

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 2

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of fulfilling the Great Commission through true discipleship and the significance of baptism as a commitment to Christ.

Duration: 25:30

Scripture: Matthew 28:18, Mark 16:15

Topics: "Great Commission", "Trinity Doctrine"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of completing the Great Commission by both preaching the gospel and making disciples in every nation. It highlights the significance of baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a symbol of dying to self and rising with Christ. The message stresses the mystery of the Trinity, the need for humility, and the revelation of spiritual truths by the Holy Spirit, contrasting human understanding with divine wisdom.

Transcript

We continue our study today on all that Jesus taught. We were looking earlier at the importance of completing the Great Commission. In Mark 16, verse 15, we have one half of the Great Commission, which is going to all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

And he who believes and is baptized will be saved, which I said last time that is being fulfilled by 99% of those who engage in missionary work and evangelism among born-again Christians. But this other half of the Great Commission, in Matthew 28, verse 18 to 20, is, as I see it, being fulfilled only by about 1% of born-again Christians who engage in missionary work and preaching the gospel. But this is what completes the Great Commission.

Otherwise, it's like a half-finished job. There's such a beauty in the symmetry of our human body, how ugly a body would look if, for example, one half of my body was muscular and strong and the other half of my body was skin and bones. That would look hideous.

Or if one eye was normal size and the other eye was 1% of that size, or one ear was 1% of the size of the other ear. And that's how bad it looks when the Great Commission, given in Mark 16 and Matthew 28, is fulfilled in an imbalanced way by Mark 16, 15 being emphasized to such an extent that Matthew 28, verse 19 and 20 is almost ignored. In Matthew 28, verse 19 and 20, he speaks about making disciples in every nation, not just getting them to the place where their sins are forgiven, not just getting them to the place

where they are baptized, but making them disciples and then leading on to other things, which we will come to later.

But let's look at Matthew 28, 19. In our last study, we saw the conditions of discipleship. And what it means to make a person a disciple.

Those apostles understood it very clearly. We saw those conditions from Luke 14, 25 to 33. Then he said, once you make them disciples, you got to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So in other words, before we baptize them, we got to present to them the claims of discipleship and say, when you come to Christ, we're not inviting you just to go to heaven when you die. We're not inviting you just to come to have your sins forgiven, but we're inviting you to make Jesus Lord of your life. Not someone whom you occasionally visit once a week, but one who's going to be your husband.

You know, like when a woman marries, she even gives up her parents' name and she completely is now one with her husband, or that's the way she should be. And this is the relationship that Christ wants to have with each of us. This is what it means to be a disciple.

And so a woman should not enter into marriage thinking that I've got to spend only one day a week with my husband, or I can continue to live my own life and visit him once in a while. No, she must be made aware of the fact that in marriage, it's a total commitment to this other man whom you're going to marry. And even so, in the preaching of the gospel, there must be a clarity in the way we explain to the people we preach to, that this requires total commitment.

This means discipleship. This means following the Lord. Are you ready for that? Then come, we'll baptize you.

We don't wait till a person becomes perfect. No, but we do say that a person must be presented with the claims of discipleship and it's when he accepts that, that we baptize him in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And that's why we would like to wait in our churches to see whether a person is willing to follow the Lord before we baptize him.

Now in countries where there's persecution, where it's not popular to be a Christian, we may not need to wait so long. Like in the early days, for a Jewish person to become a Christian was a tremendous sacrifice. And even today it is, for a Jewish person to become a Christian.

And that's why in the early days, in the Acts of the Apostles, they could baptize a person almost immediately. For an idol worshiper to give up their idolatry and become a Christian meant being cut off by their relatives, etc. So it was easy to know that they were willing to be disciples and they could be baptized fairly soon.

But nowadays, in countries where there's no persecution, it's not so easy to know whether a person has understood the claims of discipleship. He may have just accepted Christ because he wants to go to heaven. The claims of discipleship may not have been presented to him, he may not have understood it, and even if he understood it, he may not be willing for it.

We have no right to baptize such people. Now a person can backslide after they are baptized, that's another issue. But the claims of discipleship must be made clear to people right at the outset.

Jesus always proclaimed the truth like that. When a rich young ruler came to him and asked him, what must I do to inherit eternal life? He virtually told him to forsake all that he had. And when he was not willing to do that and walked away, the Lord never went after him.

The Lord never sort of reduced the conditions in order to make it convenient. He didn't even ask him to come step by step. He said it's absolute.

If you want to follow me, you've got to give up all that. So this is what we read in Matthew 28 19. That is the way the gospel should be presented.

Then we can baptize them. And baptism is significant in this sense, that as we read in Romans chapter 6, it is symbolic of the burial of that old self, the old way of life that I had, which is basically doing my own will, doing what pleased me, seeking to please myself or seeking to please other human beings, that that person, that Adamic person living inside me has died. I have taken my place with Christ on the cross and that person has died.

When I accept that, then I can be baptized and coming out of the waters of baptism, I'm testifying that I'm a new person now. So that's the meaning of being baptized, immersed. So if that is not true, then baptism becomes meaningless.

You can't bury a man who's not dead. And a lot of people who are baptized, I say they're not dead. They have not chosen to die to themselves, but they go into the waters because it's become a ritual to them.

Many parents want to urge their children to be baptized for their own honor. They think that baptism will somehow protect them from the world. It doesn't.

Baptism is only a symbol of a choice that a person has made to die to his own way of life, to die to doing his own will. And if he hasn't made that choice, it's a meaningless ritual. A lot of Christians go through meaningless rituals like that.

And the other thing we read here in Matthew 28 and verse 19 is, this baptism must be in the name of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So there itself, Christ emphasizes the Trinity, just like at his own baptism, we read there was a voice from heaven, the Father, the Son of God there going into the River Jordan, and the Holy Spirit coming and descending upon him in the form of a dove. We see the same thing here in Christian baptism, that emphasis on the triune God, on the three persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Three distinct persons, but one God. And that's why it's mentioned in the name, not the many names, one name, but it's Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is a mystery.

I don't believe that it's possible for us as human beings to fully understand this mystery, how God is one, but yet in three distinct persons. But to me, that is one of the proofs that Christianity is the truth, that three persons and one God is the truth. One proof of it is that I can't understand it.

It's beyond my human understanding. To use an illustration, a dog is not able to understand a human being, many things that a human being does. Take mathematics, for example.

You may be able to convince a very clever dog or chimpanzee by putting three objects in front of it, that one plus one plus one is three. There are some clever chimpanzees who can identify that and say the total

is three. Maybe you can convince a dog, a clever one, that three bones are three different bones.

But then if you go on from addition, one plus one plus one equals three, to multiplication and try to explain to that chimpanzee, that clever one who could add one plus one plus one and explain to that chimpanzee now, that when one multiplied by one multiplied by one is still one, the chimpanzee is all confused. He can't understand that. Why is that? Because he's not a human being.

Whereas a little child going to school, when he comes to multiplication, he understands very clearly that one multiplied by one multiplied by one is still one. Three ones are one. So I'm using that just as an illustration, that for a chimpanzee or a dog to understand what a little eight-year-old child can understand, it will have to be a human being.

Even a 20-year-old chimpanzee won't be able to understand what an eight-year-old child can understand, because it's not a human being. For a chimpanzee to understand multiplication, it has to come to the level of a human being. Now the distance between us and a chimpanzee is much less compared to the distance between us and God.

It's immense. So if a dog or a chimpanzee can't understand a human being, how one into one is one, into one into one into one is one, how do you think we as human beings could understand Almighty God, that three persons are one God? In fact, if I could explain God, I'd have to be God myself. Just like if a chimpanzee to understand multiplication, it has to become a human being.

It's as simple as that. So I don't seek to understand the mystery of the Godhead. It is arrogance to think that I can contain in the little cup of my mind the ocean of God's wisdom and His immensity and the mystery that there is.

But the Christian life begins with immersing a person in water into this mystery as it were. He acknowledges there that there are things about God I cannot understand. He baptized them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

They are being immersed into God Himself in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, implying thereby also that each of these people who are now disciples must have a personal, direct connection with God, not through a prophet or through a pastor or through anybody. Just like a man doesn't want to have a secretary between him and his wife, Christ doesn't want to have any in-between mediator between him and his bride, which is you and me, if you're a disciple of Christ. So all this is involved here in this emphasizing baptism as one part of the Great Commission.

Make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I see something else in relation to what I just mentioned, that we're right at the beginning of their Christian life introducing them to the mystery of the Trinity, which they cannot understand, humanly speaking, but which they can experience. I can experience the love of the Father and the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit in my life, even though I can't explain that mystery.

So there are many things like this in the Christian life which are a mystery, which we may not be able to explain. The important thing is not explanation but reality. In any area, we have such a, as human beings, such a tremendous faith in the ability of our own mind, an arrogant, we would say, belief that our mind can explain everything, that we can limit ourselves from knowing the truth.

If I say, I'll only accept what my mind says, it's like a dog saying, I can't understand multiplication, so multiplication must be all rubbish. That's how man say, if I can't explain the Trinity, it must be all rubbish. Well, that's because the man's limitation in his mind, it's that dog's limitation that prevents him from understanding multiplication.

But it's important for us as we begin the Christian life for people to realize that we are not to lean on our own understanding. If we want to follow Jesus, I remember once a person was being baptized in our church, in the baptism tank, and he was quite a tall person. And so when he was being immersed in the water by the brother who was baptizing him, I noticed that he did not go in completely, the top part of his head was still above water before the brother lifted him up.

So I said, wait, we've got to immerse him completely. And especially the top part of his head where his brain is, that's really got to die so that he can be resurrected and have the mind of Christ, be humble enough to acknowledge that his human way of thinking is not capable of understanding divine mysteries apart from the revelation of the Holy Spirit. So I said, dip him again fully.

So this is important for us to understand. It may be a very small thing, but I believe that many Christians go astray because they try to understand with their mind what can only be revealed by the Holy Spirit. In fact, Jesus said that in Matthew chapter 11 and verse 25, Matthew 11 and verse 25, he said, he was praying and he said, I praise thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise, the clever and the intelligent and revealed them to babes.

Have you ever thought about that verse? Right at the outset of the Christian life, we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And we are acknowledging whether you know it or not, there's a mystery there that my human mind cannot explain fully. It's hidden from the clever and the intelligent who seek to explain everything of God with their mind.

Look at the foolishness of people who believe evolution just because they put certain evidence here and there together, they come to certain conclusions, and they still have to acknowledge there's a missing link there between that chimpanzee and the man who has never been able to figure out why nobody's in that in-between stage today. And so we see when man is so confident in the power of his mind, he doesn't understand many things in scripture. And the explanation is here that God has hidden these things from those who are wise and intelligent.

And the reason is they are proud of their wisdom, their cleverness and intelligence. It's not that God is against intelligent people, because God himself gave us intelligence. It's God who's given me intelligence.

But if I become proud of my cleverness and my intelligence, then I become blind to the things of God. Why does it say here he's revealed them to babes? There's a word Jesus used here called revelation, which is different from understanding. Understanding comes through study and analysis and using my mind, you know, a chemistry equation perhaps, or a mathematical problem or a geometry problem.

I can use my mind and my cleverness and my intelligence and grasp it and understand it. But the things of God are not by understanding, it's by revelation. Revelation is a word used in the New Testament to speak about truths that cannot be understood by our natural mind without the Holy Spirit enlightening it.

So it says here this is revealed to babes. Now what do babes have that clever intelligent people don't have? Is there any book that anyone can write anywhere in the world that clever people will not

understand but babes will understand? There is one book like that and that's the Bible. What does it mean? What does a babe have that clever intelligent people don't have? First of all, a babe has a pure heart.

A little baby, his heart is absolutely pure. It's got no bitterness against anyone. It's got no hatred, no grudge, nothing.

And Jesus once picked up a little baby and said, you got to humble yourself like this little child. They've got a humility that no other human being has. So that's another thing we see that babes have, which grown-up people don't have.

So a very important factor in Revelation is humility. And humility is closely connected with the death of the cross. I want to show you Philippians.

See, baptism, Romans 6 says, is symbolic of our dying with Jesus, death to self, death to the old man. I'm burying the old man that was crucified with Christ on the cross. I want to explain that baptism so that we understand the significance of it.

God has placed us in Christ, Ephesians 1 and verse 4 says, before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 1 and verse 4. God has placed us in Christ before the foundation of the world. What that means is God, who knows the future, knew that millions of years later, you would be born, I would be born, and that at a particular time in our life, we would open our life and surrender ourselves to Christ. And so he chose us on the basis of that foreknowledge, 1 Peter 1 verse 1 and 2 says, on the basis of that knowledge of the future, he chose us in Christ before Genesis 1 verse 1, right at the beginning.

And he placed us in Christ. It's something like this. I mean, this is you, and this Bible symbolizes Christ.

He placed you in Christ. You were in Christ. And when Christ died on the cross, because you were in God's mind, placed in Christ before the foundation of the world, you died with him.

And when he was buried, you were buried with him. And when he rose again, you rose again with him. When he ascended to heaven, you ascended with him, spiritually.

Now, when you are born again, and the Holy Spirit comes into you, these things become real in your life. And this is what we are testifying to in baptism. I accept that.

I accept that on the cross, not only my sins are forgiven, but I died with Christ. And here is something that we need to lead Christians to right at the beginning of their Christian life. Your old man was crucified with Christ.

You're risen again. This is not some postgraduate lesson. Baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Now, it's okay to be baptized, even if you don't understand its full meaning. But when Romans 6 is there available for us, explaining the meaning, it's good for us to understand it. That we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so that we can be raised up, ascended, and as we come out of the water, we're saying, I'm raised up with Christ.

And now my mind is set on the things that are above. So that command to be baptized in Matthew 28 and verse 19 is not something we just take as a ritual. It's unfortunate that many people do things, they're

obedient to scripture, but they don't seem to understand what does it mean.

And then if you don't understand the meaning, we miss the blessing of it. So make disciples and baptize them into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We acknowledge that there are many things we can't understand, but we accept by faith.

As we come in humility, God reveals them to us. For example, we read in 1 Corinthians 2 verse 10, God has revealed them to us through the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes into our heart, he reveals things which our mind cannot grasp.

As we come in humility, like little babes, he reveals these things to us. So I believe there's a lot in that, that we need to recognize when a person is being baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There are a lot of people who deny that trinity.

There's something seriously wrong in that. If you're not being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and you're really becoming a disciple, you need to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And then we move on to something more that Jesus taught.

So let's bow our heads and pray. Our Heavenly Father, once again, we thank you for your word. It leads us into all truth.

Guide us and lead us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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