

Section: Doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology)

 Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Lesson 86 <> Q111

Pastor Joshua Kirstine

**TEACHING NOTES**

Intro:

We are currently in the section of theology called **Ecclesiology**, which is **the study of the doctrine of the church**. It’s from the Latin word ecclesia which emphasizes the gathering and ministry of the church.

It is the study of how God has instructed us, His redeemed people, to act and what we are to do and not do, and how we are supposed to operate.

This leads us to Questions 111 in our Word of Truth Catechism and the important practice of Baptism:

**Q111. What is baptism?**

Baptism is a holy, New Covenant ordinance from our Lord Jesus, whereby a professing believer in Jesus Christ testifies of his/her faith in Christ alone for salvation and his/her 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.

First our answer says, “Baptism is a **holy**, **New Covenant ordinance**”

The commandment to practice baptism comes from Christ himself in the great commission given to the Apostles and the New Covenant Church.

**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.”

Like in previous convents, the Triune God (who sets the covenant terms and is the only lawgiver), has issued positive laws for those in the New Covenant. To remind you, **Positive Law** is law and commands based on the will of God for a particular people, a particular purpose, and a particular time.

**For the New Covenant AKA The Covenant of Grace**, the law is given not as a burden to earn covenant rewards like the Old Covenant, rather, it is a part of the covenant rewards.

In the New Covenant it is a blessing to have the Law (to KNOW GOD’S WILL for us) and to have God working obedience in us (CAUSING US TO DO GOOD WORKS FOR HIS GLORY AND THE GOOD OF OTHERS AND OURSELVES). Church this is a true blessing!

What this means is, Believers Baptism is a New Covenant positive law or as our catechism answer says, *“a holy, New Covenant ordinance.”*

It is one we should faithfully honor and obey and celebrate as we do!!

Our historic Baptist Confession of 1689 says it this way:

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution. They are appointed by the Lord Jesus the only lawgiver and are to be continued in his church to the end of the age.

Next our Catechism answer says.

***whereby a professing believer in Jesus Christ testifies of his/her faith in Christ alone for salvation.***

A major part of the Lord Jesus commissioning of us is to be his witnesses and to testify the gospel to the ends of the earth until he comes again to bring final judgment and to usher in the new creation.

**We see this not only in the great commission but in other commissioning statements like..**

 **Acts 1:8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

With this is view, it is important to understand that a baptism at it’s core is a testimony from a witness. A person who has had a direct connection and transformation with the one we are testifying about, **Jesus Christ.** The testimony a person gives at their baptism is not to say, “Look at me!”.

It is to say look at Jesus Christ. Look at what he has done.

Next week, we will talk about the other New Covenant Ordinance that Jesus gives to the church called **the Lord’s supper** and it too is a testimony. It too says. “Look at what Christ has done”

Baptism is a ceremony whereby a person goes on public record to announce that Jesus has saved them form their sin. It is a way to say, I belong to Jesus now and I want the world to know it.

It is as our catechism answer says, *whereby a professing believer in Jesus Christ testifies of his/her faith in Christ alone for salvation and his/her union with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection by the public testimony of immersion in water.*

**Believer baptism is a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person’s union with Christ:**

And it is done in the likeness of His death and resurrection.

The Apostle Paul speaks to this well in..

**Romans 6:1-5** What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? **2** By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? **3** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We 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. **5** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

It is here that we see the power of the visual symbolism that comes with a baptism ceremony.

There is rich symbolism when a person goes under the waters of baptism as this is symbolic of the death that Jesus died and the grave that Jesus went to on our behalf.

**Romans 5:8-9** but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

Jesus died in the place of guilty sinners and fully satisfied the wrath of God due that sin so that they are no longer under condemnation but forgiven of their sin.

Not only did Christ die for our sin and satisfy the wrath of God due that sin but he rose from the grave and became our forerunner in resurrection. Paul speaks to both of these facts so well in..

**1 Corinthians 15: 3-4** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, **4**that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

The Christian who is saved by God is not only forgiven of their sin but justified and adopted into God’s family and empowered with the Holy Spirit to walk in the newness of life that God has given them.
This truly is a transformed person. Saved and made new in the power of God.

This is what a person being baptized is testifying. This is why baptism so wonderful to witness.

To hear what God has done to save someone and make them new!! Listen to Paul’s words again as they well define the symbolism of baptism..

Paul says “know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We 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.”

See that this is what a person is confessing in the testimony of their baptism. Look at God. Look at what God has done through Christ to make be new!!! To give me new life!!

What an amazing things God does every time he saves someone!! What a joy it is to hear the testimony of another person whom he has saved at their baptism!!

Next our catechism says it’s a “a public testimony”

See with me that a baptism is a testimony that a large group gets to hear and celebrate with that person. It’s not done in private. It is done with the church and as many people as you can gather.

This is why we don’t do baptisms in private back yard pools or remote rivers if we can avoid it. Because this is news worthy to be shared with as many people as we can gather. The goal is to tell the world!!! And the goal is definitely to celebrate with the church body!!!

Disciples family, please make it a priority to attend all church celebrations or any other gathering we hold baptisms at.. OH how worth it, it is to be there and to witness what God has done!!!

For it is worthy to be celebrated for it is bigger than a promotion at work, a graduation from school and even a birthday. It is a celebration of eternal life for a person who was worthy to be eternally condemned!!! All glory to God!!

Our catechism answer says next..

“by the public testimony ***of immersion in water*** “

The word baptism (baptizo) means to dip or plunge or immerse.  This is why we do baptism by immersion.

Because sprinkling water on someone doesn’t satisfy the symbolism given by Paul about joining Christ in the grave and in His resurrection from the grave. Because we can’t actually burry someone in dirt and then dig them up again for they would suffocate.. we use water.

While the baptisms that John the Baptist did and even that Jesus had himself were not like our New Covenant baptisms they too where by immersion in the river!!

People and denominations who sprinkle water on people for baptism are wrongly connecting this ordinance to the old covenant system of animal sacrifice and circumcision, but there is not any biblical evidence that the New Covenant commandment for baptism is linked to these Old covenant practices. All of the examples given in the New Testament for baptism are examples of immersion!

The visual display is so very clear, the person getting baptized is declaring his/her faith in the death burial and resurrection of their Savior. When I got baptized in the Pacific Ocean in 1993 in front of our church family and a large public crowd, I was declaring that because Christ died for me and that I too in Christ am dying to myself and burying my old life with or in 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 is a representation to the spiritual reality that happened in me before my baptism by the Holy Spirit’s work of causing new birth by grace alone.

Therefore Baptism is outward display of what God has already done on the inside of someone!!

The whole visual picture of baptism so amazingly displays the spiritual truth that has taken place in the heart of a sinner who has been regenerated. Because Christ died, was buried, and rose defeating sin and death for all who are his, when the Holy Spirit causes the elect person to be “born again” and gives each one faith, He is applying Jesus’ death and victorious resurrection to the believer.

This regeneration is outside of our human ability to see, so we count it as a 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!

This public testimony is also a way for the believer and the church to come together, to make a commitment to each other to hold each other to what we are proclaiming and build each other up in our faith. **Do you see how gracious this ordinance is?!**

Next in the answer, Baptism is done “**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 that we are to be baptized in the name of our triune God!

Our historic confession also aligns with this saying:

The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water, in which the individual is to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Based on God having one eternal will, each of the three Persons carries out the same plan of salvation and judgment. God the Father chose the elect before the foundation of the world, Jesus died exclusively for those elect people, and the Holy Spirit only regenerates those same elect people.

The 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 salvation, 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 God’s 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 the Spirit resurrects and protects us. This is truly a beautiful picture is what we testify to when we get baptized!!!

Finally our answer states, “**Baptism is to be done once and in no way contributes to one’s salvation.**”

**We are to be baptized as a believer one time and not multiple times!**

Again, Baptism is a testimony of what God has done. It is not a testimony of what you have done or how you are doing. Sometimes people want to make baptism about their journey of sanctification and not just about salvation. And it should not be this way. Baptism is about new birth in Christ and not about Christian maturity in Christ.

If baptism is done to testify of Gods work to save us then this work is done once and remains.

He loses none that he saves. And we cannot be lost and then saved again to warrant baptism 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.

Now, what about those who are baptized without clarity of the gospel or with superficial faith or when they were in a false religion and therefore believed a false gospel or as a baby or young child before they had a true testimony of faith?

If the action was done *prior to* genuine, personal profession of faith in Christ alone, then the action was not an actual biblical/Christian baptism. In that case you should be baptized—not again, but for the first time as a professing believer.

If this brings up questions or concerns about your own baptism please do not hesitate to talk to Leadership who would love nothing more than to come along side of you and clear up any confusion you may have over this! Please if you have questions, reach out!

Moving to our last part of the answer; ***Baptism in no way contributes to one’s salvation.***

**Please understand that Baptism is not a saving ordinance!**

Sadly there are many false religions who teach wrongly that baptism saves you and that there is a literal salvific work in the physical act of baptism…or that baptism is needed to be saved (such as faith PLUS baptism).

Church, this contradicts the consistent and global teaching or God’s holy word.

Salvation is the gift of God by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

**Romans 3:28** For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

If Baptism was necessary for salvation it would be a work of man thereby nullifying the work of Christ alone and gift of faith alone by God’s grace alone unto Salvation.

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

One of the important examples we are a given for the fact that one does not need to be baptized to be saved is the thief on the cross next to Christ.

**Luke 23:39-43** One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

There is zero evidence that the thief on the cross was ever baptized, but what is evident is that he believed in Christ and his kingdom and Jesus declared him to be saved. The constant theme throughout scripture is that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone.

So when we read scripture that seems to say that the action of baptism saves you, you must weigh it in light of all scripture. An example of this is..

**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,

Pastor John Piper has some good commentary on this verse.. “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.””

**Another verse we can read that might seem to say baptism saves is..**

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

The answer is again very similar to our last quote from Piper.

Mark is not saying that baptism saves, he is saying that faith produces an appeal to God and the commanded appeal to God is baptism, so whoever believes will be saved and will express their belief through baptism.

Church, we do not contribute to our salvation in any way. We have nothing to boast in!!!

***Now, What does it mean if a true believer chooses to not be baptized?***

**It means that true faith is truly weak. Meaning, trusting in Christ means trusting my life to Christ. Which means I will obey Christ and honor Him despite how hard it might be.**

**To be saved but then to reject the ordinance of baptism is to sinfully disobey Christ.**

IF this is the case one should repent and be baptized. No matter how long they have waited.

**That said, If a person is truly saved then that person’s salvation is still intact even in light of their disobedience. How do we know that? Because we do not contribute to our salvation in any way.**

**Colossians 3:3** For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

**Ephesians 2: 8-9**For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9**not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Before rapping up let us consider some practical questions and answers…

***Who should be baptized?***

Baptism is for every individual who has repented of sin and self and trusted in Jesus Christ alone as their Lord and Savior.

We see this in passages like..

**Acts 2:41** Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church--about three thousand in all.

## -Those who received his word were baptized.

## Acts 10:47-48 "Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?" 48So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Those who have the Holy Spirit which is only people who are believers. These are commanded to be baptized!

***Who should not be baptized?***

**Anyone who has not** repented of sin and self and trusted in Jesus Christ alone as their Lord and Savior.

This is Includes Infants and young children (**Infant baptism** or **pedo-baptism** from the Greek *pais* meaning "child.")

*For those who have been “baptized” as infants/children we would say that we are thankful for parents who loved you and long to point you to Christ but this is not believers baptism according to scripture so we would not say that you are being baptized again. We would say you were dedicated in traditional ceremony of another church or faith practice as a child but that you should be baptized as a believer in light of God giving you saving faith.*

Paedobaptists believe that baptism was given to those who are a part of the new covenant ***and to their children***.

Paedobaptists give various reasons they perform infant baptism. For example, they assume that when scripture testifies of someone’s household being baptized that there must have been babies in that household.

Ultimately, their covenant theology views enforce their belief that children of believing parents should get at least one covenant sign, namely baptism. Their reasoning is since the Old Covenant included covenant signs for the kids, so does the New Covenant. **But Scripture nowhere teaches this.**

This where I believe the big miss lies in the hands of the Paedobaptists. Instead, when you take a right understanding of the New Covenant people of God and add to it that fact that there are zero references to infant baptism, zero occurrences of infant baptism, and zero commandments on the New Covenant people to baptize infants the clarity of scripture rings through.

One other point that’s helpful is this, every clear example of New Covenant baptism in the New Testament was done after the person had faith. If the early church, Jesus’ own apostles, and the scriptures give zero evidence that this was practiced then it is clear that infant baptism is not a biblical idea.

Again our historic Baptist confession rightly declares:

Those who personally profess repentance toward God and faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ are the only proper subjects of this ordinance.

The biblical evidence is overwhelming and that is that there is no evidence in scripture for infant baptism and very clear and ongoing evidence of baptism only being done to believers.

If baptism is a sign commanded for the New Covenant people and the true New Covenant people are all the truly saved (unlike the Old Covenant) 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 or young children unable to make a credible profession of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So when we read passages like..

**Acts 16:31-34** 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. And faith of who, just one person? Is that how we are saved….one person in the family believes so all are saved. No, Scripture elsewhere is extra clear, each person must believe personally to be saved. So, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” Does not mean, if one person believes then all are saved.

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.

Similarly, “he and all his family” being baptized means each person would have had the testimony of belief we just talked about.

**The entire house was spoken to about the gospel, all of them heard the gospel.** This would imply that those who were there were of an age to understand what Paul was telling them.

Now I want to clarify something, though we disagree with Pedobaptism (infant baptism) if those who support it 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 the application of Baptism wrong. While I do not endorse their position on this matter, I count them brothers in the Lord.

Church, It is our duty as shepherds of Christ church to present to you what scripture shows us and there is simply no sign of infants or unbelievers being baptized in the scriptures. Not only that but it’s practice contradicts what we do read which is that baptism is for professing believers in the gospel. Again, notice with me how this passage ends: **Acts 16:34** 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.

They rejoiced in God, in the reality of faith, in the gospel! The entire household rejoiced! This simply solidifies the fact that those who were baptized were believers.

Before wrapping up let me share what we are looking for to solidify that someone indeed is saved and therefor readied by God to be baptized.

\* Children who are raised in the church often know a lot about the gospel and God’s love and embrace it as true and good. One of the clarities w are looking for to solidify that a person has true saving faith is their understanding and conviction of they guilt in sin before God and that Christ has died for them to pay for their sins and that has caused in them a true and full surrender in faith to Christ. To no longer live for themselves but for Christ. No matter how their family goes, even if their parents prove to be false converts and turn to another religion or reject the gospel later, they individually belong to Christ now and forever!!!

Because baptism is not at all part of ones salvation we do not need to fear that our child is going to be left out. No, if they are God’s elect he will have them. What we don’t’ want to do is baptism someone to young and then later have them say in tears but I didn’t understand then. But I do now!

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

Baptism is a holy, New Covenant ordinance from our Lord Jesus, whereby a professing believer in Jesus Christ testifies of his/her faith in Christ alone for salvation and his/her 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.

So for those of you who have not been baptized but are a believer, we look forward to talking with you. Grab a leader and let’s celebrate this gracious gift!

For those of you who may be confused about your past experience please, please grab a leader or myself and let’s grab a coffee or lunch and let’s talk about it.

Our aim is that you would glorify God through your enjoyment of and delightful obedience to His word. God is so good amen!

Let’s pray