

The Baptism (Part 1)

by Ron Bailey

The sermon explores the profound significance of baptism in the context of Jesus' mission and the anticipation of His return.

Duration: 53:42

Scripture: Matthew 19:27-28, Matthew 24:45-51, Luke 12:35-37, Luke 12:47-51

Topics: "Baptism"

Description

In this sermon, Peter asks Jesus if his parable is meant for all or just for them. Jesus responds by discussing the qualities of a faithful and wise servant who will be rewarded by the Lord. However, Jesus also warns about the consequences for a servant who becomes complacent and indulges in sinful behavior, thinking that the Lord's return is delayed. Jesus emphasizes the importance of knowing and following the Lord's will. The sermon then shifts to discussing the concept of baptism and how Jesus, through his death on the cross, took on the sin of humanity and provided a cure for the destructive nature within us.

Transcript

From time to time, people ask me to recommend books or things, and I say, well, I find it a great difficulty to recommend any other books other than this one, wholeheartedly. And I usually say, well, I don't even agree with myself all the time. So anything I believed in in 1986, I might not have quite the same perspective on it now as I did then.

But it's good to be with you, and I hope you'll get used to my voice. When I was talking to you, Becky, I was saying, well, I think what I'd like to talk about this weekend is the baptism. A pretty wide discourse came to mind.

I suppose about 18 months ago, that verse came strongly to my mind from the Book of Revelation, where the Lord speaks to the church at Sardis and says, strengthen the things that are remain, that are ready to die. And I don't know that this truth is ready to die, but I do feel a sense of permission in my heart to strengthen some of the things that God has given to us, maybe some of the special perspectives that God has given to us. And I want to talk about the baptism.

Now then, having given you my title, I wonder if you think you know what I'm going to talk about. What do you think about when I speak about the baptism? Well, I'd like you to turn with me, if you would, to Luke's

Gospel, Chapter 12, and we'll begin here. Bible words, you know, don't really have definitions.

They have histories, and you really need to know the history in order to understand the word. Let me explain it or illustrate it. There are enough greyheads like mine here, and some probably older than me, to know this word.

If I were to say the word Dunkirk to you, there's a generation of people living in this country and in my country who would think of, like, a seaside town in Normandy or France. But there's another generation who, when they hear the word Dunkirk, don't think about seaside towns and holidays. They have quite a different image immediately in their mind, because Dunkirk doesn't have a definition.

It has a history. And Bible words are like that. When God used Bible words, he used them to evoke memories within the heart of his people.

Stories that they had heard that their mothers knew. Things that they'd passed down from mouth to mouth, one sharing it to another. And when he used words, some of these words, they didn't just have a definition.

They had a whole history behind them. And if I were to say to you, well, do you know any places in your Old Testament where you can find the word baptism? I doubt that there's anyone here who would say, yeah, I know a couple of places. And it's true.

In your English version, or whatever version you're using, it's almost certain that you don't have the word baptism. But many of the people who were the early Christians had a version of the Old Testament which did have the word baptism in it. If you don't know this, by the time that the New Testament came into being, many Jewish people had almost forgotten their own natural language.

Many of them were scattered around the Mediterranean in what was called the Diaspora. And many of these people spoke Greek as their first language. Well, they wanted to understand the Scriptures in their language that they were most familiar with, so they provided for them a version of the Scripture known as the Septuagint, which was our Old Testament translated into Greek.

And in fact, in that particular version, the word baptism comes a couple of times, and maybe we'll look at those in the course of this weekend. But before we do, I want you to turn with me to Luke's Gospel, Chapter 12, because there was a time when Jesus spoke about baptism. Most people, when they think about baptism, the baptism, immediately think of the phrase, the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

And of course, that was John the Baptist's phrase. He was the man who first used it. And others who use the Scriptures usually refer back to John when they use it, and say, well, this is what we're talking about.

This is what John was talking about. John was a Baptist. He was a world specialist on baptism.

He knew the implications of baptism, and he'd had lots and lots of experience of it. And when he was speaking of something that Jesus was going to do, he referred to it as a baptism in spirit and in fire. But Jesus used the word baptism as well, and he used it in a context that I think is really important for us to have in our minds if we're going to understand what the Bible teaches by the baptism.

Here it is in Luke, Chapter 12. Well, shall we begin? Let's begin at verse 41. This is actually an explanation, an interpretation of something that Jesus had already said, but I think you'll know this passage of Scripture well enough for this to serve as a leading point.

Okay, this is verse 41. Well, then Peter said to him, Lord, do you speak this parable unto us or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise servant whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he comes, shall find so doing. Of a truth I say to you that he will make him a ruler over all that he has.

But, and if that servant say in his heart, My Lord delays his coming, I shall begin to beat the men's servants and maid's servants and to eat and drink and be drunken, the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he does not look for him and will allow him where he is not aware and will cut him in sunder and will appoint him his portion for the believers. And that servant which knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. And he that knew not and yet commit things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes.

For unto whosoever much is given, of him shall be much required. And to whom men have committed much of him, they will ask the Lord. Then Jesus said this, I have come to set fire on the earth and what will I if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with and how I am straightened until it be accomplished.

You suppose that I have come to give peace on earth? I tell you no, but rather division. Now I'm not going to go on, I think you know this passage of Scripture, you probably know this verse fairly well, but as you realize the context of it, Jesus is referring to the time of his coming. He keeps referring to this master who would return to his council at a time when they weren't expecting it and then there would be consequences for those who would live their lives careless of the fact that he was returning.

So the context is, if you like, the second coming. He's thinking about his coming, he's thinking about the time when he will return in power, in judgment, and then suddenly in the midst of it all he says I have come to set fire on the earth. What will I if it be already kindled? I have a baptism to be baptized with.

Isn't that an amazing phrase? I have a baptism to be baptized with. Some old versions say something like I have a baptism that I must undergo or that I must receive or something like that, but it's better to have it doubled up like this. I have a baptism to be baptized with.

That's the way the Hebrew language intensifies things. If they want to say something is extra special or something, they double it up. And you know this, and you've been singing this today, although you don't realize it was a kind of Hebrew way of doing things.

When you were singing king of kings, back to Hebrew idiom, it's a way of saying the ultimate king. When you sang lord of lords, it was a Hebrew idiom. You were singing the ultimate lord.

When you speak of the holy of holies, you're referring to the ultimate holy place in the temple. And when you speak of the song of songs, which is Solomon's, you're referring to the ultimate song, the greatest song that's ever been written. So, when they doubled words up like this, it was a way of making sure that you really paid attention to it, that you really understood that this was a tremendous focus of importance.

And Jesus speaks about a baptism. And he says he has a baptism that he must be baptized with, and then he says that he is straightened, he is held in, he is restrained until that's accomplished. It's an amazing thing that when he was upon the earth, he seemed to move with such freedom and obedience to his father's will, doing always those things that were on his father's heart, hearing his father's voice, speaking his father's words, and yet all the time he was under constraint.

All the time there were things on his heart that he wanted to do and wasn't able to do. I don't think he was frustrated. I don't think we should be frustrated, dear Christians.

You know, really, frustration is a call to prayer. It's never a call to action. It's always a call to get back before the Lord and say, Lord, you are the Lord.

Frustration really is actually me saying, I want to be God. I want to be in control of this situation and I want it now. That's what frustration is usually.

I was thinking as we were singing, I think the most frequently used word that we were singing tonight was probably the word worthy. You can run your mind back to the choruses that we were singing. He is worthy, worthy of honor, worthy of praise.

It's an amazing thing. Do you realize what you're saying when you say that he is worthy? Do you realize you're actually passing a judgment upon him? You're actually saying this is what he is worth. This is my judgment.

You're saying he is deserving of honor and praise. And it's amazing. Who am I that I should dare pass a judgment upon what God has done or what he is? And yet the amazing thing is that God insists that you pass a judgment.

He insists that you consider what he has done and tell him what you think about it. He insists on it. So that you're not just a passive spectator.

You're not just thinking, oh yeah, this is interesting or this is a good way of doing it. But you really are saying, yes, my judgment is the way I assess what you have done, you deserve all the praise. You deserve all the honor.

You deserve all the glory. You deserve everything because of what you've done. God invites us to think about what he has done and to make our comments on it.

And that's what we're doing when we praise him. There are things that were in the heart of the Lord Jesus that he longed to do and yet apparently, according to his testimony here, he couldn't. He was straightened.

He was narrowed. He couldn't spread his arms. He couldn't do freely what he wanted to do.

He was narrowed in until something else should be accomplished. And I always think that it's an absolute tragedy that in our English version you've got the word accomplished here. Because if I tell you that it's the word finished until it is finished it would immediately connect with what he's talking about when he speaks about his baptism.

Do you remember there was a time, a little time after these events, when the Lord Jesus had done everything in the manner, in the pattern that had pleased his Father and then went up to Jerusalem, spread his face like a fruit to do what God had put in his heart. And this was it. And it seemed as though maybe for those onlookers that looked at those things that had run out of hand and were totally out of control but it was all part and parcel of what God was working through.

And he went through that agony of Gethsemane and through that separation upon the cross and when it was all over he cried, It is finished. It's what he was referring to here. There was something he wanted to do but he couldn't do the other thing until he'd done this thing and passed the verdict, the sentence, it's

finished.

Accomplished it. It's all right. It's the same word.

I'm not just picking up the words. It's just that it robs us of the connection with this, It is finished. Here he says, There's something I've got to finish and until that thing is finished I can't do everything I want to do.

I'm fastened in. And then explaining this event he calls it a baptism. He says, I have a baptism to be baptized with and I am straightened until that is finished.

What happened on the cross was a baptism. The only time so far as I know that this word was actually on the lips of the Lord Jesus here. I have a baptism to be baptized with and I am restrained until it is finished.

We know what he was talking about, don't we? He was talking about the cross. But what an amazing thing to call it. What would you have called it? We call it all kinds of things, don't we? We call it a sacrifice.

We call it a payment. We call it a victory. A battle.

A conquest. We call it all kinds of things. He called it a baptism.

At this point he called it a baptism and he said, Until I have been baptized with that baptism there are things I want to do but I can't do. He said to the third forger, I have come to set a fire on the earth. The specialists of the second coming and I'll be very careful in case we have any specialists of the second coming here.

I was a specialist once. I really was. It was one of my specialties, the second coming.

I got everything all sorted out. I could take you to a revelation and tell you if it was a Tuesday what verse we should be on. And you exactly have a timetable we're supposed to run.

I'm not nearly sure now. I'm still absolutely convinced that he's coming. The Lord said things and it seems as though he often looked to his coming.

The cross is one of the steps on the way to the coming. The redirection is one of the steps towards the coming. The ascension to the Father's throne is one of the steps to the coming.

Ultimately, he will come. There will be the coming. This was John the Baptist's commission.

John the Baptist was sent to the people of Israel to, how does it refer to it, to lift up, to raise up the valleys and to bring down the mountains. The word coming often used in Thessalonians is actually a Greek word peruski which actually means the presence or the progress. In ancient times, if a king had conquered a land or inherited it or ever come into possession of it, he would go and visit the people who were now his subjects.

And it was called a royal progress and he would go through the length and breadth of his kingdoms so that everybody could see him. So that everybody could see the king was alive and well and they would give him the praise and the glory. And they'd say, you're worthy to have all these kingdoms.

And they literally used to take the tops of the mountains and fill up the valleys to make everything flat so that from miles away people could see this procession on its way. So they could see the coming. They could see the peruski, the presence, the royal progress of the king.

Jesus is coming. Jesus is coming and here he's thinking about it. And he's thinking about the effects of it and all wrapped up into it is this fact that has to be accomplished.

He has a baptism. Fire that's come on the earth. Not water the second time, but fire.

It must do its work so that there can be a new heaven and a new earth. A reminder of another passage in Scripture. Now sometimes we take up words and we use them and maybe why I say it's important to kind of look at the history of a word, see how it's used.

What about the word regeneration? That's one of our favourite words, isn't it? Great word. Jesus used it. Do you remember how Jesus used it? Well, um, turn with me to Matthew, I think it's chapter 19.

Here we are. Matthew chapter 19. And, uh, I'll read from verse 27 again.

It's just enough for you to put it into its context, I hope. Matthew chapter 19, verse 27. Now I'm not going to go on into the you also shall sit, but I want you to see how he uses this word.

He refers to the regeneration. And then he explains what's in his mind when he says regeneration. It's the time when the Son of Man sits in the throne of his glory.

What's he talking about? He's not just talking about personal regeneration, is he? He's talking about cosmic regeneration. He's talking about the renewal of all things. He's talking about the time of the new heavens and the new earth.

He's talking about the time when the Son of Man, that is what it says in the book of Revelation, and the throne was there. And the Lamb. And there was no more curse, it says in the latter chapters of the book of Revelation.

No longer conflict, no longer curse, no longer any remnant of the fall, but just the King ruling in all his glory in absolute authority. That's what Jesus is referring to here. But when you and I use the word regeneration, we don't usually use it in that context, do we? We usually use it in a personal context, because there is a tremendous link between what he is going to do, and what he is already doing now.

It says in the book of Hebrews that we are partakers of the powers of an age that's yet to come. The true Christian, the truly regenerate man or woman, has already begun now to share, to enjoy, to taste powers from a coming age. When that age comes in all its fullness, it will be a wonderful consummation.

There will be nothing left out of it. But in the meantime, you have a foretaste of it, in your own personal regeneration. You have a down payment for it.

I go and speak from time to time to some of my friends in Haringey, those kind of areas, just sort of in North London, which is where lots and lots of the Greeks are, these wonderful Greek Cypriots. And they always correct me in my pronunciation of my Greek words. I always explain to them that they go, yeah, but you're speaking Cypriot Greek and I'm speaking North Staffordshire Greek.

There's kind of a difference between the two. One of the things I remember kind of talking to them about on one occasion, do you remember when Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit? And he says the Holy Spirit is the surety, or the guarantee, or the down payment, or the earnest. That's the authorised version, isn't it? He is the earnest.

Now, this is my North Staffordshire pronunciation of the word, but the Greek word for earnest is arabo. And it's fascinating that modern Greeks still use it, Cypriot Greeks use it. It's the modern Greek word for an engagement ring.

It's the down payment. It's the guarantee of the full consummation. It's the beginning now of pleasures and promises which will come at another point in the future.

A Christian is someone who has begun to enjoy now the powers of an age to come. Yes, the regeneration is going to take place, and the Son of Man will sit in the throne of His glory and everything will be as it ought to be. But you don't have to wait for it.

You can begin to know it now. This is my personal definition of regeneration. It's when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory.

And there's no civil war, and there's no contest, and there's no struggling, there's no fighting, there's just the throne of God under the Lamb. That's regeneration. That's going to be cosmic regeneration, but now it can be personal regeneration.

When the Son of Man sits in the throne of His glory. When Paul passed first time through Thessalonica, he caused amazing difficulties and problems for everyone who was there. There was a man named Jason who was one of the Christians who was bound over to keep the peace.

And they brought an accusation against Paul. In fact, they brought two. They said, these are the people who have turned the world upside down, and now they're here.

But this was the accusation they brought against Paul. They said, this man is teaching us things which are not consistent with our rule of the Caesar. This man is preaching another king throughout the rest of his life.

And by God's grace, I am preaching another king. I don't know who it is that's being king in your life. I don't know whether it's sin, or self, or Satan, or heredity.

I don't know what it is. But by God's grace, I am preaching another king. You do not have to live under that old king.

And the new one will certainly not share his throne with anyone. And you can know now your own personal experience of the power of an age that's yet to come. You can know your own personal regeneration.

And the Son of Man will sit on the throne of glory in you. And you'll probably use the same kind of language that the book of Revelation uses. The book of Revelation says, There was a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth was passed away.

Listen to Paul's testimony. If any man is in Christ, he has become a new creation. Old things are passed away.

Behold, all things are become new. That's the man testifying to his own personal regeneration. And it's not a unique testimony.

It's the testimony of anyone who really does yield up the throne of their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ. So there's a connection between the alternate and this that we experience now. And the reason I tell you that is because Jesus is constantly speaking in this passage of Luke's Gospel, chapter 12, of a time when he's going to come.

So he's thinking future. But although we still need to keep thinking future, and we know he is coming, at the same time we need to know that he comes now. Moment by moment.

And you can know some of the effects of his coming now. He's come to cast fire on the earth now. He's come to consume.

He's come to make things absolutely new. Our God, says the scripture, is a consuming fire. I was, as soon as I got into the car tonight, I kind of took a few sniffs.

And all my kind of childhood came flooding back, and I could smell coal smoke. And I come from the potteries, which is kind of a mining area as well, but I've lived most of my life in areas where there isn't any coal smoke. So it's a very wonderful smell.

I live in a part of the world now where we have a fire, but it's not a consuming fire. It's a fire, it's a safe fire, it's behind glass with a control on the side of it, and I can turn it up and down and off. God is not a gas fire.

He is not safe. He is a consuming fire. And his desire is to come into our lives and consume everything that is not in perfect alignment and accordance with his will.

He's come to cast fire on the earth. If I were to say to you, I hope you don't mind me talking to you like this, if I were to say to you, why would you say Jesus came? I wonder how many kind of answers I would get. I'm sure they'd all be good, solid, theological answers.

But if I said to you, why did he come? And I want your answer to come from Luke chapter 12 and verse 49 and the first half of the verse. And I said to you, tell me, according to this verse of Scripture, why did he come? He said, I am come to send fire on the earth. Didn't he come to die? Yes, he did.

Didn't he come to rise again? Yes, he did. But he came to send fire on the earth. He came to begin the process which would bring everything back under the perfect will of God in the regeneration, in the consummation, in the new beginning when all the oil has passed away.

He began, he came to set it all into motion. That's what he came to do. So, he came to send fire on the earth.

What will I, is it already being kindled? I have a baptism to be baptized with. And then he says, I'm going to come back to verse 50. But in verse 51 he says, let me ask you another question.

This is a kind of a trick question, so I don't want you to look at the verse for a moment. If I was saying to you, we were talking about opposites and contrast just after our meal came out. We were talking about the way that colors contrast.

And there's always kind of an opposite in color. And of course there are opposites in words, aren't there? There's kind of tall, and there's short, and there's wide, and there's thin. If I were to say to you, give me an opposite for the word peace.

Quick. And we all make the same reaction. We're all saying war.

And that's because we're not really saturated in the way that God thinks of things. Look at the contrast he puts here in verse 51. Did you suppose that I had come to give peace on the earth? I tell you no.

But rather division. We say war because we think that peace is the absence of war. And that's a kind of a Greek idea.

But the Hebrew idea of peace is something much more wonderful. It's this wonderful Hebrew word shalom, which really means wholeness. It means everything perfectly in its place, all perfectly integrated in exactly the way it should be.

Not broken. Not divided. For when told the people of Israel that they, if they were going to build a wall, he said, and you're going to build a, if it's going to be an earth wall let it be like this.

And if it's going to be a stone wall, make it like this, he said. But be sure that you don't use broken stones. You must use whole stones.

Do you remember this? A bit obscure, but it's way back there in Exodus in Deuteronomy. They were to make their altars from whole stones. And the Hebrew word for whole is shalom.

They were to make it with peace stones. They were to make it with stones which hadn't been broken and fragmented and divided. They were to make it with stones which were whole, complete the way they should be.

And here he says, did you think I'd come to bring wholeness? Did you think it'd come to bring wholeness? It'd come to bring division. These are strange words, aren't they? They're not the kind of things that we normally associate with the Lord Jesus. We think of his gentleness, of his kindness.

We think of the times where he took the children on his knee and he loved them and hugged them and we know the gracious words that proceeded from his mouth. We don't always think, that's how we think of it. But this is another side here, and he said I'd actually come to bring division.

At least from Hebrew, praise the Lord. When you get home, read Genesis chapter 1 and discover how God created a world by division. See how he divided the heavens from the earth and the land from the sea.

Creative acts are often divisive. They mean you have to separate things out. The reason I'm getting all these things together is because I want you to hold in your mind ideas of fire and separation because fire separates too.

It separates things permanently. There's no going back. We've learned our bridges behind us.

It effects separation. He's come to bring separation. Not wholeness, that'll come, but he's come to bring separation.

And it's all in this context when he's talking about the baptism. He was going to experience a baptism which for him would be like the fire of God's judgment coming upon him, and in which he would experience amazing separation. But it would all be so that you and I could enjoy the benefits of it.

What I want to say, and we'll go into this in the next couple of days if we can get to grips with that. What I want to say is that this baptism that Jesus experienced upon the cross, all baptism you know is actually baptism into death. Did you know that? Did you not know that those who are baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death that Paul writes in the Romans? All baptism is baptism into death.

Jesus on the cross was baptised into your death. Our death. He was baptised into the death of the human race and his earnest desire, the passion of his heart is that you should be baptised into his death.

He was baptised into yours so that you could be baptised into his. Now what's all that about? Let's just simply have a look at this word baptism. Baptism in ancient times was a word that was typically used to dip something, to immerse it.

And it was used in different ways. It was used of people who used to dye cloth. You know, you'd take a piece of white linen and you would baptise it into a purple dye.

Here's a good question to tease your functional children with. Do you know a lady in the Bible who used to dye for a living? Do you know a lady in the Bible who used to dye for a living? Lydia, the star of purple. She was a baptiser.

What she would do is she would take white linen, or whatever other cloth it was she had, and she would baptise it into the purple dye. And the consequence of baptising it into the purple dye was that things which had been two would now become inseparably one. You would no longer be able to say where the cloth ended and the purple began.

The one would have so thoroughly taken on the nature of the other that from that point on you would have to say, it's purple cloth. That's what baptism was. In fact, there used to be cooking as well.

There were two words that sound a little bit similar in Greek. One is bapto and one is baptizo. There is an ancient before the days of J. B. Oliver and Delia Smith and all these people, there were other cooks.

And there's an ancient cookbook from the days of Greece. And it tells you how to pickle onions. I don't know if this is how you do it now.

But they said, first of all, you had to take your onion and you baptise it. The word bapto. You baptise it into boiling water.

That's, I think, what you call blanching, isn't it, ladies? I don't know whether this is the way you... blanching, blanching, yes. I don't know whether this is the way you pickle onions now, but this is what's in this recipe. So, first of all, there's this word bapto and it says this is what you do.

You take your onion and you, using the word bapto, you, into boiling water. And then when you go through that process, you go onto the next verb, which is baptizo. And you baptizo it in vinegar.

And you know what the difference is, don't you? One is a brief plunge and the other is actually marinating until all the flavours that are in the vinegar are so seeped into the onion that you can't distinguish one from the other. It's absolutely... this is the word he's using, baptizo. I am going to be immersed into something with such completeness, with such fullness that you will not be able to tell where the one ends and the other begins.

You know what I'm talking about, don't you? There are different ways that the Bible refers to what Jesus did on the cross. It says, for example, Peter says, doesn't he, he says he bore our sins in his body on the tree. That's true, absolutely true.

But there's another statement in the scripture that Brother Paul uses which shows even more amazingly what happened. He says this, he says, He became sin for us. He who knew no sin.

He was immersed into, baptised into, united with the condition of men and women outside God so thoroughly that it was not possible to distinguish between him and the sin into which he had been baptised. Do you understand what I'm saying? He became one with what you and I have become. And you can hear it.

You can hear it on the cross when he cries out, my God, my God, why has thou forsaken me? That's Psalm 22. Psalm 22 goes on to give the explanation to the question but thou are holy. When he became the sin carrier and he became the one who was immersed into our estate separated from God, he experienced exactly what our condition is, what I call the ruin of our death.

That's our death. The Bible says, doesn't it, in Romans, that sin entered in and death reigned. Yes? Is that what it says? Well, it's actually telling you something very, very important that we need to understand.

Paul says, by one man sin entered and so death passed to all men through all their sins. Do you remember that phrase? It's Romans chapter 6, is it? 5. Romans chapter 5. He's telling you something very important if you listen to it. He says, by one man sin entered.

Now, excuse me for making this, I'm not being frivolous, but I want to make this so simple that you really do understand it. By one door every single one of us entered this room tonight. Is that right? Every single one of us entered by one door.

But you did not begin to exist when you entered that door. Some others have obviously existed a lot longer than that. What I'm saying is, you existed before you entered into this room.

That's what I'm saying. The Bible says, by one man sin entered. Sin is older than the human race.

Sin is older than the human race. What happened in Genesis is sin entered the human race. Now we're going into mysteries that the Bible tells very little about.

The mystery of iniquity. We've got clues here and there about what happened, about the way in which Satan, the greatest creature that God had ever made, began to aspire for greatness and praise and ultimately equality and ultimately it would have been annihilation because you could never have two supreme lords. He's a murderer from the beginning, Jesus said.

What happened in Genesis chapter 3 is that that spirit became one of the human spirit. Let me say it in a sloppy way, but I want you to think with me. It's almost as though in the gardens of Eden Satan came to our human representatives and said to them behold I stand at the door and knock.

If you hear my voice and open the door I'll come into you and I'll sit with you and you with me. I hope you don't think it's blasphemous but that's really what happened and that's why that process has to be absolutely reversed by the one who really had the right to say those words, Jesus saying them to us. And it's because of what sin is.

Sin is not just a failure to arrive at some standard. It's not a lack of education, it's not something that we could get rid of if we were a little bit better at this. It is something endemic to the human condition.

It's something which has got into us, something which goes from generation to generation and there's no possible cure for it. Education won't cure it. Politics won't cure it.

Religion won't cure it. Bible teaching won't cure it. The only thing that will cure it is a brand new beginning.

And it's why only the baptism can deal with what men and women have become. Nothing else will do it. Forgiving won't remove it.

Covering it won't remove it. Something else has to happen. Well, what happened is that Jesus on the cross entered into what the human race had become.

Our old men, our joint old men. You must be careful about boundaries in this language. When you say our old men as though we've got one each.

It says our old men, because we've all got one old man. I sometimes find it fascinating to see, I'm nearly stopping, fascinating to see how people ordinary folks who have no Bible knowledge use words. If I was kind of with some of my friends again, it was all from London, and I said to them you know, not people who are Christians.

I just said to them, if I said to you I'm having trouble with my old man, who do you think I was talking to? And if I was a woman and I said I was having trouble with my old man, who do you think I was talking to? Yes. Yes. And our old men fathered something into the human race.

And our old men, our wrong husband, our wrong head on the right body produced something which is grotesque. Something which, I don't think we ever really see this until God is ready to do something about it. I think it's just as well, I think we'd go mad if we saw what we had become.

But it is the only thing that explains the way that human beings cure it. Bible teaching won't cure it. The only thing that'll cure it is a brand new beginning.

And it's why only the baptism can deal with what men and women have become. Nothing else will do it. Forgiving won't remove it.

Covering it won't remove it. Something else has to happen. But what happened is that Jesus on the cross entered into what the human race had become.

Our old men, our joint old men. You must be careful about the Bible using this language. It doesn't say our old men as though we've got one each.

It says our old men, because we've all got one old man. I sometimes find it fascinating to see, I know it's shocking, fascinating to see how people, ordinary folks who have no Bible knowledge, use words. If I were to tell a whisper to my friends again, and they're all from London, and I said to them, you know, not people who are Christians, but I just said to them, if I said to you I'm having trouble with my old man, who do you think I was talking to? As if I was a woman and I said I was having trouble with my old man, who do you think I was talking to? Yes.

Yes. And our old men fathered something into the human race. And our old man, our wrong husband, our wrong head on the right body, produced something which is grotesque.

Something which I don't think we ever really see this until God is ready to do something about it. It's just as well, I think we'd go mad if we saw what we had become. But it is the only thing that explains the way that human beings are the way they are.

A couple of occasions I've been to Auschwitz and I've been to Majdanek. These were the concentration camps. Not concentration camps, these were the extermination camps.

These were the places where millions of people ultimately were taken in order to be annihilated. Animals don't behave like that. Animals kill for food.

And I know that a cat will play with a mouse, finally honing its instincts and training and it'll let the baby cat. And I know that orca whales and other things will do the same thing. But to destroy a whole race of people by the cruelest methods possible, to exercise on them unbelievable medical experiments, human beings don't behave.

Animals don't behave like this. There's something, you know, about the human race which, and I'm using my words very carefully, there's something about the human race which is diabolical. There's something about the human race that is diabolical.

And this is the only book that even begins to give an answer to what that is. No philosophy, no religious textbooks, no psychologists have ever given an explanation as to why human beings behave like that. But we have it.

We have within us by first birth the spirit of a murderer. Someone who comes to kill and slay and destroy. Someone who enjoys cruelty.

Someone who enjoys dominion. Someone who is really just a cosmic vandal. He wants to destroy things that are precious to God.

That's what he wants to do. And this seed passed into the human race. And there was no cure for it until Jesus came and with this took place on the cross was baptized into our old men.

Was baptized into our humanity under the wrong head. He used his words, which I hardly dare use them, but he used them. When we think of Jesus dying on the cross, most often I think we think of the words of John the Baptist, Behold I am a God who takes away the sins of the world.

Maybe if we're romantic enough we have a quick picture in our minds of a lamb. Love the little creatures. Wonderful.

Innocent. Playful. Jesus referred to his death upon the cross.

He said as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. That's not nearly so lovable, is it? He became identified with the snake. He became identified with the source of the poison that has been destroying the human race for generations.

He became one with it. He was baptized into it. He became sin.

He who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in him. And he says here it's my baptism. And I won't have things I want to do.

And until I've done this, I can't do those other things. This is amazing to me, this passage of Scripture. A baptism in which he suffers the fire of God's righteous anger against sin.

A baptism in which he experiences the penalty of separation. A baptism in which he becomes absolutely one with what the human race has become. And holds it under the judgment of God until all God's righteous anger is spent.

Charles Spurgeon used to say, and he would not have a great gram of words, he used to say it was as though God unsheathed the sword of his justice and in righteous anger plunged it once and for all into the body of his son. That's what he did. His anger is turned away.

His wrath is spent. His dealing with sin was finished. And from the cross, from the cross not from Hades some strange teaching gets in around at certain times, from the cross comes the word triumph.

It is finished. I am baptized with the baptism that I must be baptized with. I have made the identification.

I have become one and carried away this sin from the presence of God. That's Jesus. He was baptized into our death.

And now somehow he has to find a way of baptizing us into his death. He experienced all the consequences of our sin so that we might experience all the blessings of his nature and his fellowship with his Father. I'm going to stop now but we'll continue later tomorrow and on Sunday.

I hope you'll think about these things. I try to make people think. I've got this famous motto that I stole on the back of a car once which said if you haven't changed your mind recently how do you know you still got one? So I shall challenge you to think but more than that to worship this which is our God.

Let's just pray.

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