

Disciples Church

Lesson 71: Wednesday Feb 22, 2017

**HANDOUT**

**Q111. What is *baptism*?**

Baptism is a holy, New Covenant ordinance from our Lord Jesus, whereby a professing believer in Jesus Christ testifies of their faith in Christ alone for salvation and their union with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection by the public testimony of immersion in water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is to be done once and in no way contributes to one’s salvation.

**Matthew 28:18-20** And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

1. “Baptism is a holy, **New Covenant ordinance.**”

In order to properly understand what baptism is we must know when and why it started. It is important to understand when this ordinance was given because it will clear up a lot of confusion about what it is for.

We see the ordinance of baptism clearly commanded by Jesus in the Matthew passage, but when did Jesus give this command? This took place during His time bodily here on Earth, in this case after His death, burial and resurrection. Therefore we know this command was given to us in the New Covenant. This is the Covenant that remains now and until Christ’s return. Therefore anyone who lives after Christ was resurrected and is given faith in Him, should enjoy and obey this ordinance.

Here is one way we see the importance of knowing **when** this ordinance was given. Since this ordinance was given in the New Covenant we can draw the conclusion that this ordinance doesn’t provide salvation. If baptism were necessary for salvation, then what happened to all the believers under the Old Covenant? Baptism was not commanded or taught in the Old Covenant. Now we know because of our covenant theology lessons that God’s people are all saved the same way all throughout time, namely, by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Romans 4:1What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? 2For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

1. “**from** our Lord **Jesus**”

We see this clear command from Jesus in the great commission passage we read when we began the lecture. The command was to “go and make disciples baptizing them”. Clearly Jesus institutes baptism through this command to all believers who came after this command was given. And again this was instituted by the Lord Jesus during His bodily time on earth as He was establishing the New Covenant clearly making this ordinance something to be done from then-onward in this first creation.

1. “Whereby a **Professing Believer** of **Jesus Christ** *testifies* of his/her *faith* in **Christ alone** for **salvation**”

Now, because the commandment that Jesus gave was so clear, we believe that all who and only those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, in a credible way, should be baptized. There is not a minimum or maximum age, rather we believe this should be done on a case by case basis. If you live under the New Covenant and you have been saved (grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone) then you have been commanded to be baptized. So everyone who has been given faith should participate in baptism, and only such people.

We do take caution because we do not want to just baptize a bunch of people who later would say “I wasn’t ready.” It is our job to help flush these things out for younger professors (those professing faith) or newer folks to Christianity in order to lead them well into this ordinance. On the other side of this coin we do not want to withhold this ordinance from someone who truly is professing faith simply because of age. This is why we go with a credible profession of faith and dialog that helps us (to the best of our ability) to ensure that the person being baptized understands the claim each is making about faith.

1. “and **their union** **with Christ’s** *death, burial, and resurrection* by the **public testimony**”

The ordinance of baptism has been given to us believers for the purpose of proclaiming to those around us that God has saved us by Jesus’ work alone and given us faith in Christ Jesus as our Lord and savior. It is a gift to us, the believers, as a means of grace, meaning that it is a great reminder and lifter of our souls to physically display what has happened spiritually. The ordinance of baptism gives us a greater understanding of what we are proclaiming to believe.

The visual display is so very clear, the person getting baptized is declaring his/her faith in the death burial and resurrection of the Savior. When I get baptized I am declaring that as Christ died for me I am dying to myself and burying my old life with and through Christ’s death and burial. My old self died with Christ (being dunked under the water represents Christ’s death and burial) and God rose me to new life as Christ was raised to new life (being raised up from the water as Christ was raised from the grave).

This reality is the process of regeneration and it is a spiritual process that has taken place. This is outside of our human ability to see, so we count it as blessing that we’ve been given the commandment of baptism because it helps give us a visual representation of what happened in our hearts before the baptism to declare and celebrate the faith that God has previously given to the believer. This is why it is a public testimony!

1. “of **immersion** in **water**”

There are a few reasons why we do not sprinkle people for baptism. If baptism is meant to put on display Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection it makes sense to submerge the one being baptized completely under water as Christ died completely and was placed in the tomb or the earth for 3 days.

People who sprinkle in baptism are connecting this ordinance to the old covenant system of animal sacrifice, and we do not see any biblical evidence for this. Another reason is the examples given in the New Testament are examples of submersion. There’s no example of sprinkling or splashing so this is our effort to follow what scripture teaches. Jesus himself was fully submerged when baptized.

1. “in **the name** of *the* **Father** and of *the* **Son** and of *the* **Holy Spirit**”

If baptism represents the work of God in our salvation then we must see the clarity to be baptized in the name of our triune God! God the father in agreement with the Son and the Spirit decided before creation whom He would save. These elect chosen people of God is who Christ came to die for, remember our teaching on particular redemption.

Christ’s work did not simply make salvation possible, it assured, it made certain the salvation of all the elect of God. There will not be one drop of our Savior’s blood that was shed in vain! Praise God!!

The Holy Spirit acting in unison with the Father and the Son causes regeneration or new birth in the elect man or woman of God. Salvation was decided accomplished and applied by our triune God so therefore we express this work and get baptized in the name of The Father, in the name of The Son, and in the name of The Holy Spirit! Christian, praise God for His work of salvation! This is why we baptize in the name of our triune God we acknowledge the role of each member of the trinity and praise God for His work to save us!

Notice another beautiful part of this is the unity and purpose of the God head. The persons of the triune God are always in complete unison! The Father elects us, the Son pays our debt and protects us, the Spirit resurrects us and this beautiful picture is what we testify to when we get baptized!!!

1. “Baptism is to be **done once** and in *no way* **contributes to one’s salvation**.”

I want to make the first part of this point clear and concise because we need to spend some time showing you that baptism in no way contributes to salvation. We are baptized once, it make sense that if baptism is done to testify of Gods work in our hearts then this work is done once and remains. I am not saved then lost then saved again. Just as my salvation was a onetime act of God (though it’s evidenced in ongoing faith) my testimony of this through the ordinance of baptism is only done once as a true believer.

Baptism in no way contributes to one’s salvation. Many would say wrongly that baptism saves you, that there is a literal salvific work in the physical act of baptism. In fact, the scriptures may seem to speak about baptism in such a way that if you do not understand how to interpret or exegete the passages properly you could make the same mistake.

1 Peter 3:21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

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

Romans 6:1What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

3Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

5For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7For one who has died has been set free from sin.

On the surface it really seems as if these passages are claiming that baptism is what saves you, or at the very least faith + baptism. So how do we know that this cannot be the meaning behind these texts? We must consider these verses in light of all scripture! The constant theme all throughout the entire bible is that you are truly saved by God through gifted faith alone. Not baptism, not works, not your own will…

1st John 4: 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

You see in order for us to love God, He had to love us first. And whoever loves “has been born of God”. See the past tense! If you love the brothers (fellow Christians) and God, it is only because you had been born again. New birth produces faith and love for God!

New birth did not happened because we got baptized, rather we believers got baptized because we were first given new birth or born again by God and then repented of sin and trusted in Christ.

1 Peter 3:21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Here is a snippet from John Piper about this passage and how it relates to salvation: “Peter seems very aware that his words are open to dangerous misuse. This is why, as soon as they are out of his mouth, as it were, he qualifies them lest we take them the wrong way. In verse 21 he does say, "Baptism now saves you" - that sounds like the water has a saving effect in and of itself apart from faith. He knows that is what it sounds like and so he adds immediately, "Not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience - through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

But the point seems to be this: When I speak of baptism saving, Peter says, I don't mean that the water, immersing the body and cleansing the flesh, is of any saving effect; what I mean is that, insofar as baptism is "an appeal to God for a good conscience," (or is "a pledge of a good conscience toward God"), it saves.

Paul said in Romans 10:13, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord - everyone who appeals to the Lord - will be saved." Paul does not mean that faith alone fails to save. He means that faith calls on God. That's what faith does. Now Peter is saying, "Baptism is the God-ordained, symbolic expression of that call to God. It is an appeal to God - either in the form of repentance or in the form of commitment.””

Romans 6:1What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

3Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

5For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

6We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7For one who has died has been set free from sin.

This passage in Romans is Paul doing what Paul does best. Paul is trying to give us a mental picture of how things relate to each other. The baptism here in verse 3 is not an action that saved us, Paul is speaking to people who have already received the grace of God. Unfortunately they are applying the principle of grace in an incorrect way, that’s why he starts the section with the phrase, “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” You see here Paul is talking to those who are already believers (we who died to sin) but who are abusing or misunderstanding grace.

Then as he continues he’s showing us how our baptism relates to the saving work of Christ which has already happened. He is not talking about how this could happen and save you. Paul is saying the baptism that you did (after and because of your faith) represents this literal death that Christ died and if you have died with Christ to sin then why do you think that grace would permit you to continue in sin! That’s the whole point of this part of the letter.

Paul would go on to say again “shall we sin since we are under grace and not the law?”

Paul’s use of baptism here is descriptive of what happened when God saved you, it is not prescriptive to tell you how to be saved. If Paul meant that baptism saved he would have said “shall we go on sinning all the more so we can continue getting baptized?”

We have to see here that this passage actually reinforces the earlier section where I told you what baptism was. In fact this is an amazing description of what baptism represents. These verses are the typical case of description not prescription.

**Descriptive** literature is that which describes what happened.

**Prescriptive** literature commands the reader to a course of action.

1. **Credobaptism vs. Paedobaptism:**

Paedobaptists believe that baptism was given to those who are a part of the new covenant and to their children. We will read a passage later that they use to make this argument. Paedobaptists have many reasons they perform infant baptism. They claim that when scripture testifies of someone’s household being baptized that there must have been babies in that household.

They claim that there are particular New Testament verses that parallel Old Testament verses and tie baptism and circumcision together as covenant signs. They argue that since circumcision was done to an infant then baptism should be done to an infant. The argument continues, infant baptism does not save (unless you hold a Catholic view) it is simply the initiation into the family of God. They still have to have faith to be saved. So they argue that there are two types of God’s family, one that’s temporary but still a blessing and one that’s eternal. Since circumcision was a sign that they were a part of God’s Old Covenant people (even without faith) they claim that the sign of the New Covenant (baptism) is just like this and by performing infant baptism you are bringing the child into the family of God even if they may never be saved through faith.

So they are really holding to two things, that you can be in the family of God and not have faith ergo you could eventually pass and not be with God’s eternal family. And since this was seen in the Old Covenant it would make sense to continue the process in the New Covenant.

Genesis 17:10-14English Standard Version (ESV)

10 This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

11 You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.

12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, 13 both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

As you can see God takes this seriously in the Old Covenant. What we need to understand about this is that the members of the house, including children or slaves (those who were owned by God’s people), were commanded to be marked through circumcision by God. They were commanded because they were a part of this covenant, not just the parents who received it but their kids and their slaves. In fact, if they disobeyed God said they were “cut off because they broke God’s covenant.” We believe the error that Paedobaptists make is that they see the old covenant people of God in the same way as they see the New Covenant people of God. This is where they go wrong.

The Old Covenant people of God were meant to show their falleness and the insufficiency of the old system, so that the true unity the New Covenant people have with God is lifted up to be seen as awesome as it actually is. Remember the Old Covenant never even promised salvation through obedience. It promised temporal blessing but not eternal salvation. Therefore, you could be among the Old Covenant people of God and not be saved. However, when we see in Hebrews 8:6 6But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises, we can begin to see that the true New Covenant people of God are definitely saved and are only a part of this New Covenant because they have been saved.

If baptism is a sign commanded for the New Covenant people and the true New Covenant people are all truly saved (unlike the Old Covenant people simply following Old Covenant law apart from faith) then only people who belong to that covenant should partake, just like we warn those who do not believe to not partake in communion, why would we baptize those who could not possibly profess faith.

Since infants cannot make a credible profession of faith, and we see in Scripture a profession must come first in order to get baptized, we do not baptize infants. We at Disciples Church believe the biblical command and the evidence of the New Testament point solely to believers alone being baptized.

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Notice how clearly faith precedes baptism here. When they believed THEN they were baptized.

Acts 16:14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. 15 And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.

Notice how faith precedes baptism in this passage, God opened her heart then she was baptized her and her house.

Acts 16:31 And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.

34 Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

This passage is a great example of what we mean when we say faith precedes baptism. The passage begins with BELIEVE “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” So how will their household be saved? They and their household will be saved through faith through belief. After this command he follows with: 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.

We’ve got to be careful when we make assumptions, if you base your doxology on possibilities that are not clear or expressly stated I do believe it can lead to false understandings and practices.

Now I want to clarify something, though we disagree with Paedobaptism we certainly don’t think it is a grievous sin and placing those who do it outside the body of true believers. If they rightly believe baptism doesn’t save or play a role in salvation, only faith in Christ alone saves, but baptize some wrongly, then they are in error on the baptism matter, but still brothers in Christ. I can have brothers in Christ who get this wrong and in fact I have many that I study and glean from who do indeed get this point wrong.

Acts 10:44 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 45 And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 47 “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Peter proclaims can anyone withhold baptism from these people “who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” As soon as Peter realizes what has happened, that God has given them the Holy Spirit Peter immediately says lets baptize them! You cannot make an argument for baptism to precede faith here it is very clear that baptism is for those who have received the Holy Spirit or better said those who have been given faith.

**Q111. What is *baptism*?**

Baptism is a holy, New Covenant ordinance from our Lord Jesus, whereby a professing believer in Jesus Christ testifies of their faith in Christ alone for salvation and their union with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection by the public testimony of immersion in water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is to be done once and in no way contributes to one’s salvation.

Baptism is a holy, New Covenant ordinance from our Lord Jesus. This is made clear in his final charge to the Apostles before he ascended back into heaven, the charge to go and make disciples and baptize them. Our answer continues “whereby a professing believer in Jesus Christ testifies of their faith in Christ alone for salvation and their union with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection by the public testimony of immersion in water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” again baptism is a testimony to the church an outward physical expression of what the triune God has done in our hearts. What a unique and beautiful display of the gospel given to us “who are believing” to testify of the work God has done in us! Baptism is done by submersion as evidenced by Jesus’ baptism.

It is to be done once and in no way contributes to one’s salvation.” We do not baptize every time we sin, our skin probably couldn’t handle constantly being in water. Can you imagine how pruned you’d be if this was the case. But why do we only get baptized once? It is clear in scripture that you get baptized to testify to your faith, faith that is genuine doesn’t go away, and therefore, there is no reason to be baptized twice.

Baptism does not contribute to your salvation, if it did the thief on the cross could not have been saved. In fact, none of the saints in the Old Testament could have been saved just think about the logic of that. Baptism is a beautiful ordinance given to those who are a part of the New Covenant. Members of the New Covenant (and all the elect believers throughout the history of man) have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus alone! I really think we will be shocked at how we just don’t get the depth and beauty of God’s grace to give us something like baptism to celebrate and glorify the treasure of our hearts our God! It is a gracious gift given to us and our goal is to rightly handle it in our desire to rightly honor our Lord!