

Baptism
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Good morning, everyone.

I'm very pleased to be starting our Christian Basics series this morning. We're calling it our "Nuts and Bolts" series.

I think, for the church, it is going to be quite helpful, just getting back into the truths of (getting grounded in) some of these very basic principles that lead us in our faith and in the daily operation of the church ... and us as well, as Christians. I believe there's no better place to start in this series than with the topic of baptism.

This is mainly because it's through baptism that we are converted to Christ ... to Christianity.

Hopefully, as we'll come to see through this lesson, baptism is foundational to the function of the Lord's Church and to our relationship to Christ.

And what we should also learn, is that the consequences for misunderstanding the doctrine of baptism can have eternal consequences for those who fail to obey Christ's command to be baptized.

Now, while there are as many different ideas about baptism as there are "churches," there are two very prominent false teachings that emerge.

Many protestant doctrines teach that baptism is an optional act of obedience, going so far to as to say that it is against faith, to preach baptism as a necessity.

Other groups like the Catholic church teach that water itself is holy, meaning that it is the water itself that cleanses a person of their sin.

The result of this, the result of this doctrine, is that many babies have been baptized ... babies that couldn't even utter their first word, let alone confess their own personal allegiance to Christ.

I happen to be one of those babies.

So now, knowing that many different ideas about the rule of baptism exist, it's important for us to go directly to the Bible to cut through this confusion.

We need to know exactly what God intends for us to do, which brings us to our first point.

Baptism is fundamental part of God's plan of salvation.

Now, as I'm going through this, I do strongly encourage everyone to break out their Bibles and to go to the different Bible verses that I'll be mentioning, so that you can fact check me and verify that what I'm saying is exactly what the Bible says. This will help you to ingrain some of these Bible verses in your memory.

The best way to start this conversation is to go back to Jesus' parting statements before he ascended into heaven.

Turn to Mark chapter 16, 15 and 16 ... again, that is Mark chapter 16 verses 15 and 16. After commanding His Disciples to preach the Gospel all creation, Jesus says that “he who believes and is baptized will be saved. And he who does not believe will be condemned.” From this passage, we get the most point-blank version of God's salvation plan.

One must believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ as well as his teachings. And then with this knowledge, one must be baptized for the remission of their sins so that they will be saved.

Other passages of scripture reveal further details about the salvation process.

During the first Gospel sermon after Jesus' ascension into heaven, the apostle Peter gave instructions to his audience.

And this is coming from Acts chapter two verse 38. “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

And again, this is coming from Acts chapter two verse 38.

Now, from this passage, we learned three very critical truths.

One, repentance must proceed baptism.

Secondly, we must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

And thirdly, through baptism, our sins are remitted ... which means “taken away” or “washed away.”

Now, of the different accounts of conversion found in the Bible, probably one of the most detailed that we find is that of the Ethiopian eunuch.

And for that, I do strongly encourage you to come with me to Acts chapter eight, verse 30.

Again, that is Acts chapter eight, verse 30.

I'll give you a moment.

The Bible says that “Philip ran to him [him being the Ethiopian eunuch] and heard him reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’

And the Ethiopian said, ‘How can I unless someone guides me?’

And so, he asked Philip to come up and sit with him in the chariot.

Now the place in scripture which he was reading was this. ‘He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before a shearer is silent ... so he opened not his mouth in his humiliation. His justice was taken away, and who will declare his generation, for his life is taken from the earth?’

So, the Ethiopian Eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this? ... Himself or some other man?”

Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning at this scripture, preached Jesus to him.

Now as they went down the road, they came to some water.

And the Eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’

Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God.'

So, the Eunuch commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the Eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

Now, when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away so that the Eunuch saw him no more. And he went on his way rejoicing."

Now the Eunuch's question for Philip is very telling ... "What hinders me from being baptized?"

What this means is that before any individual can be baptized, there are certain requirements that must be met.

First, they must hear and believe the Biblical account of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

Second, again with this knowledge, they must be convicted by this knowledge of Jesus and his teachings, and they must repent of their sin, which means to turn away from their evil doings.

And third, one must confess their personal belief and allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I think it's also quite telling ... the Eunuch's response after Philip was called away. We're not told his whether he rejoiced when he heard about Jesus and then believed in Him. But we are told that he rejoiced from that moment when he was baptized ... once all these conditions were met, and only after the Eunuch was eligible to be baptized into Christ.

The same principle applies to us today.

Now that we've established that baptism is part of God's salvation process, we can look to the spiritual significance of baptism itself.

That second point being that baptism places us into Christ.

Now in the New Testament, and especially in the epistles, strong emphasis is placed on the renewed spiritual condition someone when they are in Christ.

God has promised eternal blessings to those who are found in Christ.

Some of these blessings include salvation and eternal life.

Please turn to first John chapter five verse 11.

Again, that is first John chapter five verse 11. Here we see that eternal life is promised to us In God's Son.

Now, please turn with me to Ephesians chapter one, verse seven.

We see the same promises here in Ephesians chapter one, verse seven. "In Christ, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses ..."

If we turn to verse three of the same chapter, Ephesians one, verse three, we see that God plainly promises all spiritual blessings [every spiritual blessing] to those who are in Christ.

beginning in verse three, the Bible plainly says that all spiritual blessings are found in Christ.

So then, if this be the case, that all spiritual blessings are found in Christ ... the natural question that must arise is, "How do we position ourselves to be in Christ?"

If we turn over to Romans chapter 10, verse 10, Paul explains that “with the heart, one believes unto righteousness and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.”

Now, according to this passage, an individual is “unto righteousness,” which means “near righteousness,” when they believe.

And they also come close to salvation when they confess Christ.

However, the word “unto” does not mean the same as “in” or “into.” Paul instead reserved the use of that word ... “into” ... when describing baptism according to Galatians chapter three, verse 27.

Again, Galatians three verse 27 ... “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Once again ... “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

From this passage, we plainly learn that baptism is a spiritual doorway through which we enter into Christ.

I think it's quite beautiful, that in the book of Romans, in chapter six and verse four, it says that we are buried with Him, meaning Jesus.

“We are buried with Him through baptism into death. That just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father even so, we also should walk in newness of life.”

It's quite frankly a spiritual miracle (wonder?), that we were once spiritually dead, and then through baptism, we enact the death, burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This concludes our first lesson on baptism.

Now, this is part one of two. In the next lesson ... which I'm quite excited for, we're going to be discussing objections many raise to baptism.

Probably one of the prime examples that a lot of people come up with is the thief on the cross.

He obviously wasn't baptized.

Yet Jesus promised that he would be with Him in paradise.

And we're also going to be talking about other points as well, which I hope that you'll be interested to find out about.

But at this point in our service, we will be extending the invitation of Christ.

If anyone has not begun their Christian journey ... if they have not learned about the story of Jesus Christ, not repented of their sin or confessed Jesus Christ ... and have not been baptized for remission of sins...

In a moment, you'll have the opportunity to do just that.

We'll be singing a hymn during that time, and if you are ready to be baptized into Christ, come forward and let us know.