still baptized.

Now, Matthew 3, verse 15 through 17, But Jesus answered and said to him, permitted to be so. Remember, John says, I can't baptize you, you need to baptize me. And Jesus answered and said to him, permitted to be so.

Now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. And then he allowed him. Remember that John's baptism symbolized repentance.

And I don't want to get into it in more detail, because we have a lot of ground still to cover this evening. It symbolized repentance. Did Jesus have to repent? No, he didn't have to repent.

All of the things we've spoken about in terms of the washing, he didn't need to be washed. None of these things, he didn't need to be put into the body of Christ or into Christ, because he was Christ. So baptism really had no value, if you will, for Jesus, because he was sinless.

And yet Jesus is baptized. So why is he baptized? Well, here's the reason he gives. He says, thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.

In plain English, it is right for me to be baptized. It is right for me to be baptized. That's all he says.

It doesn't add to Jesus' righteousness. Remember, he is 100% righteous, with or without baptism. So he just needs to do it.

Why does he need to do it? Because the Father wanted him to be baptized. How do we know that? Well, if we go to verse 17, verse 16, first, when he had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water. I'm going to come back to this verse again later.

And behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God ascending like a dove, and alighting upon him. And then verse 17, a voice came from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Now, I think that if anything speaks to the importance of baptism, this speaks to it.

Remember where Jesus is at now. He has lived his life for 30 years, growing up as a boy, working in his father's carpentry shop, being a carpenter himself, providing for the family. And he has not preached a single sermon.

He's not performed a single miracle. He's done nothing except live his earthly life. And obviously, he studied the Scriptures and had a relationship with his father, and so on.

And yet, at this point, the father says, I'm pleased. What was the father pleased with? Well, yes, the way he lived his life, obviously the father was pleased with that. But it's because he was obedient in baptism that the father puts his stamp of approval on Jesus' obedience.

And he says, This is my beloved Son. Heaven's opened. The Holy Spirit descends upon him, and he then begins his earthly ministry.

First goes into the wilderness, and then begins his earthly ministry. So again, a simple question for those who choose not to be baptized. The question is simply, Are we better than Jesus? Are we better than him? If he needed to be baptized, well then, I need to be baptized.

It's really as simple as that. All right. Matthew chapter 10, verse 32.

It is a public declaration. Now, let me just say a few words about baptism. Baptism, or about the public aspect of baptism.

Baptism is a public declaration. It's a public declaration. There is no example, except for the eunuch to some extent—but remember, even the eunuch is not traveling alone, he's traveling with an entourage, there's people with him—of people being baptized secretly.

There's a thing among some Christians about being baptized secretly, and so I get my husband or my wife to baptize me in the bathtub. No, the part of the serious—folk do this, this is popular. No, part of what I'm doing is I'm making a declaration.

I'm making a public declaration that I'm identifying with Jesus in his death, burial, resurrection, that I've been washed, that I've come out of Egypt, that I'm now moving onto the promised land. All of these things we've spoken about. So it's a public statement that needs to be made, and it's not just a public statement.

It is made to principalities and powers, to the demons. We're making a statement to them. And remember that the moment Jesus is baptized, the devil's on him.

It's that serious. Not only does the Father acknowledge Jesus' baptism, but the devil gets on his case as well, because he is baptized. And so it's a declaration to everyone.

And so the idea of a secret baptism just doesn't go with the whole principle, the whole idea of what baptism is all about in the New Testament. And so this verse applies then, verse 10, Matthew 10, 32, Therefore, whoever confesses me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. And so when we are baptized, we are making a confession.

Part of that is a testimony, a vocal testimony, but the vocal testimony is not the whole thing, just what I'm doing. By being baptized, I'm making a statement, I'm making a declaration. We'll see the same thing in the Lord's table.

By doing this, he says, you show the Lord's death until he comes, or you declare the Lord's death. So when on Sunday we took the bread and we took the wine, we're making a declaration. We're making a declaration that Jesus died and that he died for me.

It's a statement that we're making to ourselves, to the church, to others who would choose to look on, and to principalities and powers, to demons who are watching, that we identify with Jesus' broken body and his shed blood, what a baptism is. And the similarity between these two things, of course, we speak about the fact that we don't like to call them sacraments, but we have two of these symbolic things that we do as a church. One is the Lord's table and the other one is baptism.

We don't have anything else. All right, so it is a confession of Jesus before men. And I spoke about Muslims and Jews and others who, when they are baptized, it becomes the final breaking of the relationship with the world, because it's a final statement, declaration, that I'm with Jesus.

And then he goes on, and he says if we deny him, he will deny us. John 3 verse 23. Now, what I want to deal with here is the idea of sprinkling versus immersion.

We know that there is a tradition in some churches to put a few drops of water on the head of the baby, sometimes in the form of a cross, sometimes they'll use a cup or something, and they'll pour some water over the baby's head. Now, just by the way, some traditions also baptize adults in that way, by sprinkling water on the forehead of the adult. So it's not always, although generally, I guess 80-90 percent of the time when we speak about sprinkling, it is babies that are sprinkled.

When we speak about immersion, generally it's adults that are immersed. But there are variations. In the Greek Orthodox tradition, because they know the Greek, they do not sprinkle.

They know what the Greek says. They say, no, it means immersion. So they baptize babies, and they baptize those babies by immersion.

So the baby gets dunked in a font with water. But generally, it's babies that sprinkle, adults that are dunked or that are immersed. Now, the question—and I'm going to deal with those two things, adults or babies, and then the first thing here is immersion or sprinkling.

Why do we insist that it is by immersion? Well, obviously, first of all, because the word baptized means immersion. That's the first reason. And John 3.23, and John was baptizing—and remember, I said there's some differences between John's baptism and ours—but John also was baptizing in India near Salem, because there was much water there, and they came and were baptized.

Why did he have to go there if he was sprinkling? He could have done that anywhere, because you had drinking water, you had cooking water, you had washing water. There's enough water in any house those days, even though they didn't have running water, there was enough jars of water to be able to sprinkle someone. But clearly, he goes to a place because it says there was much water there, so clearly it's saying they were baptizing by immersion.

Matthew 3.16, when he had been baptized, we saw this verse a moment ago, and Jesus came up immediately from the water. It's simple. It's clear.

He's not standing on the bank, and there are these pictures, these icons of John pouring a basin of water over Jesus. No, the Scripture is very clear. He comes up out of the water.

This is in the River Jordan at the time. In Acts 8 verse 36, this is the Ethiopian eunuch. You remember the Ethiopian eunuch? He's a believer, but he's an Ethiopian.

He had been to the Passover feast, and he's now journeying back to Africa, to Ethiopia, and he's on his wagon. He's a wealthy man. He is probably the minister of finance of Ethiopia at the time, and Philip is brought by the Holy Spirit to him, and he walks along the chariot, and the Ethiopian is reading from the book of Isaiah.

From this, we can see that he was wealthy because he could afford to buy a scroll, which very few people could afford. So he has the scroll, and he's reading, and Philip says to him, do you understand what you're reading? He opens the Scripture, shares the gospel with him, and it says, now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, see, here is water, what hinders me from being baptized.

We're going to come back to this again to make a different point. So again, the same thing that I said earlier. They're going through a desert area.

You don't travel through a desert area unless you have water with you. I know some people go into the desert, and they don't have a drop of water in the car. That's just crazy.

When you and I travel through the desert, we make sure we have drinking water. If something goes wrong, we have water. So there's definitely water on this chariot.

So if it was sprinkling, they could have just used the drinking water that was there. But they wait until they come to a place where there is more water, and he says, I want to be baptized. So we can see from all of those that these were physical immersions.

That's the way they're baptized in the Old Testament. I'm not going to show you the Scripture, but you remember when David sinned with Bathsheba. David should have been at war, and he's on his palace looking out in the evening, and there's Bathsheba, and she is not having a bath, as I've heard some preachers say.

If you read the context clearly, she is going through a purification ritual, and she is baptizing herself, and she is covered in the water. She goes under the water. So right through the Old Testament, these washings that they did in the Old Testament to cleanse themselves from their impurity, either certain times of the month for the women, or because you touched the dead body, or priests who needed to serve in the temple, whatever the case was, was a form of immersion.

And Jewish people still do that today when people become a proselyte and join them. Up to 711, 700 years ago, the churches—whether you're talking about Roman, Catholic, or Eastern Orthodox, or Protestant churches, not that Protestant churches existed then, but the independent churches, if you will—all baptized by immersion, including the Catholic Church. In 1311, the Catholic Church changed the rules and said that baptism is no longer by immersion, but it is now by sprinkling.

Just by the way, there are still some Catholic churches who baptize by immersion, but most of them are sprinkling, and some of them will actually offer you both options. But this was what the church did for the first 1300 years, and then the rules changed. So we can go right back to the ruins of the earliest churches that you can find, and many of them have baptism pools or fonts in them.

So they have a place in the church, or just outside the church, which was clearly a kind of a pool, just a little pool with steps, and many of them would have scriptures or statements that clearly meant that this was used for baptism. So we have history that supports that. All right, now the next question then is adults or babies.

What's the big deal about adults or babies being baptized? Well, because of what baptism means. Remember what we said, baptism is a picture that I am crucified with Christ, I've been raised to walk in the unions of life. It's a picture that I am one with Jesus Christ.

A baby cannot make that kind of declaration. We're going to look at a few scriptures in a moment. Now, many churches that sprinkle babies, or even baptize by immersion, have a statement very clearly that the moment the baby is baptized, that baby is saved and is a full member of the church.

Now this comes to the next point, which I'll come to in a few moments, but we call that baptismal regeneration, that baptism saves you. Now, we know that baptism does not save, because the scripture is clear. We saw this last week, that we are saved by faith.

We are saved by faith, not by works. So if I'm saved by baptism, what is baptism? It's a work. It's something I can do.

And this is the problem. You can, you know, you can be baptized a thousand times. I came across somebody recently, I can't remember the context, who said that she was baptized—I remember it was a woman—said she was baptized seven times.

Well, you can be baptized 700 times. It doesn't change anything. If you're not born again, you're not born again.

As the old people used to say, you go into the water a dry sinner, you come out a wet sinner. You're still not saved. Baptism does not, cannot save.

Baptism is a picture that I have been saved. The same way as communion doesn't save me. Communion is a declaration that I have been saved.

We won't get into that. So Mark chapter 16, verse 16. This is the opposite of Matthew 28, the Great Commission.

He who believes and is baptized will be saved. This is the verse that they use. He who believes and is baptized will be saved.

Now remember, there's a principle here, that you must interpret scripture in the light of the rest of the teaching of scripture. There is no other scripture that says you are saved by baptism. There are dozens of scriptures that say we are saved not by works but by faith.

And so, he who believes and is baptized—you see, now here's the second problem. Not only do they take it out of context of the whole of the teaching of the New Testament, but they take it out of context in the same verse, because the verse goes on to say, but he who does not believe will be condemned. It doesn't say, he who is not baptized will be condemned.

He who does not believe will be condemned. So baptism is not what saves me. It is faith that saves me.

Baptism is simply an expression of that faith. Baptism is simply an outward expression that I have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. All right.

Acts chapter 8, verse 36. This is the Ethiopian eunuch again. So they went down the road.

They came to some water. The eunuch said, See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized? And Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may.

And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And Peter said to him, Repent. I'm getting ahead of myself.

So, if you believe. Now, we're speaking about babies. Can a baby believe? No.

I don't know at what stage they begin to be able to believe, but certainly a baby that is a few weeks old, when they are traditionally baptized, does not believe. It doesn't know anything. It doesn't know God, doesn't know salvation.

So they cannot believe. The other thing that they need to do is, and this is where we go to Acts 2.38. Then Peter said to him, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized. So repentance is a prerequisite for baptism.

Can a baby repent? No. The baby just lies there and drinks its milk, and sleeps, and does its thing. So these are the things that save us, is repentance and faith.

We've dealt with those in the first two principles. A baby cannot do these things. And that's why we speak of this as believers' baptism versus infant baptism.

Those are the two terms that we use. It is baptism for those who have come to believe, not those who... When we speak about infant baptism, and I've run out of time, but there's a lot of other wrong doctrine that goes with that. They say it replaces circumcision, it's a sign of the covenant, and all those kinds of things.

We can't deal with that this evening. But again, there is no scripture for that whatsoever. All right.

So let's talk very quickly then, and I've touched on baptismal regeneration. Again, Mark 16.16, he who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned. Luke 23, verse 43, Jesus on the cross.

We're going to get to Luke 23 in the next month or two. And Jesus said to him, assuredly I say to you today, you will be with me in paradise. Was he saved? Jesus says he was saved.

The rest of us die, and we say, well, we think he was saved. We can't say for sure. Obviously, we can be 99.9% sure, but at the end of the day, it's only God who can declare someone is saved or not saved, because he alone knows the heart.

But here's one—probably the only person that I know of in the Bible that God says, he's saved. Jesus says, you'll be in paradise with me today. So Jesus is saying—now, what's the point? The point is, he never got baptized.

He got saved that hour. He believed on the Lord Jesus. His friend on the other side, of course, he rejected the gospel, he rejected the cross, but he believed, and Jesus says, you're saved.

So if you needed to be baptized to be saved, then this man could not be saved, because he had not been baptized. All right, so two more scriptures. Acts chapter 8, verse 36 again.

So what are the conditions for someone to be baptized? Well, first of all, they need to believe. We've dealt with that, so I'm not going to go over that again, because we want to save a bit of time. If you believe, and he says, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

And then in Acts 8, verse 38, he commanded the chariot and so on. Acts 2, verse 38, repent. Those are the two prerequisites for baptism.

Someone who does not believe cannot be baptized, whether as a child or as an adult. And someone who has not repented cannot be baptized, because they have not believed. Remember, we said that repentance is evidence of believing.

And so if I believe the gospel, then I must—I repent. And so these are the two prerequisites. And so it is incumbent on those who baptize to make sure that those that they baptize are believers, number one, and number two, that they have repented.

Again, it's a popular thing these days to have—I can't remember what they call these things—but impromptu baptisms. So they have a baptism, and these are generally big congregations. And the preacher will say, well, you know, there's some more people here that need to get baptized.

Ah, yeah, me, me, me, me, me, me. And a whole bunch of people jump in the water, and they get baptized. That's not what Peter does here.

Peter doesn't say, well, yeah, I've had a conversation with you. I think you're ready. Peter says, do you believe? Sorry, Philip.

And Peter, preaching the gospel on the day of Pentecost, says, repent and believe. Baptism is a very, very serious step. It's not something that should be entered into lightly.

Those are words we used when we do marriages. And we know that people just get married, and it doesn't mean anything. And that's the other problem with baptism.

People just get baptized. It doesn't mean anything. No, it's a serious, serious step.

And those who baptize, the pastor or the leaders of the church, whoever, need to make sure that the people who are being baptized are actually really saved. And you'll know that in the past we've held people back from baptism because we were concerned that there was. Now, I can get into all of the reasons.

I've given you some of the reasons here, but there are many other reasons why that is important. Let me just answer a final question before we close. I'm sorry we're over time.

But the other question simply is, which always comes up, is the issue of re-baptism. Somebody says, well, I was baptized, but I didn't understand what was going on. I didn't know what I was doing.

I want to be re-baptized. And there are all sorts of permutations. And of course, there's the question then that I was baptized as a baby.

Now, the answer is pretty simple for me. The way I look at it is simply, you cannot be baptized twice. You cannot be baptized twice, because remember what you're symbolizing.

You're symbolizing the death, burial, resurrection of Christ. Jesus cannot be buried, crucified twice. And in fact, we're going to come to that passage a little further down in Hebrews chapter 6, because they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh.

He cannot be crucified a second time. Remember, that was why Moses was barred from the promised land, because he hit the rock a second time, symbolic of Christ being crucified a second time. So someone cannot be baptized twice.

The only basis on which somebody can be baptized again—and from this we get the word Anabaptists, so generally we refer to Amish people and those groups, Mennonites, as Anabaptists. Ana meaning again. They baptize again.

In South Africa, in Afrikaans, they would refer to people of us as the Vierderduppers, the people who baptize again. No, we don't baptize again, because the first baptism was not a valid baptism. Remember we spoke about dead works.

It's nothing. You put a few drops of water on the head of the baby, you make the sign of the cross, you can do whatever you like. It is nothing.

It does not save the baby. It doesn't change anything. It is simply a ritual that the church goes through.

That is not a valid baptism. Therefore, someone who was sprinkled as a baby can and must be baptized properly once they are born again. There are many permutations, but the other possibility is that someone gets baptized, but they are not saved.

Does that happen? Yeah, it happens. It happens often, because of what I spoke about earlier. The preacher puts pressure on, or the family puts pressure on you.

Yeah, you know, my kid is 16 years old or 18 years old, whatever. He needs to get baptized. They put pressure on him.

They put pressure on the pastor, you know, baptize my boy. But he wasn't saved. Is that a valid baptism? No, it's not.

He was not a believer. You can do that, as I said, a thousand times. It's not going to make any difference.

So the question always is, is it a valid baptism? It's a valid baptism if the person believed. If he was a Christian at that point, it's a valid baptism. It doesn't matter.

There are different styles of baptisms. Some people dunk three times—in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, in the name of the Holy Spirit. It doesn't matter whether it was hot water or cold water, whether it was the River Jordan or the Pacific Ocean.

You know, it doesn't matter. If it was a baptism, if you were put under the water and you were a believer, it's a valid baptism. You cannot be re-baptized.

It's very, very critical. It's very important. If it was not a valid baptism, if it was not a Christian baptism, baptized in Mormonism, for example, that's not a valid baptism because it's not a valid faith.

People who come out of Mormonism, out of Jehovah's Witness, out of the cults, they've been baptized there. They need to be re-baptized in the sense that that's not a valid baptism. I'm sure there are questions, and I'll answer those in a moment.

Father, we thank you for your Word. Lord, these are just such simple things, and yet at the same time they speak of profound truths. They speak about the great work that Jesus did as he died for us at the cross of Calvary, that he was crucified, that he was buried, that he rose again.

It speaks, Lord, of the washing away of the sins of the flesh by the blood of Jesus Christ. It speaks about the fact, Lord, that the old things are passed away. All things have become new, that we are new creatures in Christ.

Lord, we thank you for the richness of this simple little act that you've given to us. Help us, Lord, not to despise it, but at the same time not to overemphasize it and to make it a condition for salvation or any of those kinds of things. And so, Lord, I pray that you'd help us to understand.

Above all, help us to obey. If there are those who are watching, Lord, who have not been obedient in this matter, we pray that we may find grace to be obedient to your Word. We pray in Jesus' name.

Go with us now, Lord. Keep us and protect us. Bring us together again safely on Sunday.

I ask this in Jesus' name.

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