

Baptism in Water

by Anton Bosch

Water baptism is a symbol of our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ, and it is a demonstration of our obedience to God.

Duration: 41:42

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3-4, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 2:12

Topics: "Baptism"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the topic of water baptism. He starts by acknowledging that the chosen Bible passage, 1 Corinthians 15, does not directly address water baptism. However, he uses this chapter on the resurrection to emphasize the importance of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection as the core elements of the gospel. The preacher explains that the mention of Christ's burial is significant because it verifies his actual death and refutes the belief that he was in a coma or swoon. He contrasts this Christ-centered gospel with the man-centered message that is often preached today.

Transcript

So we deal with water baptism tonight. We've been dealing with the doctrine of baptisms. Hebrews 6.2. The first baptism we dealt with last week was baptism into Christ.

And tonight we deal with the second one, which is water baptism. Let's turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. And if you know your Bible well, you'll know that this chapter doesn't teach anything about water baptism.

But we're going to start here anyway. This is the chapter on the resurrection. And we'll read the first four verses.

1 Corinthians 15 verse 1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I deliver to you, first of all, that which I also received, that Christ died for us, for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures, and that he was seen by Cephas, and then of the twelve. After that he was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

And so Paul is defining the gospel, and he says this is the gospel that he has preached to them. Now, when we ask people to define the gospel today, we get many definitions. One of the most popular definitions is that we have sinned, that we need a Saviour, that Jesus died, and that we need to believe on the Lord Jesus.

Now, you'll notice that in that three of the four points have to do with me, and only one has to do with the Lord Jesus. But Paul's definition of the gospel here is that Jesus died, according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he rose again on the third day, according to the Scriptures. And so the gospel, according to Paul, is a Christ-centered, or a Christocentric in the learned people's language, a Christocentric message, whereas the gospel which many people preach today is a man-centered message.

Yes, of course the gospel is for us to get saved. It has us as an object, but the central message of the gospel remains Jesus Christ. Now, that is just by the way.

Now, you'll see here that he says that these are the three elements or aspects of the work of the Lord Jesus, his death, his burial, and his resurrection. Now, it's interesting that he uses his burial. One would say, well, why does he refer to his burial? In fact, I wondered about this for a long time, because you would say, well, surely it was his death and his resurrection that was important.

Why does he focus on his burial as well? Well, he focuses on his burial for two reasons. First of all, because it relates to the work of the Lord Jesus, and that he died, and that he was buried, and that he was dead for three days. And so it deals essentially with verifying the fact of the death of the Lord Jesus.

So, Jesus wasn't just in a swoon, or in a faint, or in a coma, and then somehow they kept him on life support systems, and then they raised him again on the third day. Some people actually believe that Jesus was in a coma for those three days. He wasn't actually dead.

And that's why I believe the scripture emphasizes the fact that he was buried. You don't bury anyone unless they are properly dead. And you remember there was a whole series of things that happened before he was buried.

The soldiers came to him to break the legs, because the next day was the Sabbath, and they came to the Lord Jesus, and they discovered he was dead already. And so they thrust a spear into his side, and out came water and blood. And then Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus went, and they took the body of the Lord Jesus, got permission from the Roman authorities, and they then buried the Lord Jesus.

Now, again, they would not have buried him unless they were absolutely sure about his death. There was a whole embalming process, and all of these things that had to happen, the preparation of his body. And so they were working with his body.

They knew he was dead, otherwise they would not have buried him. And so the burial of the Lord Jesus has to do with verifying the fact that he was not just dead for a little while, but he was properly dead, and he was buried. You remember, it's the same with Lazarus.

He was in the tomb for, was it two days? And then they said, but you know, he smells already. In other words, he's properly dead. He's not just, you know, it's not like he's just fallen asleep a moment ago.

So that's the one reason why this is emphasized. But obviously, it also is emphasized because of its impact upon us. And the whole process of baptism, and the whole picture of baptism revolves around this process.

The process of death and of burial in water baptism, and then resurrection. There are two pictures, two things that baptism speaks about. The first is the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

And the second is there is the symbolism of washing. And we'll speak about both of those in a moment. But you can see the importance in the Gospel of the emphasis of the burial also of the Lord Jesus, because this is the problem that many Christians have.

Paul deals with this in great detail in Romans. And he says that we need to be crucified with Christ. We need to be dead.

But unfortunately, many of us drag the old man along with us, and we resuscitate him from time to time. And so it's important that as Christians, we actually bury the old life. It's no good just saying, well, I've died to my old life, but somehow I'm able to revive it every now and then.

And I keep it sort of on ice somehow, you know, on life support just in the background. So when I'm tired of the spiritual things, I revert back to it. And this is what we do.

And you can see the importance of this concept of not just dying with Christ, but actually burying the old man, putting him away and saying that's the end of that life. I'm not going back to that again. I'm not going to dig him up again.

I'm not going to revive him again. That's finished. I'm now risen to walk in newness of life, is the language that Paul uses in the book of Romans.

And so you can see why this chapter now impacts then on baptism, water baptism. Water baptism is simply a picture of that spiritual reality that should have happened to us as born again believers, in the sense that we have died with Christ. And Paul goes into this in great detail in Romans 6, 7 and 8, that I have died with Christ.

I'm no longer, and remember we spoke last week, I've now been placed into Christ. And so the life which I now live, he says, I'm lived by the faith of the Son of God. And so it's a new life.

And so spiritually, I was dead, buried and I'm raised again. But what came out of the grave, out of the spiritual grave, was not the same old man. It should be a new man.

And that's why he writes in Corinthians, and he says that if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creature. The old things are passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

Now those are the spiritual realities. And we dealt last week with the spiritual aspects of the whole process of being placed into Christ and being made one with Him in His death and in His resurrection. But now water baptism is now simply an external expression of that spiritual reality which we spoke about last week and which we've just touched on briefly.

Now you'll see, if we go through the Old Testament, and I'm just going to go through a few examples here, how central this is to the whole message of the Word. Not just in the New Testament, but also in the Old Testament. This concept of death, burial and resurrection, and oftentimes the issue of three days.

And so you remember that Noah probably is one of the first pictures. Noah went into the ark. Everything else was wiped out.

The earth was covered in water. And then on God's time, the whole thing was revived again. You can see the same picture of death, burial by water and resurrection.

New life as Noah steps out of the ark and he begins a new generation of people. A new world, a new earth so to speak. The old earth having been washed and cleansed and buried in water.

You can see exactly the same picture. Abraham and Isaac. God says to Abraham, take your son Isaac and go and sacrifice him.

And so for three days, Abraham takes Isaac and they walk to Mount Moriah. And for three days, in Abraham's heart, Isaac was dead. As far as he was concerned, he had already done the deed.

That was how committed he was. And then Isaac is laid on the altar, remember. And then God calls out to him and there's a ram that takes the place of Isaac.

A picture of Jesus taking our place. And Isaac is set free and Isaac comes back to life again in a picture, in a symbol. And so Isaac was dead as he comes back to life again.

Joseph, in fact, goes through this picture many times. You remember, Joseph was taken by his brothers and they throw him into a pit. And they forget about him.

And then they bring him out and somehow he comes in type, he's brought back to life again. Then he's sold down to Egypt and they take him away and they take his multicolored garment and they dip it in blood and they bring it to his father. And Joseph is dead.

And his father mourns for him for a long, long time. And then you remember, many years later, Joseph is restored to his father and Joseph comes back from the dead again in type and in picture. Also, while Joseph was in prison, you remember, there was a butler with him.

In fact, there was a butler and a baker. But to the butler he says, in three days. Now the butler was dead as the king had forgotten about him and thrown him in prison and thrown away the key.

And yet he said, in three days you're going to be restored. And so the butler, after three days, comes back out of the prison, out of the dungeon and he's restored to his position again. Again, death out of life.

The same picture. Joseph takes his brothers and when they came down to Egypt and at one point he takes them and he puts them in prison. And he leaves them there for three days.

All part of the process of his dealing with them. But again, at the end, as far as they were concerned, this was it. They were dead.

They were going to be left in that prison forever. And you remember, they speak amongst themselves and they say, well, we deserved this because this is what we did to our brother. And yet after three days, Joseph brings these brothers out of life again.

Moses comes to Egypt and for three days in the ten miracles that he performs, one of the miracles is darkness. And for three days there's darkness over Egypt. And then on the third day again, light out of the

dark, death and life again.

Queen Esther, you remember, she determines to go and see the king and to go and plead the cause of the people of Israel. But this is a very dangerous exercise that she embarks on because if the king would not extend mercy to her, she would be taken by the gods and she would be killed. And so she needed the king to extend his scepter and by that to extend mercy and to spare her life.

And again, she says, well, if I die, I die. And so she is willing to die, she's willing to lay down her life. And she prepares herself for three days.

And then she goes into the king's chamber and the king extends his scepter and she's brought back to life again in that sense. Jonah, of course, is one of the clearest pictures in the Old Testament. And remember, even Jesus referred to this and he says, no other sign will be given you but that of Jonah, who was three days in the heart of the fish, in the belly of the whale.

And again, the same picture. He was dead for all practical purposes. That man was a goner.

And yet somehow God miraculously brings him out and the fish puts him out on dry land and he's restored again to life. Jonah goes into Nineveh and he preaches. And his message is that God's going to destroy this place.

This place is written off. God has cursed it and there's going to be nothing left of this place. And how long does he preach for? Three days.

For three days, death hangs over that city. And again, God spares Nineveh and extends life to them. And then finally, you remember that the Lord Jesus, when he was 12 years old, goes to Jerusalem with his parents and they return after the end of the feast and after three days they realize that he was missing.

Jesus was gone from them. He was lost from them for a period of three days. And then they find him again in the temple discussing things with the rabbis and again he is restored to them.

And so you can see right through, and there are many, many other examples, but right through the scripture you can see this pattern again and again of death and life, of someone being buried or lost and then being restored again. Now this is the picture then obviously which Jesus fulfilled. And all of these pictures in the Old Testament don't speak of baptism, they essentially speak of Jesus.

Because remember Jesus says you search the scriptures because in them you think you have eternal life, but it is they that speak of me. And so all of these scriptures in the Old Testament essentially reveal Jesus and essentially the work that he would do as he would die and be buried and rise again on the third day. Alright, so you can begin to understand first of all now that this whole picture then of death and of burial, of watery grave and resurrection from that, that the whole issue of immersion becomes a very important part of the symbolism.

And a few drops wouldn't symbolize this process at all. And we'll deal with another aspect of it, and we're not going to spend the whole evening talking about the difference between water baptism or baptism by immersion and sprinkling, but we'll just make one or two comments. And we dealt with this to some extent last week when we spoke about the meaning of the word immersion, which is the proper word which should have actually been used in the New Testament.

But you can see that in no way does a few drops on one's head in any way symbolize death and resurrection, in any way symbolize the principle of being buried and then coming out of the water back to life again. It can only be symbolized in full immersion of the whole person being put under the water. Now, if we go to Matthew chapter 3, and for all of the examples I gave you before, I have scriptures so I can give them to you afterwards, but in Matthew chapter 3 we find the account of the baptism of the Lord Jesus.

Now, without going into too much detail, the principle or the concept of a water baptism was not new when Jesus came. Remember, John was baptizing, and that was what he was known as, as John the Baptist. And there's a lot of discussion and debate as to where did this tradition come from, but it seems that it finds its roots in the ritual washings, which is part of the Hebrew culture, part of the Hebrew, of the Old Testament law.

And you remember that if a man had touched the dead body, he would have to be separated for a certain period of time, and after that he would have to wash himself, and only then could he come to the temple or to the tabernacle. If you had a particular disease, you would have to wash, and then you would be restored again. And with women, a particular time of the month, again at the end of that time, they would have to wash, and they would be able to enter into the tabernacle, and be able to enter into worship again.

And so there was that principle of ritual washing, in order to not wash away the filth of the flesh, but to symbolize the fact that they are spiritually clean, and spiritually able now to enter into the presence of God, and enter into God's service. And it's this symbolism, the same picture which John the Baptist now uses, to baptize people. It's not the same baptism as the baptism of the Lord Jesus, but it is a baptism.

It was a baptism in water, it was a baptism by immersion, but it was essentially a baptism to repentance. Not the same baptism. It was not symbolizing the same principle of death, burial and resurrection.

It was to a certain extent symbolizing the washing away of sin, because it was a baptism of repentance. But again, remember that the Old Testament could never, under the Old Testament system of sacrifice, there could never be full cleansing, as there is under the blood of the Lord Jesus. And so, here in Matthew chapter 3, Jesus now comes, and let's read from verse 13.

Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent him, saying, I need to be baptized by you, and are you coming to me? But Jesus answered and said to him, Permitted to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed him.

Then Jesus, when he had been baptized, came up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. And some of the other gospels say, Hear him.

Now, a few important things that we need to notice here. Again, you see that they go into the water. It comes out of the water.

So again, it's not a matter of a few drops of water. In fact, it says that John was baptizing at that particular place because there was water, because there was much water. And so, it was clearly by immersion.

There's no stretch of the imagination that any time or at any stage when water baptism is spoken of in the New Testament is it anything other than full immersion. And so, the Lord Jesus then comes out of the water. But it's interesting the fact that Jesus is baptized.

Now, you remember that Jesus had never sinned. Even at this point, even though he had only begun, or this was at the beginning of his ministry, he was perfect. The Scripture is very clear that he had no sin.

Yes, he took our guilt upon himself, but he had never sinned. And yet, he is baptized. And we say, Well, why should Jesus then be baptized? Because he had no sin to be forgiven.

And so, it wasn't symbolizing sin that would be forgiven. But he says for himself, or he says himself here what his purpose is. He says, Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.

And when John hears this, John says, Okay, I will baptize you. Now, without going into all the detail of the meaning of that concept or that phrase to fulfill all righteousness, simply what Jesus is saying is that this is necessary for me to do. I must be obedient in this aspect.

I must be obedient because this is what the Father wants me to do. Now, this is one of the central issues of water baptism. And I suppose that there are three essential or central issues.

The first is that it symbolizes death, burial, and resurrection. Secondly, that it symbolizes the washing away of sins. And thirdly, it is a picture of obedience.

These are the three essential issues or aspects, central aspects of water baptism. And it's amazing how many people have a problem with this. How many people believe on the Lord Jesus, have been saved, have been born again, and yet they neglect to or they refuse to be baptized.

And they say, But it's not important. But you know, if Jesus needed to be baptized, then it has to be important. If anyone had a good reason to sidestep this, yes, small aspect.

It is a small aspect of our total relationship with God and of the whole work of salvation. It is a small aspect. But if Jesus had, if anyone had the right to sidestep this issue, Jesus had the right.

And yet he didn't. And he says, It is necessary for me to do this. And so he does it.

And he does it in obedience. And you know, the tremendous thing I see in here is that when he does this, there is a voice from heaven, the voice of the Father saying, This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Hear he him.

Or this is, according to Matthew, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Now, the thing that struck me when I considered this a few years ago was the fact that at no stage in the rest of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, we know that this reoccurred again on the Mount of Transfiguration. On the Mount of Transfiguration, again the same voice comes.

But at no other stage in the life of the ministry of the Lord Jesus does this happen. When he raised the dead, we would say, Well, this is the most, maybe this is the highest point in the ministry of the Lord Jesus, when he raised the dead. But there was no voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

When he fed the multitude, there was no voice from heaven. And yet when he does this little insignificant thing, this thing which many people are prepared to write off, at this point, the Father acknowledges him and he says, This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Obviously, this is a very important issue.

This was an important step for the Lord Jesus to have gone through. And the Father puts his seal upon it and acknowledges the obedience of his son as he comes out of the water. And obviously, if the Father's seal of blessing is upon the Lord Jesus for that, I believe that as believers, as we are obedient to God in this process, I believe we will know God's blessing in our lives.

Now, just a little point here is that, I believe that there are many Christians whose growth is stunted over the issue of baptism. Just a small thing. People say, But you know, it's not an important issue.

If it's in the Word, it's an important issue. And you know, it's an amazing test of our willingness to be obedient to God in such a small thing. And if it's so small, why don't we just do it? But obviously, it's a major issue.

And you'll see some of the symbolism which we'll speak about just now when we speak about the Red Sea, because of the implications of this process, people are not prepared to do it oftentimes. And then what happens is that the rest of their growth is stunted. Now, this does not only apply to baptism.

This applies to any area of disobedience. When God speaks to us about something, whatever that may be, whether it be water baptism, whether it be witnessing to someone, whether it be laying off something of the flesh, whatever it is. And we're not obedient to Him in that.

That is the end of our growth at that point. Because God has now drawn a line. He says, Now do this.

And He doesn't take us to the next step unless we have dealt with that issue, unless we've dealt with that step. And you know, we can't just bypass. It's the same way in school.

You've got to go from Standard 1 to Standard 2 to Standard 3. You can't go from 1 to 5. It doesn't work that way. And yet as Christians, we want to go from this step to that step and just miss the whole lot in between. But God says, No.

You've got to go step by step. And whichever route He takes us, He doesn't all take us all the same way. Some of us He takes us through step 1, 2, 3, 4. Others He takes us through step 1, 5, 6, 7, 8. And so He deals with each one differently.

But when He brings us to a particular point, we need to be obedient to Him in that point because unless we get victory in that issue, unless we grow in that issue, unless we submit to Him in that issue, He doesn't move on to the next point. And I've seen this many, many times. And it's very visible in the issue of baptism simply because baptism is an external thing.

It's something which you can see and you know this person. And oftentimes when people have an issue with us, they will discuss it with you and they'll say, Oh no, I don't think it's important to be baptized. Or I was christened as a child.

I don't need to do that. And yet when you look at their lives, you see that there's been a spiritual growth up to that point. And then somehow there's no growth.

And I can show you many, many people who for many years have never developed spiritually because they've not been prepared to be obedient in this issue. And I've seen many people when they come to the point and they say, well, I'm prepared to submit to God. Not only on this issue.

Any area of obedience or disobedience. How from that point they begin to grow again and how they develop until they come to the next issue where they stick again. And they say, no, no, I'm not prepared to be obedient in this one.

And again their growth is stunted until they're prepared to submit to God. That's just the process that happens in our lives. And obviously it's one that baptism is, as I say, very visible because it's an external thing that we do.

Now, if we go to Matthew chapter 28. And Matthew 28 is well known because it contains the Great Commission. And the Lord Jesus says in verse 18, All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I've commanded you and love them with you always, even to the end of the age. And so there are a number of things that we need to do. This is the commission that he gives to his disciples and to the church.

The first is to make disciples. The second is to baptize them. The third is to teach them to observe all things.

Those are the three things we need to do. And many people are quite happy to do the first one, which is making disciples. And they're happy to do the last one, which is teaching.

But they're not happy to do the middle one. And yet we need to do all three. And it's amazing that this little thing that seems to be so insignificant is part of this commission that he gives us.

And, of course, he tells us how it's to be done. He gives us the formula. He says we need to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All right. Now, in Acts 8, we have the story of the Ethiopian eunuch. And I've not taken all the examples of baptism.

Otherwise, we'd be here all night. But I've taken a few key ones, essentially because they contain truths that we need to examine in this whole issue. Acts 8. And this man comes from Africa.

He had gone up to Jerusalem for the feast. And he was now returning back to where he had come from. And you remember he reads from the Scripture.

He has a scroll with him. It must have been a wealthy man who could afford the scroll. And he reads from Isaiah 53.

And Philip joins himself to this man as the Spirit directs him. Verse 34 says, And so the eunuch answered Philip and said, I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of some other man. Then Philip opened his mouth and, beginning at all the Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

Now, notice that he preached Jesus from the Old Testament. At this point, they didn't have New Testament at all. But he takes the Old Testament and he begins in Isaiah 53 and he preaches Jesus.

Now, verse 36, 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. Then 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 so he commanded the chariot to stand still. Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and he baptized them.

And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more. And he went on his way rejoicing. Now, a few important things there.

Again, you'll see the emphasis on the fact that they went down into the water, came up out of the water. If sprinkling was sufficient, they would have had water on the chariot. Because they were going through a desert area, they would have had water in jars or in pots and they could have used that to sprinkle.

But clearly they go down, come back up out of the water. But the other important thing I want to highlight from here, is the requirement for baptism. The requirement for baptism.

And many people say, no, no, you must attain a certain standard of holiness before you can be baptized. You must be able to have gone through a foundational course of some sort and then we will baptize you. No, the only question that Philip asked this man is, Do you believe? Do you believe? And this is why baptism is often referred to, water baptism is often referred to as believer's baptism.

Believer's baptism. Now, that tells us two things. It tells us, first of all, that it's very simple.

That we don't have to have achieved any great heights of spirituality. But if we believe, we may be baptized. But it also secondly tells us that babies cannot be baptized, because they cannot believe.

They do not believe. How does a two week old or a three week old baby believe? Cannot believe. And therefore doesn't qualify according to this.

But Philip very clearly says, there's just one thing that's necessary. And that is, that you believe. Now, obviously it's very important that a vocal confession is made.

And remember that Paul in Romans chapter 10 speaks about the fact that with the heart we believe, but with the mouth confession is made to righteousness. And you'll see here that this man makes a vocal confession. And his confession is, in verse 37, the last part, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

He makes that confession. And Philip is happy to baptize him. And he baptizes him.

And the man goes down the road rejoicing. Great rejoicing. Because he had been obedient.

First of all, he had believed on the Lord Jesus. And secondly, he had been baptized. Alright, now in 1 Peter chapter 3, I'm going to do two more scriptures.

And then we'll draw to a close. 1 Peter chapter 3, between Hebrews and Revelation. And we'll read from verse 21.

There is also an anti-type which now saves us, namely baptism. Not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to him. Now, there's quite a lot of complicated bits in there, but we simply want to focus on the fact that he says that baptism does not wash away the filth of the flesh.

In other words, it's not a physical thing. It's got nothing to do with my physical state, whether I'm clean and, you know, if I'm born again, whether I'm clean on the outside or not is really besides the point. But what he says, it is the answer of a good conscience.

It's the answer of a good conscience towards God. Now, that is a very important part of baptism. And so it is not just something we do in order to satisfy the church requirements, because in some churches you can't become a member unless you have been baptized.

It's not for that purpose. It's not in order to be washed physically. It's not in order to wash away my sins spiritually even, because baptism is not able to wash away my sins.

If I'm an unbeliever, if I've not come to Jesus and been washed in his blood, I can be baptized a hundred times, I will still be a filthy sinner. There's only one thing that can wash away my sin, and that is the blood of the Lord Jesus. And what he is saying, it is simply an answer, simply a declaration of a good conscience towards God.

A good conscience, first of all, that my sins have been washed away, and secondly, that I'm walking in obedience. Those two very important issues. And then the final scripture in 1 Corinthians chapter 10.

Now, I believe that this is one of the important reasons, or one of the main reasons why some people don't get baptized, because of the symbolism that you find here. Now, in 1 Corinthians 10 he compares the people of Israel to us, and he says that everything that happened to them was an example to us. And he shows us how some of those things were pictures for us.

And let's read from verse 1. Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, referring to the Red Sea that was open for them. Verse 2. All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.

Now, you'll see that he speaks in verse 2 about being baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. So he's speaking about them being baptized twice. Once in the sea, once in the cloud.

We'll deal with the issue of the cloud next week when we speak about baptism in the Holy Spirit. That's what the cloud symbolizes, is the Holy Spirit. But then they were baptized in the sea.

And so, again, the same picture. As they go through the Red Sea, if at any stage God was to allow the water to close over them, as it did with the Egyptians, they would be dead. They would be drowned.

But God miraculously brings them through the Red Sea. They come out on the other side, and they're still alive. The Egyptians try and do the same.

The water closes, and they drown, and they're dead. Now, what was the issue? What was the purpose of the Red Sea? It had, in fact, two purposes. The one was to show God's mighty power to Israel, which was part of the many things He was doing with them at that time.

But it was also in order for this express purpose, that He may be able to provide a way by which they could be cut off from a retreat back to Egypt. You see, as long as they were on the other side of the Red Sea, the temptation to go back to Egypt would always be very real. In fact, it would be a real possibility.

They would be able to go back. They just need to turn around, do a U-turn, and they go back to Egypt. Now, you remember, many times in the history of Israel, moving from Egypt to the Promised Land, many times they cried out to Moses, and they said, would to God that we were back in Egypt.

We remember the things that we ate in Egypt. We remember all the good things about Egypt. They forgot about all the bad things, by the way, but they remembered all the good things.

And they said, we want to go back to Egypt. But when they passed through the Red Sea, the road to Egypt was closed. There was no way they could go back.

Obviously, they could if they were prepared to go another long way around. But this was the final burning of the bridges between them and Egypt. Now, remember, Egypt is a picture of the world, of our old life.

And when God brought Israel out of Egypt, it's a picture of God saving us, bringing us out of the world, and He's taking us to the Promised Land. But along the way, we as Christians need to go through the Red Sea. We need to come to that point where we're prepared to say, Lord, I'm prepared to go through this.

And we speak in our language about the Rubicon. And you remember the story about the Rubicon. It speaks about a point of no return.

Having gone so far, you cannot go back. And you know, this is what was real for Israel. And I believe that this is one of the most important reasons why Christians need to be baptized.

Because it is an open declaration, saying that I'm finished with the world. I'm not going back there again. I'm prepared to burn my bridges.

I'm prepared to make an open declaration. Now, this works in two ways. It works personally, inwardly, for the believer, because he has now subconsciously or consciously, he has now actually made a step.

He's taken a step. And he has symbolically said, I'm prepared to be baptized. I'm prepared to cut off any association, any link to the things of the flesh, to the things of the world.

And I'm prepared to bury my old life. And I'm prepared to walk in newness of life. But also, it is a declaration to everybody around.

And that's why many people or some people are not prepared to do it also. Because when their friends hear, and we'll speak in a moment about that this needs to be a public step, when their friends hear, when the devil sees, when angels and principalities see that this has happened, they know you're serious about this whole process. There's no, you know, you remember we spoke about Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who buried the Lord Jesus.

Now, I remember the thing about those two men was they were secret admirers of Jesus. They followed Jesus secretly. Nicodemus came to him at night.

They didn't want others to know because they were Pharisees. But when Jesus finally died on that cross, they realized that they had to come out in the open. They had to make a public declaration.

And so they go and they publicly associate with the dead Christ and they bury him. And you know, as Christians, we need to come out. And many Christians are prepared to secretly in their hearts believe, but then they know that when we come to a point of baptism, this is a public declaration.

Everybody is going to know that in fact, I'm finished with the old life. I'm prepared to bury the old life. I'm prepared to rise in newness of life.

Now, we just touched, and I'm going to just deal with this very quickly in closing, that it's a public declaration. It's not a secret thing. Because what we're doing is we're making a declaration because I know I'm born again even before I'm baptized.

God knows I'm born again. It's something between me and Him. There's no question about that.

But what now needs to happen is other people need to know. Principalities and powers, demons, angels need to know. The world needs to know.

And this is a public declaration to everybody around that I've actually been born again. And that's why it cannot be a secret thing. You can't be baptized in, many people say, but can't I be baptized in my bath or in my Jacuzzi or in my, you know.

No, I don't believe it's right. Because you're denying the very declaration that you're making because it's an outward declaration of that which is happening. So it needs to be a public.

And when we say public, well, in someone's swimming pool with other Christians around and with the neighbors hanging over the wall if necessary, that's fine. But secretly in the dark, just you and your minister, and I know that in the time when the Dutch Reformed Church was much against baptism, there were Dutch Reformed Germanies who were getting baptized secretly. Now as far as I'm concerned, that doesn't count.

If you're not prepared to acknowledge Jesus openly, then you may as well not even bother. And so it's a public declaration. It's something that needs to happen outwardly.

Because what I'm doing is I'm showing to everyone what has actually happened in my life. That I've died with Jesus, I've been buried with Him, I've raised to walk in newness of life, I've been washed of my sins, I've burnt the bridges, I'm not going back any longer, I've made an absolute commitment to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let's pray. Father, as we again just consider these little steps, and they seem to be small steps to us, Lord, and yet they are very important in our whole development and our growth with You. And Lord, as we consider that there are those who may be here this evening, or even watching the video, or listening to the tape, who are struggling with these issues, we pray, Lord, that we may find grace to be obedient to Your Word.

Lord, we can get involved in all sorts of complicated arguments about this and that, and about sprinkling, and water baptism, and immersion, and the meaning of all of these things, and yet Lord, at the end of the day, all You're asking is for us to be obedient. Help us to have the mind and the attitude and the spirit of the Lord Jesus, who was prepared to be obedient, even to the point of allowing someone inferior to Himself, John the Baptist, to take Him and to dump Him into that muddy water of the Jordan River, simply as an expression of His willingness to fulfill all righteousness, to be obedient to You. Thank You, Lord, for Your seal, Father, upon Him, and Your declaration that You were well pleased with the Lord Jesus in His obedience.

And so, Lord, we pray as we consider these things, that they may be real to us, Lord, those who have been baptised, Lord, that our baptism may become real and fresh to us again, and, Lord, that we may once again understand the commitment and the symbolism and the picture of all of that that happened on that day, when we identified with the Lord Jesus in His death and His resurrection. And so, Lord, make these things real to us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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