

049 - The Church's One Baptism---Ordained by Christ - 2015-06-28

Call to Worship: 1 Chronicles 29:11-13

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 4:1-9

Sermon: "One Baptism As Ordained by Christ" Ephesians 4:3-6

Benediction: Exodus 39:32

Last week we looked into the scriptures to see that the church's "one baptism," which forms part of the church's essential unity, is indeed *baptism*. That is, it is immersion in water, dunking all the way under, which is the very meaning of the Greek word "baptism," and the practice clearly indicated by the stories of baptism in the bible, where people go down into a river at a place where there is plenty of water, and come back up out of the water afterward.

Yet, as we know, many of the churches, and the Christians who make up those churches, do not immerse people in water, do not baptize them, but instead sprinkle them with water or pour water on their heads, or wipe water on their foreheads, and these things even to babies, and then they think that should be called, "baptism."

Yet the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all authority has been given in heaven and or earth, did not ordain sprinkling, pouring, or wiping, and certainly not of babies. When we are told that the church's unity consists partly in having "one baptism," it must be the baptism the Lord Jesus ordained. When we are told to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, it cannot mean that we keep a unity of obedience to a man-made perversion of the Lord's ordinance, but must mean that we keep a unity of obedience to what the Lord Jesus has ordained.

So today we see that **the church's one baptism is the baptism ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ.**

TEXT:

Ephesians 4:3-6

BODY

See with me today that **the church's one baptism, in which there is to be found unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, is the baptism ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ.**

- I. See how clearly He ordained baptism; how plainly He issued the ordinance establishing the church's one baptism
  - A. He demonstrated it by submitting to baptism Himself, at the beginning of His earthly ministry
    1. in the Jordan river
    2. going down in
    3. coming up out of the water
  - B. At the end of His earthly ministry, He ordered His church to do it, in a word impossible for the church to misunderstand: baptize
    1. Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, **immersing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.
  - C. By His apostles, He commanded all of His disciples to submit to it
    1. Acts 2:38 Repent, and let every one of you be baptized
    2. Acts 10:48 he commanded them to be baptized
  - D. He caused examples of it being obeyed to be recorded in the bible
    1. some where the details are given, showing immersion in water
    2. some where details are omitted as to how it was done, but descriptions are given as to who was baptized
      - a) both men and women
      - b) both Jews and gentiles
      - c) Africans, Asians, and Europeans
      - d) individuals and crowds of thousands
      - e) both adults and inf. . . oh, wait a minute; not both adults and infants; but that is for another time

See how clearly our Lord Jesus ordained baptism; how plainly He issued the ordinance establishing the church's one baptism; the church's one baptism is that baptism ordained by the Lord Jesus.

- II. If the church's one baptism is the baptism ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ, there are some things we can know to be true about that ordinance
  - A. the ordinance establishing baptism is set, it is fixed, it is not subject to change
    1. ordinances that we have set in human governments we can repeal or amend, but
    2. the ordinances set by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords cannot be repealed or amended by anything we here can do;
      - a) if the Supreme Court voted 9-0 to overrule an ordinance of the Lord Jesus establishing baptism, it would not be changed;

- b) if the United Nations voted unanimously to change the Lord's ordinance of baptism, it would not then be changed;
      - c) if all the churches on earth submitted to the government of one man in Rome, and said that when he speaks ex cathedra, he speaks infallibly, still, when he spoke declaring a change to our Lord's ordinance of baptism, it would not be changed
    - 3. if the church's one baptism is the baptism ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ, then it is fixed; it is not subject to change
  - B. there is no *good* reason to change it anyway; it already is the best it can be; it is incapable of being improved upon; if a command has been issued by a perfect commander, then it is a perfect command, and any change we could make to it would not be neutral, and would not make it better, but would necessarily make it worse; if we were to change it, no change we made would be an improvement;
    - 1. its effectiveness as a means of grace cannot be increased
    - 2. its suitableness as a symbol cannot be increased
  - C. it is a commission to do a certain thing, not a license to do a range of related things
    - 1. Illustration: Powder Creek Park is the city's flagship public park; city council passed ordinance that city mowing crew must mow the grass at Powder Creek Park as their first priority once per week during growing season
      - a) City Manager checks and finds crew setting fire to the grass
      - b) City Manager checks another day and finds crew spraying grass with herbicide
      - c) he questions them; they reply that they have given themselves the liberty to keep the grass down by whatever method they see fit; they know the ordinance was to mow the grass; they know what the word "mow" means, but they don't worry themselves too much about the actual method of grass control, as long as it is kept short
    - 2. our Lord Jesus Christ has ordered that His church baptize His disciples
      - a) this is not a license to sprinkle, pour, or wipe His disciples with water, as long as some water is applied to the body somehow
  - D. it is a commission to do a certain thing, and so a prohibition to doing anything else
    - 1. same Illustration: Powder Creek Park is the city's flagship public park; city council passed ordinance that city mowing crew must cut the grass at Powder Creek Park as their first priority once per week during growing season
      - a) City Manager checks and finds crew sometimes cutting tree limbs instead of grass, other times cutting grass; sometimes cutting grass, other times spraying grass with herbicide

- b) City Manager did not forbid the crew doing those things; but everyone understands that if the mowing crew is ordered to do a certain thing, that means they are prohibited doing something else
  - 2. our Lord Jesus Christ has ordered that His church baptize His disciples
    - a) that has the effect, also of forbidding our doing something else along with it
    - b) e.g. we baptize, but we also sprinkle
- E. it is not overruled by previous ordinances
  - 1. there have been many ordinances for religious ceremonies in old testament times
    - a) circumcision
    - b) animal sacrifices
    - c) holy days
    - d) human priesthood
  - 2. the ordinance of baptism is not to be understood as subordinate to any of these or equal to any of these, as if the terms of any of these should modify the Lord's ordinance of baptism
- F. Illustration: the Lord's Supper
  - 1. We are commanded to eat the bread
    - a) what if we crumbled the bread and sprinkled it on our heads instead?
      - (1) what if we elders told you to do that?
  - 2. We are commanded to drink from the cup
    - a) What if we told you to dip your finger in the cup, and make the sign of the cross on your baby's forehead?
      - (1) What if the people next to you in the assembly did that?
      - (2) What if the elders told you to do that?
  - 3. If the worshipers next to you in the assembly tried to do those things, or if the church elders commanded you to do those things, what might your objections be?
    - a) That's not what the Lord said to do!
      - (1) we changed it
      - (2) you can't change it; you can't change what the bible says!
    - b) That's not how you take the Lord's Supper
      - (1) we do it this way because it's better like this
      - (2) no, it's not! you can't make the Lord's Supper better!
    - c) You're supposed to eat the bread and drink the cup!
      - (1) well, we have given ourselves the liberty to eat and drink the Lord's supper in a variety of ways: crumbling, pouring out, and finger painting; and we don't see why you get upset with us for this, and insist on only eating and drinking the Lord's supper

- (2) the Lord didn't say do what you want with the bread and cup, but to eat and drink them
- (3) well, anyone who would like to eat and drink them may do so, and others may prefer to crumble and pour them; the bible does not say we should not crumble the bread
- (4) no, it doesn't have to say that you may not crumble; it says to eat the bread, and so you aren't supposed to do something else with it
- 4. What if the church elders, when they passed you to cup, told you to go sprinkle it on the doorpost of the building?
  - a) you would object: wait, no, that's from the old testament; that's from passover
  - b) we would answer: yes, but the Lord's Supper has replaced the passover in the New Covenant
  - c) no, the Lord Jesus told us to drink the cup, so it's not like the passover in that way
- 5. What if the church elders told you that we will observe the Lord's Supper on the 14th day of the first month; for the week before that, you are to remove all yeast of any kind from your house; then, when we eat the bread, we will eat it in haste, with our car keys in our hands
  - a) if you have read Exodus 12 lately, you would object: waitn, no, that's from the old testament, from passover
  - b) we would answer: yes, but the Lord's Supper has replaced the passover in the New Covenant
  - c) no, the Lord Jesus told us simply to eat the bread and drink the cup; the Lord's Supper is not like the passover in those ways
- G. Since the church's one baptism is the baptism ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ, we can know some things about the ordinance of baptism
  - 1. it cannot be changed by us
  - 2. it could not be improved upon by us, even if we could change it
  - 3. it is not license to do a variety of things
  - 4. it is a prohibition against doing other things along with baptism
  - 5. it is not overruled by any previous ordinance

III. If the church's one baptism is the baptism ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ, think what things are true about us in relationship to the baptism ordinance

- A. We do not naturally feel moral compulsion for the exact terms of the ordinance, so we must not deal with the ordinance according to that
  - 1. difference between "Thou shalt not kill" and "No chickens may be kept in a coop closer than 100 feet from any inhabited residence within the city limits." Your dealing with that ordinance is not on the basis of the natural

right or wrong of it, but on the passing of that ordinance by your city council and the enforcement of it by your city police

- a) you don't see why it couldn't be 50 feet or 75 feet
  - b) but it is 100 feet, and you could be ticketed for having one at 50 feet, because that violates the ordinance, even though it might not violate a fundamental principle of right and wrong
2. difference between "Honor your father and your mother" and "Immerse disciples" Your dealing with the baptism ordinance is not on the basis of the natural right or wrong of it, but on the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ has ordained it.
- B. If our idea of what the ordinance should be is not the same as what it actually is, we must consider ourselves, not Christ's ordinance, to be mistaken
1. in the example above, we might think that the exact terms of the ordinance are not best, and we might be right! 50 feet or 200 feet might be better
  2. you may be tempted to think the same about the baptism ordinance; but there you would be mistaken
- C. If we do something else, we are then obeying the ordinance of someone other than Christ
1. Mark 7:7-9 AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.' (8) For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men-- the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." (9) He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.
- D. We are obliged to obey it
1. He is the Lord, and we are His domain
  2. He is the King, and we are His subjects
  3. He is the Master, and we are His servants
  4. He is the Creator, and we are His creatures
  5. He is God, and we are not
- E. We love the church's one baptism for His sake; we want to obey His ordinance out of love for Him
1. He is the very Son of God, all lovely, all majestic, infinitely worthy of love
  2. Think of what He has done for us
    - a) He took on our flesh
    - b) He came down here for us
    - c) He suffered and died for our sins
    - d) He was buried
    - e) He rose again
    - f) He appeared to us to show Himself alive
    - g) He sent His church to go all over the world with His gospel---all the way over here to North America

3. Oh, what love we have for Him because of what He has done for us!
  4. What do we do with that love? He has told us:
    - a) John 14:15 If you love Me, keep My commandments.
    - b) Oh, yes, we do love You, and it is our joy to keep Your commandments
  5. When He had done all of this for us, He commanded that we as individual disciples be baptized, and that we as a church baptize His disciples
  6. and so we love the church's one baptism, and the ordinance by which the Lord Jesus ordained that baptism, because we love Him, and we obey it out of love for Him
- F. The church's unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace is to be found where baptism is observed according to the ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### IV. APPLICATIONS

- A. Because the church's one baptism has been ordained by our Lord Jesus, we always should wish for the genuine institution to be maintained, rather than a counterfeit to be substituted
- B. We should prefer to struggle much, to be persecuted much, to lose much, than to lose the church's one baptism ordained by our precious Lord Jesus
  1. yes, I know immersion is baptism
  2. but it's not worth and discomfort, not worthy losing anything to keep that
- C. We should not grant to ourselves a liberty to change the ordinance that the Lord Jesus has not granted us.
- D. Let us consider it right, not wrong, to reject whatever tampering people do with the baptism ordinance. If we do not accept their altered version, let us be confident it is their wrong, not ours.
  1. We are not, by pointing out their error, causing a problem with unity
  2. They, but their disobedience to the ordinance of Christ, are causing a problem with unity
- E. Let us be sure, in our own consciences, "that there is nothing holier, better, or safer than to be contented with the authority of Christ alone."
  1. Isn't it holier to be broad-minded?
  2. Isn't it better not to be so insistent?
  3. Isn't it safer not to rock the boat?
  4. No, "there is nothing holier, better, or safer than to be contented with the authority of Christ alone." And in His authority, He has ordained the church's one baptism, an integral part of the church's essential unity.

**The church's one baptism is *baptism*, immersion.**

**The church's one baptism is the baptism ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ.**

The church's "one baptism" is:

- I. baptism
- II. ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ
- III. for his disciples
  - A. even the sprinklers, Larger Catechism Q 166 (except infants)
- IV. in the New Covenant
- V. to picture the gospel of His death, burial, and resurrection



The church's "one baptism" is the baptism **ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ**

- I. Consider the difference between moral law and an ordinance
- II. See how we can draw on many sources of revelation to understand moral law
- III. See how we need the exact ordination to understand an ordinance
- IV. Consider how precious are the ordinances to us because of who ordained them

Fasol, *With a Bible in Their Hands* p. 9

William Screven's first step from obscurity into history occurred when he was arrested for speaking against infant baptism in Kittery, Maine, in late 1682. . . Screven, along with several other Baptists, moved to South Carolina. Screven thus became the first Baptist pastor . . . in the South.

JRY:

The church's one baptism is something we do because the Lord Jesus Himself told us to do it, not because of anything derived from

- general revelation or
- old testament ordinances or
  - not by the command that Abraham and his descendents circumcise their baby boys
- man-made traditions or
- our own imagination.

And so if someone does something and calls it "baptism," but it is not what the Lord Jesus himself ordained, then it is not the church's one baptism.

JRY:

See how clearly He ordained it

1. He demonstrated it by submitting to it Himself
2. He ordered His church to do it
3. He commanded us to submit to it
4. He caused prominent examples of it being obeyed to be recorded

Calvin:

[comments on Acts 8:38] We ought rather to fight even an hundred times to [the] death for the ceremony . . . of baptism, ~~inasmuch as~~ [since] it was delivered [to] us by Christ, than that we should ~~suffer the same~~ [allow it] to be taken from us.

- I. The church's "one baptism" is the baptism **ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ**
  - A. The church's one baptism is something we do because the Lord Jesus Himself told us to do it, not because of anything derived from general revelation or old testament ordinances or man-made traditions or our own imagination. And so if someone does something and calls it "baptism," but it is not what the Lord Jesus himself ordained, then it is not the church's one baptism.
    1. We understand this about the Lord's Supper
      - a. from scripture: 1 Cor 11:17-21
      - b. especially: 1 Corinthians 11:20 Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. [ESV, NIV: it is not the Lord's Supper you eat]
    2. It is true about baptism, also. If Christians do something that is not what the Lord Jesus Himself ordained, and call it "baptism," it is not the church's one baptism that they are doing
  - B. See how clearly he ordained it
    1. He ordered it to be done by His church: "make disciples, baptizing them"
    2. He commanded sinners to submit to it, by His apostles: "repent and be baptized"
    3. He caused prominent examples of His ordinance being obeyed to be recorded, as we studied a moment ago
  - C. I've been doing some very painful reading on the reasons why many churches sprinkle babies and think of that as the church's one baptism.
    1. they have built up high-sounding arguments based on God's covenant with Abraham, in which Abraham and his descendants were commanded to circumcise all their baby boys on the eighth day

- a. they say that what circumcision was to those people, baptism is to the new covenant church
    - b. so, since babies were to be circumcised then, babies are to be baptized now
  - 2. when you read what they say, it can get quite complex, bringing in several ideas about the nature of covenants; I have a hard time keeping my head above water as I read about it all;
    - a. many bible verses are quoted;
    - b. Hebrew and Greek are analyzed
    - c. many very prominent names of gifted pastors past and present are invoked: Luther, Calvin, Owen, Henry, Warfield, Murray, Sproul, and a thousand others are all quoted; the quality of these men's work, their extreme usefulness in God's church, makes you want to take seriously what they say
  - D. But it all boils down to this: the church's one baptism is not ordained by the command that Abraham and his descendents circumcise their baby boys; the church's one baptism is an ordinance of Jesus Christ to His New Covenant church, and must be understood and practiced accordingly. The Lord Jesus' ordinance of baptism is not to be overruled by old testament ordinances.
  - E. Let me warn you of this: one of the things the infant sprinklers do is to reason soundly, but from a false premise.
- I. The church's "one baptism" is the baptism ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ **for His disciples**
    - A. test
    - B. all his disciples, male and female
  - II. The church's "one baptism" is the baptism ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ for His disciples **to symbolize His death, burial, and resurrection**
    - A.
    - B.

Carroll:

The doctrine of baptism as bearing upon this point set forth in Rom\_6:1-11 is this: A justified and regenerate man is commanded to be baptized. Baptism symbolizes the burial of a dead man – dead to his old life – his cleansing from the sins of the old life,

and this resurrection to a new life. Christ died on the cross for our sins once for all. Being dead he was buried, raised to a new life and exalted to a royal and priestly throne. All this, in the beginning of his public ministry, was prefigured in his own baptism. As he died for our sins, paying the law penalty, so we in regeneration become dead to law claims because we died to sin in his death. Being dead to the old life, we should be buried. This is represented in our baptism: "Buried in baptism." But in regeneration we are not only slain, but made alive, or quickened. The living should not abide in the grave, therefore in our baptism there is also a symbol of our resurrection. But regeneration not only slays and makes alive, but cleanses, therefore in our baptism we are symbolically cleansed from sin, as was said to Paul, "Arise, and be baptized and wash away thy sins." So that not only both elements of regeneration, cleansing and renewal of soul are set forth pictorially in our baptism, but also the coming resurrection and glorification of our bodies.

continuity

they believe the Mosaic covenant was a dispensation of the covenant of grace

Greg Welty

A Critical Evaluation of Paedobaptism

<http://founders.org/library/welty/>

Stan Reeves

FAQ on the Reformed Baptist View of Baptism

[http://www.eng.auburn.edu/~sjreeves/personal/baptism\\_faq.html](http://www.eng.auburn.edu/~sjreeves/personal/baptism_faq.html)

One Gospel

One Profession

One Mode

Dagg:

If the doctrine of the resurrection be taken from the Gospel, preaching is vain, and faith is vain. So, if the symbol of the resurrection be taken from baptism, its chief significance is gone, and its adaptedness for the profession of faith in Christ, is lost. Hence appears the importance of adhering closely to the Saviour's command, "immersing them."

## One Subject

Dagg:

The believing subject can feel the force of the obligation acknowledged in the act, and Paul appeals to this sense of obligation: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"

if it be a ceremony in which children are dedicated by their parents to the Lord, it is a different institution from that in which faith is professed.

He who has been baptized in infancy, is not thereby released from the obligation to make a baptismal profession of faith in Christ.

seal of the covenant?

Dagg:

Baptism is nowhere in the Scriptures called a seal.

When we view the nature and design of the two rites in the light of the Holy Scriptures, we discover that circumcision was intended for the literal descendants of Abraham, but that literal descent from Abraham, without faith, gave no title to baptism. Whatever agreement may be traced between the two ceremonies in other respects, their difference in this particular destroys the analogy, at the very point where alone it can be of use to the cause of infant baptism.

The argument proves too much. We have seen that it extends the application of the religious rite to remote descendants. Besides this, it applies it, not to infant children only, but to children of whatever age, provided they belong to the household. Moreover, it requires that the relation of master and servant be marked in the same way. This also is an important relation, which God has used in extending his church; for servants have often been converted by being brought into pious families. The precept given to Abraham, extended to the whole household; and was given in very explicit language. The argument requires that every believer should put himself in the place of the patriarch, and consider himself bound by this command.

1. anyone who says that the church's one baptism is a sprinkling, pouring, or wiping with water, because the amount of water used, or the way it is applied does not matter, makes himself ridiculous at this point right here; think of it
  - a. if what is needed is for a small amount of water to be sprinkled on a person's head
  - b. you then have grown men, who have containers of water available to them anywhere, wading out into a river together so that one can sprinkle a few drops of water on the head of the other; that is goofy
  - c. if anyone seriously insists that these baptism accounts paint a picture of sprinkling or pouring or wiping rather than immersion, I just have to recognize at this point that the person is not talking sense; I can only conclude that he is committed to some definition of "baptism" that is from OUTSIDE the bible, and is overriding his normal belief in what is IN the bible
  - d. if, on the other hand, anyone admits that these accounts define "baptism" as immersion in water, but insists on changing the definition when it comes to the church's actual practice of baptism, then I must conclude that at this point, he is not endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit as to the church having "one baptism." He is endeavoring to keep some other kind of unity, a unity of error in the bonds of tradition. And we have no obligation at all to try to keep that kind of unity with him, our main interest in unity being the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
    - a. please understand that I am not the first or only person to reach this conclusion for this reason
    - b. Calvin, in commentary on John 3:22-23 "From these words, we may infer that John and Christ administered baptism by plunging the whole body beneath the water"

- c. Calvin, in commentary on Acts 8:38 “Here we see the rite used among the men of old time in baptism; for they put all the body into the water.”

Calvin, in the *Institutes*, in the section on baptism: “it is evident that the term baptise means to immerse, and that this was the form used by the primitive Church”

## Denault

813 - good review of material up to that point regarding the paedobaptist distinction between the substance and the administration of the Covenant of Grace

1561 - review, summary

## Johnson

p. 207 The goal of this section is to explain the continuity and discontinuity of the old and new covenants by revealing the dichotomous nature of the Abrahamic Covenant.

-JRY NOTE: this section of the Johnson book was highly recommended by Dr. Barcellos

p. 208 God’s covenant with Abraham has two distinct dimensions:

- a natural, temporal, and conditional side and
- a spiritual eternal, and unconditional side.

Distinct fulfillments of the Abrahamic covenant

- A. natural and spiritual seeds
- B. types and antitypes
- C. conditional and unconditional

## Pendleton:

Immersion is so exclusively the baptismal act, that without it there is no baptism.

A believer in Christ is so exclusively the subject of baptism, that without such a subject, there is no baptism.

On these two statements all Baptists will agree.

## Hiscox:

And yet it [sprinkling of infants] was not instituted by Christ . . . It is for this reason that Baptists utterly reject and condemn the custom, as . . . without authority . . .