

Baptism

Romans 6.1-4, Matthew 28.18-20, Jeremiah 31.31-34

Main Idea

Baptism should normally be done by immersion in the name of the Trinity as a believer as an entry point in the membership of the local church. It is important because Christ commanded it and it has an evangelistic appeal as it declares a believers union with Christ.

Overview

What is Baptism? Declares a Believers Union with Christ

- Baptism: Dip or Immerse (Greek: *baptizo*)
- John the Baptizer offered a baptism of repentance in preparation for the coming of the Lord (Mark 1.4)
- Jesus was baptized, not because He had sin, but “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3.13-17)
- As Jesus was baptized He commands that believers are baptized as they are made (Matt. 28.18-20)
- Romans 6.3-4: Declares that baptism identifies a believers union with Christ’s defeat of sin’s power in His death and resurrection

How should it normally administered?

- By Immersion: That is the word used, it seems the practice of the NT church, and it is the best way to picture the Gospel
- In the Name of the Trinity: Trinity is explicitly referenced in Jesus’ baptism and Jesus commands it be done in the name of the Trinity in the Great Commission (Matt. 28.18-20)
- In Public: John’s baptism was public, Jesus’ baptism was public, and since it is a declaration of the Gospel commanded in making disciples among the nations it would seem wise to do it public as well
 - The elders of Restoration Church would accept a believers sprinkling/pouring, though we would still maintain the above

Why is it Important? Commanded & Evangelistic Appeal

- Christ commanded disciples be baptized as they are made (Matt. 28.18-20)
- Why would Christ command it? Evangelistic Appeal
 - The command comes in the middle of the command to go to the nations and make disciples, therefore there is a connection between baptism and a declaration of a switch of “teams”
 - Baptism is the “going public” of one’s identification with Christ (cf. Matt. 10.32-33)
 - It simultaneously invites others into the same story

Who is it for? Believers only

- Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists, Anglicans/Episcopalians believe that babies of believers should be baptized in the same way that circumcision was given to the children of the families of Abraham in the Old Covenant:
 - They understand baptism to replace circumcision
 - Circumcision was given to both Isaac (child of promise) and Ishmael (not the child of promise), therefore the Old Covenant and the New Covenant continue only baptism replaces circumcision, therefore believing families should ‘baptize’ their children:
 - There was a “mixed” people in the Old Covenant (believers and non-believers), therefore as the sign changes, there remains a “mixed” people in the New Covenant

- This should not be confused with Roman Catholics ‘baptizing’ infants since they believe that baptism is part of the obedience that can lead to salvation (Faith plus works)
 - Catholics also think baptism will cover the infant if they die in infancy
- Points of agreement:
 - We both believe new converts should be baptized (they only want to add their children)
 - We both believe there is some continuation from the Old Covenant into the New Covenant:
 - God has always had one people throughout the generations
 - Those people have always been brought to God by faith (Gal. 3.7)
 - Children of believers are in a special position to receive a great deal of benefits from their believing parents
 - Its possible to understand Baptism as a replacement of circumcision in the New Covenant
- Why do we disagree that children of believers should not be baptized?
 - Textually: Colossians 2.11-12, Galatians 3.26-27, 1 Peter 3.31 all connect the need for faith in baptism (infants cannot exercise faith)
 - There is no record of Infants being baptized in the NT
 - The “household baptisms” are at best an inference
 - Covenant: Jeremiah 31.31-34 the description of the New Covenant:
 - Vs. 32: The New Covenant is NOT like the Old Covenant
 - The Old Covenant can be broken (vs. 32b, 3.8)
 - The New Covenant cannot be broken because it is made with “better promises” and sealed by the blood of Christ (Hebrews 8.6)
 - The Old Covenant included a mixed (believers & unbelievers) ethnic people (people who had descended from Abraham) (Romans 9.6):
 - The New Covenant is no longer ethnic, but includes Jew & Gentile who have the faith of Abraham (Galatians 3.7)
 - The New Covenant is no longer “mixed” but it is made up only believers (note: vs. Jeremiah 31.34: “...they shall ALL know me”
 - Therefore the sign of the covenant does not continue into the New Covenant since the sign of that covenant should only be given to those that have faith and are known by the Lord and who know Him
 - Church History: (Outside the Authority of Scripture) How have Christians thought about this for her 2k year history?
 - There is no evidence of infants being baptized for virtually the entire first two centuries of the church (there is evidence of new believers being baptized)
 - When baptism becomes widespread in the 3-5th centuries it is in response to a deepening understanding of sin, therefore they begin to ‘baptize’ as a way to protect the infant if they died before the opportunity to make a profession of faith
 - Not until the 16th century that we hear the very first articulation of baptism as Protestant paedobaptist churches currently understand it
 - Throughout her history, the church has always believed the need for new believers to be baptized

How is Baptism connected to the local church? It is the ‘front door’ to church membership

- 1 Cor. 12.12-13 seems to connect ‘baptism’ and ‘membership’
- Therefore, it is the practice of Restoration Church to only receive into membership those who have been baptized into the ‘body’ of Christ:
 - The church is the local/visible expression of the universal body of Christ
- The Ethiopian Eunuch was baptized without entrance into a membership into a local church (Acts 8.26-40), however this was clearly a missionary frontier that was/is not normative

Why have believers increasingly been indifferent about baptism or been slow to pursue it?

- Lack of Pastoral Instruction:
 - Pastors have not taught on it clearly or expressed clear and consistent beliefs as they lead their churches:
 - This is likely done for two reasons:
 - They are desiring to grow their attendance and a consistent Baptism policy will cause them to have lose potential members
 - They want to highlight the unity in the Gospel since Baptism is a secondary issue
- Lack of Personal Reflection:
 - Christians haven't taken the time to think much about it since it is a second tier issue:
 - They have had pastors, brothers/sisters in the Gospel probe and see if they have been baptized as a believer (not just as an adult)
 - They know if they did reflect they would be led the conviction to get baptized and they would rather not do so because:
 - It would mean they would have talk in front of people and testify to the Gospel
 - It would appear as though they are immature in their faith and they have been a Christian for a number of years
 - They come from a paedo-baptism tradition:
 - They found Christ in that tradition
 - Their parents are involved in that tradition
 - They are slow to pursue b/c they don't want to say they are wrong
- We can be humble, but we need to have well informed convictions about baptism and not be willing to think both infant baptism and believers baptism is okay, since Christ commands the practice
 - Baptism doesn't save us, but it was important enough to Christ to pursue baptism and commanded it in the Great Commission

Questions

Discussion Starter: *Begin by sharing a few people's testimony of their baptism*

1. How is the Preaching of the Word connected to Baptism?
2. Read Romans 6.1-4: What does Baptism indicate for Paul? What does it mean to be "united" to him"?
3. Read Matthew 28.18-20: Why is Baptism important? Why would Jesus command it?
4. Read Colossians 2.11-12, Galatians 3.26-27, 1 Peter 3.21. Who is Baptism reserved for?
5. Read Jeremiah 31.31-34: How is the New Covenant "not like" the old covenant? Why are those things important?
6. 1 Cor. 12.12-13. How is Baptism connected to membership? (Note: The local church is the visible representation of the universal/invisible Body of Christ)
7. How should baptism be done in order to best display the Gospel?
8. In ways is Baptism evangelistic?
9. In what ways does Baptism encourage us in our faith?

Accountability Question: *Spend some time rejoicing in one another's proclamation of the Gospel in one another's baptism.*

There may be non-members who have not been baptized...serve them in humble ways through prayer, conversation, etc.

Keep in mind there is an increasing crowd in evangelicalism that is not just believers baptism or infant baptism...but they are fine accepting both...if that is someone, try and help them see the imptc of a conviction on a topic since it is only one of two ordinances handed to the church to remember the

Gospel. Make certain and do not communicate that baptism is necessary for salvation, although the New Testament church would have not known of a "Christian" that was not baptized.