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Teaching Notes

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What Is Baptism?

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Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit **Matthew 28:19**

What Is Baptism?

- February 12, 1812: Adoniram and Ann Judson, newlyweds, bid a tearful farewell to their families and friends in Salem, MA, and set sail on the three-masted brig *Caravel* for the distant land of India
- They had been called by the Lord to spend their lives in missionary service, and they left their homes to preach the gospel in India
- During their four month voyage to that distant land, they spent time in intensive Bible study and prayer in preparation for their work
- A special focus of their study was the issue of baptism; they were Congregationalists from New England, both of them baptized as infants; however, they expected to work with William Carey, the English missionary pioneer who was a Baptist; they sought to glean from their study of Scripture the means by which to refute Carey's Baptist views
- As Adoniram and Ann studied the Greek New Testament, however, they became increasingly alarmed; there seemed to be no evidence whatsoever for infant baptism, and abundant evidence for believer baptism
- By the time they arrived in Calcutta, India, they were committed Baptists; on September 6, 1812, they were both baptized by immersion at Calcutta in the baptistry of Carey's Lal Bazar Chapel by William Ward

- Their co-worker, Luther Rice, made a similar theological pilgrimage and became convinced of the validity of believer's baptism; he himself was baptized on November 1, 1812
- The transformation of the Judsons and Luther Rice to Baptist convictions became the catalyst for the rise of the modern missionary movement among Baptists in America [Timothy George, "Foreword", *Believer's Baptism*, p. xv-xvi]

Baptism has been a point of much contention in the history of the church

As Baptists, we are committed to the biblical truth that baptism is an ordinance of the church that should be administered only to those who can give a credible profession of faith in Christ

I. Two Ordinances

A. Ordinances are Things Ordained by Christ for the Church

1. Established (ordained, thus the word "ordinance") by Christ during His time on earth
2. To be done in the context of the local church

B. "Means of Grace"

1. These are ordained by Christ for the benefit of His people
2. Their purpose is to help us in our spiritual lives with Him
3. They are called "Means of Grace" because by these God ministers grace to us
4. Protestants deny that these are essential to salvation; however, refusal to participate calls into question the faith of the person refusing

C. We Recognize Two

1. Baptism
2. Lord's Supper

D. Symbolic in Nature

1. They are done in the physical world
2. But they have spiritual significance
3. Thus they are symbolic in nature

4. This does not mean they are unimportant
5. “Outward visible sign of an internal spiritual reality”

E. “Ordinances” or “Sacraments”?

1. In Roman Catholic theology, there are seven “sacraments”... these are essential to salvation

Sacraments are "efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions."

- a. in the Catholic view, salvation is achieved for sinners by means of the sacramental system of grace; without the sacraments, no one can be saved
 - b. the seven sacraments are baptism (for infants), eucharist (Lord’s Supper), penance (confession), confirmation, Holy Orders (for priests), marriage, anointing of the sick
 - c. these sacraments work *ex opera operato* (i.e. by the very fact of it being administered, regardless of the personal holiness of the minister administering it); the personal faith of the person receiving it is not as important as the act of receiving it... modern Catholic theology emphasizes that lack of faith on the part of the person receiving it can block the effectiveness of it
2. Some Protestants (especially Anglicans and Lutherans) also use the term, “sacraments”, but define this term differently than Catholics
 3. Protestants recognize only two ordinances or “sacraments”, as stated above

II. Baptism

A. What Is It?

1. Word Means “To Immerse”
 - a. Though some Christian churches baptize by sprinkling, this is not the proper use of the Greek word
 - b. The word literally means “to immerse”
 - c. If I told someone I wanted a garment to be dyed purple in a vat of indigo, and that person responded by sprinkling some indigo dye on the garment, I would think they have not heard me... “No, I said ‘immerse’!” Immersion and sprinkling are two different things

2. Thus, the proper mode for baptism must be full immersion in water... not sprinkling as the paedo-baptists (infant baptizers) do
 - a. The word “baptize” itself implies this
 - b. The symbolism of burial and resurrection with Christ implied this

Romans 6:4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Colossians 2:12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead

- c. Passages in the NT imply immersion

Matthew 3:16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water.

Acts 8:38-39 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

John 3:23 Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.

3. Immersion in water done once in the life of a true believer in Christ
 - a. We need not repeat baptism in the Christian life; indeed we OUGHT NOT to
 - b. Baptism is an ordinance marking for all time the beginning of the Christian life
4. Baptism a beginning ordinance... done as soon as possible after initial saving faith

Hebrews 6:1-2 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, ² instruction about baptisms

- a. On the day of Pentecost, 3000 believed and were added to the church; they were baptized right away
- b. So also the Ethiopian Eunuch was baptized immediately after he came to faith

Acts 8:35-38 *Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.* ³⁶ *As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"* ³⁷ ³⁸ *And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.*

5. A matter of obedience

- a. In a moment, I will argue that water baptism is NOT necessary to go to heaven
- b. However, it IS commanded by Christ
- c. Therefore, to refuse baptism is a sign that the person is not really a Christian, since a Christian is someone who submits to the Kingly rule of Christ

6. Opportunity to proclaim faith in Christ

- a. Jesus says we should be willing to confess His name publicly

Matthew 10:32-33 *Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.* ³³ *But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.*

- b. Paul says

Romans 10:9 *if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

- c. Some evangelical churches make much of "walking the aisle" or "coming forward" or "altar calls" as public professions of faith in Christ; but water baptism is the New Testament way of making our faith in Christ public

7. Connection to the Local Church

- a. Throughout the Book of Acts, it is by water baptism that someone makes public their connection to the church of Christ
- b. So, it is necessary in order to be a member of a local church
- c. Of course, it never needs to be repeated in life, so all that is necessary is a testimony of earlier baptism once it's happened

B. First Seen in the Ministry of John the Baptist

Matthew 3:1-2 *In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea* ² *and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."*

C. Christ's Baptism a Higher Baptism

Matthew 3:11-12 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

D. Water Baptism in the Gospels:

1. Submitted to by Christ

Matthew 3:13-17 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. ¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

2. Done by Christ's Disciples

John 3:22 After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized.

John 4:1-2 The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, ² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples.

3. Commanded by Christ for His Church

Matthew 28:19-20 go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

E. What Baptism Symbolizes

1. Symbolic of Baptism of the Spirit

Acts 1:5 Jesus said: "For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

1 Corinthians 12:13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

2. Symbolic of Union with Christ in Death and Resurrection... and a commitment to walk in a new life of personal holiness

Romans 6:1-5 *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵ ¶ If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.*

3. Symbolic of Spiritual Cleansing

Acts 22:16 *And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.*

1 Peter 3:21 *this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also-- not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God.*

Titus 3:4-6 *But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior*

But note: this cleansing is spiritual, done by the Holy Spirit through faith:

Acts 15:8-9 *God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.*

F. Done Only to Believers

1. Again and again in the Book of Acts, it is only believers that are baptized

Acts 2:37-38 *When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

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

Acts 10:47-48 *Peter said: "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ⁴⁸ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.*

Acts 16:14-15 *One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. ¹⁵ When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a*

believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

Acts 16:29-34 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved-- you and your household." ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. ³⁴ The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God-- he and his whole family.

Acts 18:8 Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

2. So we reject the concept of infant baptism... more on that next week

G. Faulty Views of Baptism Rejected

1. Infant baptism: no scriptural warrant
2. Baptismal regeneration (baptism required for heaven) is false
 - a. Thief on the cross was not baptized
 - b. Paul's statement:

1 Corinthians 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel-- not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.