

What the Bible Teaches About Water Baptism

Good morning. Let's go to the gospel according to John, the third chapter in God's wonderful Word today. Looking in your bulletin you probably noticed that the message this morning is entitled **“What the Bible Teaches About Water Baptism.”** This is a subject we don't address a lot. But every now and then we do. We're going to begin in John Chapter three. And read verse thirty six. John 3:36 says, *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. And he that believeth not the Son of God shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him”.*

We'll talk about that verse in just a little bit. There are a multitude of opinions concerning water baptism. Today, I suppose if you were to talk to a number of people in our own community, you would discover that. Many teach that a person has to be baptized by water in order to enter the family of God. In fact, many teach that that is the way that they enter the family of God. This viewpoint is called baptismal regeneration. And it usually begins with infant baptism. That is not our position.

Others teach that water baptism must be done by a particular denomination in order to have saving qualities. I have met people that believe that. But that is not our position. There are some who teach that baptism is not to be done in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit, but in the name of Jesus only. That is not our position. There are some who teach that baptism is the covenant-sign between parents and God concerning their children in which parents dedicate their children to God by baptism as infants. Again, that is not our position.

We teach that baptism plays no part in actually saving us from our sins, but it is that outward sign of an inward change. It's what we call believers baptism, and it happens after a person is saved, not before. Rather, after a person has trusted the gospel of Christ.

Some baptize by sprinkling, and I put the word “baptism” in quotes here. Some “baptize” by sprinkling and others by pouring. We baptize by totally immersion here.

Some churches say it doesn't matter how you baptize or when - as long as you're happy, we're happy, and everybody's happy. That's not our position either, because we believe the Bible is clear on the subject.

Some years ago I met a man who had been baptized not with water but with a shower of flowers. That was unique. That's not our position either.

So, today we're going to see the answer from the Bible concerning this question. What does the Bible teach about water baptism? And I say “water baptism” because the word baptism is used in a variety of different ways in the New Testament, and not always concerning water. There is the baptism of the Holy Spirit by which God the Holy Spirit places us in Christ at the moment we believe in Jesus. There is a baptism of fire, which is judgment. Jesus said, “Are you able to be baptized with the baptism that I'm baptized with”, not speaking of water baptism, but of his suffering and death. An overwhelming experience. So, it's used in a variety of different ways a New Testament.

I won't be quoting any famous people. I won't be quoting the Reformers or the Church Fathers or appealing to any church councils. We are just going to seek to stay with the Bible today. And we won't assume anything, and we're not going to read anything between the lines. We're just going to seek to stay with just the clear

teaching of the Word of God. We won't have time to look at all the verses on the subject of baptism today. I won't have time to answer some who might have some concerns about what we're talking about -- Nor answer every objection – we can't do that today. I won't even be able to give all the verses that support the position I'm going to present today.

Baptism is a biblical subject. There is no way that you can preach through the Bible and not touch on baptism. It's mentioned over ninety times in the New Testament. Now again, not all those instances of the word “baptism” are referring to water baptism, but several of them are.

Most people don't know much about Church history today, and I'm not going to go into detail on that. But what I'm going to preach today would have been illegal; it would be against the law during most of the Middle Ages. And even during most of the Reformation. During the 1400's, 1500's, 1600's - if I preached what I am preaching this morning, I could have been arrested and put in prison and executed, in many parts of Europe. In fact, in early America what I will preach today would have been illegal to preach in most of the early colonies during the 1500's and 1600's. Thankfully when this country brought about its Constitution, they added a set of amendments, and the first amendment had freedom of religion and press and so on. But we're not going to go into that this morning.

Four facts about water baptism today, four things.

I. The Bible Teaches that Salvation from Sin is through Faith in Jesus Christ

The first thing is this: the Bible teaches that salvation from sin, salvation from hell, salvation from judgment is by Jesus Christ, and not by water baptism. It is by putting our faith in Jesus and not by water baptism. We have read here a verse from John Chapter three. John Chapter three begins with a discussion between Nicodemus and Jesus Christ concerning the subject of salvation the new birth. And Jesus said, *“Except a man be born again he couldn't enter the Kingdom of God.”* As that conversation continues we come down to verse fourteen, where the Bible tells us here, *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.”* Just as those people looked to a brass serpent on a pole in the Old Testament to be saved from a snake bite, so we look to Jesus Christ on the cross to be saved from our sins. Salvation is through Christ and His death for us at the cross. Here is that great Bible verse: John 3:16 – would you say it with me if you know it? *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* Whosoever does what? Believeth in Him. Believeth in Christ. So salvation from our sin, and having eternal life, not perishing, depends upon our belief in Jesus. Not our water baptism.

And then we have that great distinction found in verse eighteen where the Bible says, *“He that believeth on Him is not condemned.”* He who does what? Believeth...then you're not condemned. *“But he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed on the name of the Only Begotten Son of God.”* So the distinguishing factor between those who are saved and those who are lost. Between those who will perish and those who will not - is dependent upon whether they have believed in Jesus or not – trusted Christ or not. Are you looking unto Christ? What are you looking to in order to save you from your sins?

And then that closing verse that we read when we started today, *“He that believeth on the Son has everlasting life. And he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”* What's the determining factor here? Belief. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; those who don't believe don't have everlasting life. Years ago people used to say these three things: by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. It's all about Grace. Christ, the cross, and putting in our faith in Him.

You see, over one hundred sixty times in the New Testament the Bible says that faith in Jesus Christ is the way to have eternal life. Trusting Him. Trusting Jesus. 160+ times in the New Testament. If you read your New Testament, the sole way to be saved is trusting Jesus. That's all. Relying not upon our baptism; relying not upon confirmation or communion; relying not upon ritual or church. But upon Jesus, and upon him alone. His death, His burial, and his glorious resurrection. The apostle Paul was asked, along with his missionary friend, one day, by a jailer, *“What must I do to be saved”*. And you remember the answer don't you? *“Believe,”* the Bible says, *“On the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house.”* Believe – that's how you're saved.

The Bible tells us in John Chapter twenty that, *“Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written this book. But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ and that by believing, you might have life through His name. (eternal life.)”* Salvation through His name. Ephesians 2:8 says, *“By grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God.”* *“Not of works,”* the Bible says in next verse, *“lest any man should boast.”* Romans 5:1 says, *“Therefore being justified”*, and justified means declared right with God, *“being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* So how do we get justified? How do we get right with God? We put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells us in first John Chapter five, verse twelve, *“He that has the Son has life, and he that does not have the Son doesn't have life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. And that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”* So the truth of the matter is if your trust is in your baptism to save you, you need to repent of that and trust Jesus. Trust His death on the cross, and His resurrection to give eternal life. Don't trust anything else. First John chapter one verse seven says, *“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”*

II. The Bible Teaches that Water Baptism Should Follow Salvation

On March 28, 1975, in my parents' living room, as a teenager, I trusted Jesus Christ as my Savior, and looked to Him to give me eternal life. The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleansed me from all sin. A month later I was baptized, but my baptism did not wash away my sins because there were none left to wash away. Because Jesus washed my sin away at the cross. The blood of Jesus Christ God's son cleansed me from all sin. So the Bible teaches that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and not by our water baptism. And yet, the Bible does teach baptism. It teaches this – it teaches that water baptism should follow our salvation experience, should follow trusting in Christ. After I'm saved I should get baptized. In the Great Commission in Matthew chapter twenty eight, the Bible tells us here, *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations”*. Now the word *“teach”* here means to make disciples; it's translated that way often. *“Make disciples in all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo I'm with you always even unto the end of the world.”*

The biblical order is to become a disciple of Jesus. Then get baptized. Then start learning everything that Jesus taught us in the Bible. That's the order it was on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two. *"They that gladly received his word were baptized. And the same day, it was added unto them about three thousand souls."* When did they get baptized? After they received the Word of God – the message that Peter preached to look to Jesus to be saved. In Acts chapter eight verse thirty six, thirty seven, *"As they went on their way they came to water, and the Eunuch said see here's water what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest. And he said the Eunuch said I believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God."* Philip baptized the Eunuch after the Eunuch, after the Ethiopian, put his faith in Jesus Christ and not until. That's always the Biblical order.

That's the order of Paul himself in Acts chapter nine. He trusted Jesus as his Savior on the road to Damascus, and then was baptized by Cornelius in Acts chapter ten. He trusted Jesus as his Savior, and then was baptized. Lydia in the book of Acts – the same thing; then in the same chapter the baptism of the jailer in Philippi, and so on. All the way through -- this is the only pattern we see – you get saved, you trust Christ, and then you get baptized to show that you are saved. In fact, John the Baptist wouldn't baptize certain people because they showed no signs of repentance. He refused to baptize some of the Pharisees because he said, "You bring forth fruit meet for repentance; you show me you have really repented."

So in the Bible we don't find any babies being baptized. Not unless you read it between the lines. Because water baptism comes after faith in Christ. After genuine repentance and trusting Jesus. By the way, God's not going to send your little baby to hell. They're safe in Christ. And the baptism of babies leads to mass confusion as to how to really get saved because people are looking to those kinds of things rather than to Jesus to save them from their sins. Salvation in the Bible, over a hundred sixty times in the New Testament alone, is said to be by faith in Christ. To get infant baptism in the Bible you have to insert it, infer it, and read between the lines, and take literal things and make them figurative.

But we do find water baptism in the Bible. And most people sitting in this room this morning have been baptized. The Bible says in John chapter fourteen versus fifteen, *"If you love me keep my commandments."* Before He went back to heaven, Jesus said, "I want you to make disciples of all nations. You baptize them and then you teach them everything that Jesus taught them." So baptism is a commandment – we don't doubt that, but water baptism is only after we're saved.

After I was saved I was baptized. I did not get baptized to save me or to add more points to my salvation. Jesus paid it all at the cross. But I got baptized because Jesus said to get baptized- out of love for Him, out of love for Him. I got baptized because, *"If you love me, Jesus says, keep my commandments."* In Acts 10:48, it says that Peter said to Cornelius, *"And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."* He commanded them to be baptized. So the Bible teaches that salvation from sin is through faith in Jesus Christ – His death, His burial, His resurrection, and His shed blood. And His blood is sufficient to cleanse us from all sin. The Bible also teaches that after I'm saved I should get baptized as an act of love for Christ.

III. The Bible Teaches that Water Baptism is by Immersion

Number three today. The Bible teaches us that water baptism is by immersion. Not by sprinkling or pouring. Some words in our Bible have been what we call translated. For example the word "God" in the original Greek

language -- in John chapter one you see the word "Theos". We don't say "Theos" when we come to church here because we don't talk Greek here. We say, "God," because that's the translation.

When the Bible says, "For God so loved the world", the word love is "agape", but we've taken that "agape", and we brought it over and we've translated it in the English language as the word "love".

Some words in the Bible were not translated; they were what we call transliterated. That means they took the Greek letters and simply brought the Greek letters over into English without actually translating the word, and "baptism" is one of those words. They took the word "baptize" or "bapto", and rather than translate, they just brought the English letters over to the Greek and left it as "baptized". So we have this English word, that is really untranslated. So in order to find out what the word would mean if you translated it, if you went back, you'd need to go back to the Greek language in Jesus' day, the language of the New Testament (which we have), and see what it means.

This is the Greek word -- this is Strong's Concordance number 911: "bapto". And it tells some things about it. The first definition is to dip, to dip in, to immerse. The second definition is to dip into dye, to dye, to color. If you were to go, as far as I know, into any Greek concordance or lexicon and look up the word "baptism", you would find the exact same thing. Always means to dip, to immerse, and thankfully to come back up again!

It was used in Bible times of dipping a bucket in a well, and drawing the water out. The bucket had been baptized. It had been immersed and went totally under the water. It was used of die in a garment. The garment was totally immersed in the die, and it changed the color of the garment. It could also be used in the sense of an overwhelming experience like a fire or a death -- that would be an immersion, a baptism of fire or something like that. Something that just was totally overwhelming. The Greek language had another word for pouring. It had another word for sprinkling, and had this word for immersion: "baptizo", "bapto".

This is an Etymology Dictionary. I went on line, and I typed in the word "etymology" and the word "baptize" to see what would come up. This is not a Christian site. Etymology means where the word came from if you trace it back through various languages, and you can see it going through old French and Latin, and you get back to Greek, the language of the New Testament. And "baptize" means immersed, dipping in water to be over one's head.

And then I noticed this, and I bolded it just so you'd see it better: "**Christian baptism originally consisted in full immersion.**"

Again, that's not a Christian site, and it is just defining the definition of the word as it was used originally in Bible times. We see it in the baptism of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "*And it came to pass of those days the Bible says that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized of John in Jordan, and straightway*" doing what? He comes up out of the water, "*and saw heavens open, and the Spirit like a dove descend upon him.*" Did you come up out of the water when you were baptized? I hope so.

The baptism of Philip baptizing the Ethiopian in Acts 8. "*He commanded the chariot to stand still. They went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch to be baptized him, and when they come up out of the water.*" Did you go down in the water, and did you come up out of the water?

What's going on here is baptism, immersion. As the person goes down the water be baptized, and comes back up out of the water, this is the Biblical pattern. There is no other pattern found in the New Testament. This is it. Every time you have a baptism described, and it's only a couple of these, you see it this way.

Now go to Romans Chapter six, and we've got to hurry because we're out of time. Romans 6:3 says, *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized into His death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection."*

There is a baptism by the way that does place us in Christ, and it is not water baptism, but is a baptism of the Holy Spirit as He puts us in Jesus when we trust Jesus as our Savior. We put on the very righteousness of God by faith, so that we can stand faultless before the throne someday. Because we're in Jesus. First Corinthians 12:13 says, *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized in the one body."* Not by water, but by one Spirit. *"Whether we are Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, and have been all made to drink of one drink."* But the thing I want you to notice from this passage is that the word baptism. And it's mentioned several times here verse five and so on. It mentions in surrounding words -- baptize and death, burial -- verse four. Planted together - verse five. Likeness of His resurrection - Verse five. Do you know that baptism by immersion is a wonderful picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus? Pouring isn't. Sprinkling isn't. But as the person goes under the water, picturing the death and burial of Jesus, and coming back up His resurrection, it's a picture of salvation. And it is a public way of saying, "I have trusted Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection." We're not trusting in the water, and we're not trusting that ceremony. We've already trusted Christ. Baptism is publically saying, "I have trusted Christ, and I want people to know that I trust in Jesus."

In my billfold I have a pretty poor picture (I hope of myself) on my driver's license. And if I were to show that to you and ask you who it was you'd probably say, "Well, that's you." And I would say. "No, that's not me. That's a picture of me." I'm standing right here; that's just a picture. Baptism is a picture of salvation. It doesn't save us. Don't confuse the picture with the real thing.

IV. The Bible Teaches that Baptism is a Commitment

Notice verse 4, *"Therefore being buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* The fourth thing today is baptism really is a commitment. I didn't know this when I was baptized; I just did it for love for Jesus.

Baptism is a way of saying that the old person I was before I was saved, that person is dead and buried. And through Jesus Christ, I want to live in newness of life. I want to be a different person than I was before I was saved, and through Christ's strength I can do that. Matthew chapter twenty eight, He said, "You go make disciples, and you baptize them, and then you teach him everything that I tell you." What that means is that after I'm baptized I need to be taught everything in the Bible. That means I'm going to be part of a local church, and I'm going to go on with God. Baptism is a way of saying that I'm saved now. I want to commit my life to Christ in such a way that I go on with the Lord and learn everything that He has for me.

So why should I as a believer in Jesus Christ walk in newness of life? Well, because I've been born again for one thing. His Spirit has come into to me and He's changing me and is transforming me. Because Jesus Christ

died for me at the cross, and I love him. Why should I walk in newness of life? Because I left the devil's kingdom behind, and I have been transferred into the kingdom of God's Dear Son. Why should I walk newness of life? Because of the world around me that's lost. God has left us behind as believers in Jesus to be the light to this world. But in water baptism we make it public. The old me is dead and buried, and in Jesus Christ I live again. And I live through His strength to walk in newness of life.

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