

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Teaching Notes

www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

Differing Views of Baptism

[Infant Baptism, Baptismal Regeneration, Child Baptism]

Wednesday, June 10, 2009

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?

[Review]

I. Two Ordinances

A. We Recognize Two

1. Baptism

2. Lord's Supper

B. Symbolic in Nature

C. "Ordinances" or "Sacraments"?

II. Baptism

A. What Is It?

1. Word Means "To Immerse"

2. Mode: full immersion in water

3. Immersion in water done once in the life of a true believer in Christ
 4. Baptism a beginning ordinance... done soon after initial saving faith
 5. A matter of obedience
 6. Opportunity to proclaim faith in Christ
 7. Connection to the Local Church
- B. First Seen in the Ministry of John the Baptist
- 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
 2. Done by Christ's Disciples
 3. Commanded by Christ for His Church

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.

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

III. Infant Baptism

A. The Majority View in the Christian World

1. The overwhelming majority of those who call themselves Christians practice infant baptism (also called "paedobaptism)

2. Examples: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Episcopalians, Methodists
3. Note: Roman Catholics also believe that infant baptism is the means by which we are born again, so we'll discuss them in a moment in the "Baptismal regeneration" section
4. Baptist people are in the minority... but that doesn't make us wrong!

B. The Basic Argument for Infant Baptism

1. No open Scriptural warrant
 - a. Roger Nicole: Three categories of Scriptures used to support infant baptism
 - i) Those that mention baptism and not infants
 - ii) Those that mention infants and not baptism
 - iii) Those that mention neither one
 - b. There are no commands that we should baptize our infants
 - c. There are no examples of infants being baptized
 - d. There are significant flaws with the Biblical theological approach that supports Protestant views of infant baptism
2. Covenant theology
 - a. Basic concept: God always acts through covenants—binding agreements which dictate how He will relate to the human race; and there is one central, eternal covenant by which all sinners are saved... in other words, we get saved the same way that Abraham and David did

***Hebrews 13:20* May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep...**

***Romans 4:1-3* What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? ² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about-- but not before God. ³ What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."**

***Romans 4:6-8* David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷ "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."**

- b. In the Old Testament: male infants were circumcised as a covenant sign...
an entrance into the covenant community

Genesis 17:10-11 This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.

Genesis 17:14 Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.

The parallel between Israel and the Church as the “covenant community” is huge among Protestant Paedobaptists

- c. In the New Testament: baptism takes the place of circumcision as the covenant symbol... BAPTISM IS SEEN AS PARALLEL TO CIRCUMCISION

Colossians 2:11-12 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 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.

Key statement: Colossians 2:11-12 does give room for Baptists to acknowledge the overlap and similarity between circumcision in the Old Covenant and baptism in the New... but there is a big difference between overlap and identity... they are SIMILAR, not IDENTICAL

- d. In the New Testament, there are also household baptisms

- i) Cornelius’s household: Acts 10:46-48
- ii) Lydia’s household: Acts 16:15
- iii) Philippian Jailer’s household: Acts 16:33
- iv) Stephanas’s household: 1 Corinthians 1:16

It is assumed that some infants *must* have been involved in these baptisms.

However, in none of these texts are any infants ever actually mentioned. And the indication of some of them is that even the household members heard and believed before being baptized:

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.

The key question: “What must I do to be saved?”

Paul’s answer: “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved... you and your whole household.” Now either this means that the jailer’s faith is enough to save his whole household, or the same rules apply for his whole household: believe in the Lord Jesus. As the passage continues, Paul and Silas spoke the word to him and to all the other members of his household... they all had the chance to hear the word of the Lord. Verse 33 is the baptismal verse. Verse 34 clinches the Baptist view: the joy is there because he and his whole family had come to believe in God.

e. Some other key texts:

i) Acts 2:38-39

Acts 2:38-39 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. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off-- for all whom the Lord our God will call."

This verse actually proves the *Baptist* position if read properly! The promise that is for the children of verse 39 is that everyone who repents and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ will receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. But clearly repentance and faith must come first.

ii) 1 Corinthians 7:14

1 Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

The idea here is that, if even one of the parents is a believer, the children of that union are “holy”, or “set apart unto God” or in some sense a part of the covenant community. The problem with that, of course, is that the unbelieving spouse is also called “holy” in this same verse... are they also members of the covenant community?

C. The Case Against Infant Baptism

[See Greg Welty, “A Critical Evaluation of Paedobaptism”;
wwwFOUNDERS.org/library/welty.html]

1. The fundamental interpretative error of Paedobaptists

- a. They rightly emphasize the underlying unity and continuity of the covenant of grace (Romans 4:1-8; Abraham and David ARE saved the same way we are)
 - b. BUT they overlook the external discontinuity between the Old and New Covenants
 - c. They rightly stress the unity of redemptive history, but neglect the progressive unfolding of God's redemptive purposes in history
 - d. Thus they tend to Christianize the Old Testament (read it as if it were the New), and Judaize the New Testament (read it as if it were the Old)
2. Error about circumcision in the Old Testament
- a. In Christianizing the OT, they restrict the significance of circumcision to spiritual promises and blessings
 - b. BUT they neglect the national, earthly, and generational aspect
3. Error about baptism in the New Testament
- a. In Judaizing the NT, paedobaptists import ideas about "covenantal holiness" and "members of the covenant community" and apply it to baptism in a way never done in any passage of NT
 - b. BUT these concepts are entirely foreign to the NT's teaching
4. Four key texts expose this fundamental error
- a. Jeremiah 31:31-34

Jeremiah 31:31-34 "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. ³³ "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

- i) Absolutely VITAL text for understanding the New Covenant...
- ii) It is fundamental to the argument of the Book of Hebrews... that's why it's quoted verbatim in both Hebrews 8 and Hebrews 10

- iii) These words speak directly to the DISCONTINUITY between the Old and New Covenants
- iv) The New Covenant is an **unbreakable covenant**... unlike the Old; Genesis 17:14 states that any male who is not circumcised “has broken my covenant”... but the essence of the New Covenant is that God writes it on the minds and hearts of the people so they will most certainly keep it
- v) The New Covenant is **made with believers only**... they are the ones one whose hearts God writes its precepts, they are the ones who know the Lord (from the least to the greatest), and they are the ones whose sins are forgiven
- vi) The New Covenant is **made with the elect, with those who have experienced these blessings**... therefore the Baptists do not give the covenantal sign to those who have not experienced these blessings

b. Jeremiah 32:37-41

Jeremiah 32:37-41 I will surely gather them from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety. ³⁸ They will be my people, and I will be their God. ³⁹ I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them. ⁴⁰ I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. ⁴¹ I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul.

c. John 1:11-13

John 1:11-13 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

- i) The clear concept: Christ came to His own people (the Jews) who rejected Him
- ii) But the ones who did accept Him, (that is) who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God
- iii) This “new birth” to become a child of God was NOT biological, like in the Old Covenant... there is no such thing as a spiritual genealogy akin to the physical ones in the OT

- iv) Every singly “child of God” is born directly of God through faith in His name
- v) This is the essential discontinuity between Old Covenant and New Covenant

Matthew 12:47-50 *Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." ⁴⁸ He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" ⁴⁹ Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.*

The “covenant community” are those who are Christ’s disciples, who “do the will of my Father in heaven”

d. Romans 9:2-4; 8:15-17

Romans 9:2-4 *I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, ⁴ the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons*

- i) According to Romans 9:2-4, the Jews of the OT received an “adoption” as sons of God in an Old Covenant sense... and yet Paul grieves for them bitterly because they are going to hell; the Old Covenant “adoption” can result in an individual in hell
- ii) BUT the New Testament adoption inevitably results in eternal life and resurrection

Romans 8:15-17 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Romans 8:23 *Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

D. Significant Discontinuities in the Meaning and Function of the Covenant Signs

1. Circumcision in the Old Covenant sealed the promises of THAT covenant:

- a. multiple physical descendents (as numerous as the stars in the sky and sand on the seashore.); baptism did NOT signify that promise, circumcision did

- b. “you will be the father of many nations”: baptism did NOT signify that promise, circumcision did
 - c. “kings will come from you”: baptism did NOT signify that promise, circumcision did
 - d. “the whole land of Canaan will be yours”: baptism did NOT signify that promise, circumcision did
2. If Circumcision has the same meaning as baptism, two important questions
- a. Why institute a new sign?
 - b. Why baptize those already circumcised into the covenant community?

E. Summary

1. Since no New Testament passage teaches us that it is our responsibility to baptize our children (as Genesis 17 and Leviticus 12:3 clearly commanded the Jews)...
2. And since there are not even any clear examples of infant baptism,
3. And since the covenantal arguments made by paedobaptists underestimate the discontinuity between the Old and New Covenants,
4. And since the preponderance of the evidence is for believer baptism,
5. THEREFORE, we should baptize only those who give clear evidence of faith in Christ

IV. Baptismal Regeneration

A. What Is “Baptismal regeneration”?

Baptismal regeneration is the doctrine that only those who are baptized in water can go to heaven; water baptism is required for eternal salvation

B. Texts that seem to teach this

Mark 16:15-16 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

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.

C. Groups that teach this

1. Roman Catholic church
2. Campbellite groups... like the Church of Christ

D. The Great Danger

1. Works righteousness... making a human work of equal importance to the work of Christ on the cross... in some sense, making it greater
 - a. The whole book of Galatians is written to combat this works view of salvation
 - b. It inevitably leads to legalism, a destruction of justification by faith alone apart from works of the law
 - c. Amazing: you don't have to be circumcised (says Galatians), but you DO have to be baptized. How can it be??

E. The Opposite Danger

1. Making baptism of no account, as though it were a mere ritual
2. So... a REFUSAL to be baptized is significant, because it is a refusal to obey Jesus Christ

F. The Silver Bullet Texts

1. The Thief on the Cross; never water baptized, yet...

Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

2. Paul's "strange" assertion

1 Corinthians 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel

If baptism is not required as part of the gospel of our salvation, why would Paul make such a statement?

V. Child Baptism

Statements Related to Child Baptism

- Because child conversion is so important, child baptism is so important (to both parents and pastors alike)
- Thus there can frequently be too much emotion in discussing this issue
- False motives for baptizing children too early are very damaging: these include parents desire to “get their kids saved” but thus dealing too lightly with sin; and churches desire to maximize baptismal statistics
- The greatest danger of too early baptism is false assurance given to an unregenerate person
- The second greatest danger is the loss of a standard of regenerate church membership and the subsequent pollution of the local church
- “Rebaptism” is a very common issue among those who were baptized too early
- Baptism should be administered only to those who can make a creditable profession of faith in Christ
- A creditable profession of faith in Christ can be completely verbal, as in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch; by testing the words, a pastor can know whether or not an adult should be baptized
- However, creditable profession of faith in children is much more difficult to discern, since they are not so skilled with words and can merely parrot back things they have been taught
- Nearly everyone in Baptist life is uncomfortable with some level of child baptism, especially in the very young
- Children are different than adults, as shown by Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 13, “When I was a child, I thought like a child,” etc.
- Children do not have to “count the cost” as much as adults, especially in the case of Christian homes, in which Christian faith is strongly enjoined
- Baptismal regeneration is unscriptural; no one is saved by water baptism, and the failure to receive water baptism does not negate genuine faith
- Children MUST be evangelized and CAN come to genuine faith at an early age
- Churches ought not to have set age levels or policies concerning baptism, lest they begin a mindless machinery that is difficult to control; also because such an age limit is not taught in the Bible

- Rather, parents and pastors and churchmembers should study the marks of a genuine work of God in the soul and apply these to each case individually
- There is no long range harm in waiting on baptism for a child's profession to be proven out by more mature evidence
- Christians should act in charity toward each other on this issue, since it is a gray area, a "debatable issue" (Romans 14)