

051 - One Baptism to Represent the Gospel of Jesus Christ - Ephesians 4:3-6 - 2015-07-12

Call to Worship: 1 Peter 1:3

Scripture Reading: Jonah 1:17; 3:1-5

Sermon: "One Baptism to Represent the Gospel of Jesus Christ" Ephesians 4:3-6

Benediction: John 11:25

INTRODUCTION

The church's one baptism is a sign, a symbol, an emblem. It symbolizes something; it signifies something. The Lord Jesus commanded that we baptize His disciples; but He did not Himself explain the significance of baptism. He did not say, "Baptism symbolizes so and so."

He did explain the symbolism of baptism, however, by His apostles.

-As in so many things, you can find the same doctrine in Peter's letters as in Paul's. Peter's doctrine of what baptism represents is a bit complex; several other issues are raised in the same verses, so the passage requires some very careful exposition. We'll not go into that this morning. If we did, we would see that Peter teaches the same symbolism in baptism as does Paul. So, later, you might read in 1 Peter 3 to see how he puts it.

-For this morning, we'll look at what Paul teaches us baptism represents. This is especially helpful to put the concept of "one baptism" into its context, since we'll be reading here what the same author said about baptism when it was his purpose to say more about it.

Since baptism is a symbol, and since the Lord Jesus, by His apostles, explained what it is a symbol of, part of the unifying effect of the church having one baptism is that every individual church, and every individual disciple of Jesus Christ, has the same understanding of what is being symbolized in baptism.

illus.

These United States of America have one flag to represent our union, each state with every other. Part of the unity of these United States of America is our one flag. The flag is a symbol. If every state in the union, and every individual in each state, has the same idea of what the flag symbolizes, then having the one flag is part of our unity. But if some states and individuals hold that the flag represents some certain things, while other states and individuals hold that the flag represents something else entirely, then the one flag does not serve, on a practical level, to promote and preserve unity among the states of the union.

Similarly, if all churches and individual disciples . . .

But if some churches and individual disciples . . .

Therefore, today, as we work to understand how to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace regarding the church's one baptism, we look into the symbolism of baptism, wanting to

understand it rightly, and so use the symbolism of the church's one baptism as part of keeping the unity in God's church on a practical level.

TEXT

Ephesians 4:1-6 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, (2) with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, (3) endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4) There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; (5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism; (6) one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

BODY

In the OT scriptures, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ the third day was typified, foreshadowed, pointed to in symbol, along with the subsequent preaching of repentance for the saving of the gentiles from wrath of God. We know this to be so from the Lord Jesus explanation of this while He walked the earth.

Matthew 12:38-41 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." (39) But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. (40) For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (41) The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.

-and He tells them that certain features of the OT account of Jonah form a sign symbolizing this death, burial, and resurrection, and the subsequent preaching of repentance to the gentiles

The Lord Jesus Himself told his disciples multiple times that His death and His resurrection the third day were coming.

Luke 18:31-33 Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. (32) For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. (33) They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

His angels quotes His words about His death and His resurrection the third day when they spoke to the women at the tomb after His resurrection.

Luke 24:6-7 He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, (7) saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' "

The risen Lord Jesus said the same to His disciples when He appeared to them risen from the dead.

Luke 24:45-47 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. (46) Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, (47) and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

-In this last saying, you hear how the Lord Jesus based the gospel of forgiveness of sins on the accomplished fact of His death and resurrection. It had been foretold in the OT scriptures; now it has been accomplished, that the Christ would suffer and die and rise from the dead the third day; now forgiveness of sins to all who repent is to be preached in His name; all who believe in His name, repenting of sin, will be forgiven.

This, then, is the very thing Christ's church preached, as recorded in Acts! By the work of the Holy Spirit, many people believed, to the glory of God and the saving of their souls.

When the Lord's apostle, Paul, had need to summarize briefly what is the gospel message He preached, of course he wrote it down as this very thing.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, (2) by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. (3) For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (4) and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

See how he includes in the formula of Christ's death and resurrection, His burial. This is interesting, and very fitting. The Lord Jesus said that the sign of Jonah being three days in the belly of the great fish pointed to His being three days in the earth. So Paul, when he writes down the kernel of the gospel message, includes the Lord Jesus' burial. This makes the formula, in Paul's expression, not just the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but His death, burial, and resurrection.

So, the gospel message, as Paul expresses it, is that because of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection the third day, there is forgiveness of sins for all who believe on the Lord Jesus, repenting of their sins.

In another letter, Christ's apostle Paul wrote again about the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. But this time, instead of writing about it as the kernel of the gospel, he wrote about it as the thing symbolized by baptism. Look with me in Romans 6.

NOTE: Let me state here that Peter, in 1 Peter chapter 3, teaches the same symbolism for baptism that Paul teaches here in Romans 6. You of course may check on that later.

Romans 6:3-5 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.

Paul teaches us that baptism is a sign of our fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, which is also the very heart of the gospel message.

So, when the apostle Paul writes to us in Ephesians 4 that part of the church's unity is having "one baptism," we can understand him to mean that the church has a baptism that is a sign of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection the third day, and our fellowship with Him in it. Thus the church one baptism is a no less than a symbol of the very gospel of the Lord Jesus that we believe.

The church's one baptism is the baptism that symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and our fellowship with Christ, through faith and repentance, in that death, burial, and resurrection, unto forgiveness of sins, a walk in newness of life, and sure hope of resurrection and eternal life.

APPLICATION

Now, in the church's that practice sprinkling instead of baptism, they will say that primarily baptism signifies cleansing from sin by the blood of Christ. Of course we do not deny that this is part of the symbolism of baptism. But we insist that the primary thing signified is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and the resulting cleansing from sin is a derived and secondary symbolism.

In some of the churches around us, a shift has taken place, so that the primary significance is stated as being the individual's choice to follow Christ and be identified with Him. We do not deny that the individual's having become a disciple of Jesus Christ is indicated by baptism. But we insist that the primary thing signified is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and of the fellowship of the disciple with Christ through faith, not by choice of the will.

CONCLUSION

The church's one baptism is the baptism that symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and our fellowship with Christ, through faith and repentance, in that death, burial, and resurrection, unto forgiveness of sins, a walk in newness of life, and sure hope of resurrection and eternal life.

Let all who are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ understand that symbolism, and keep the unity on a practical basis in Christ's church party by practicing and loving the church's one baptism in that way.

Luke 24:44-47 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." (45) And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. (46) Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, (47) and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Henry:

An illustrious type of Christ, who was buried and rose again according to the scriptures (1Co_15:4), according to this scripture, for, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so was the Son of man three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, Mat_12:40. Jonah's burial was a figure of Christ's. God prepared Jonah's grave, so he did Christ's, when it was long before ordained that he should make his grave with the rich, Isa_53:9. Was Jonah's grave a strange one, a new one? So was Christ's, one in which never man before was laid. Was Jonah there the best part of three days and three nights? So was Christ; but both in order to their rising again for the bringing of the doctrine of repentance to the Gentile world. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

Gill:

to this the antitype answers; namely, our Lord's being so long in the grave; of whose death, burial, and resurrection, this was a type, as appears from Mat_12:40; for which reason Jonah was so miraculously preserved; and a miracle it was that he should not in this time be digested in the stomach of the creature; that he was not suffocated in it, but breathed and lived; and that he was able to bear the stench of the creature's maw; and that he should have his senses, and be in such a frame of mind as both to pray and praise; but what is it that the power of God cannot do

Carroll:

As Jonah, after his resurrection, became a missionary to the Gentiles, so Christ after his resurrection declared his "all authority" and commissioned his church to go to the ends of the world. The resurrection had a marvelous effect in enlarging the commission.

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.

Dagg:

The faith which is professed in baptism, is faith in Christ. We confess with our mouths the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in our hearts that God has raised him from the dead.(230) 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 significancy 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."

Dagg:

The immersion of the body, as Paul has explained, signifies our burial with Christ; and in emerging from the water, we enter, according to the import of the figure, on a new life. We put off the old man, and put on the new man: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ."(228)

Gill:

3.[8] The end of baptism, which is to represent the burial and resurrection of Christ, cannot be answered any other way than by immersion; that it is an emblem of the burial and resurrection of Christ, and of the burial and resurrection of believers in him, is clear from Rom_6:4, Col_2:12 buried with him by baptism, and in baptism. Now only an immersion or covering of the whole body in water, and not pouring or sprinkling a little water on the face, can be a representation of a burial; will any man in his senses say, that a corpse is buried, when only a little dust or earth is sprinkled or poured on its face?

the end and design of baptism, are to represent the burial and resurrection of Christ, therefore it ought to be performed by plunging into, and overwhelming with water; the reason is, because no other mode of baptizing either by pouring or sprinkling a little water on the face, can answer this end.

there are other texts, besides these mentioned, which demonstrate the representation of Christ's resurrection, which supposes his burial to be the end of baptism; as for instance,

1Pe_3:21 where baptism is said to save us, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But how does it do that, but by representing the resurrection, of Christ unto us, and thereby leading our faith to it, to behold our justification and discharge, by a risen Savior?

why may not our baptism, wherein we profess our faith in a buried Christ, and that we are dead by him to the law, the world, and particularly to sin, be urged and made use of by the spirit of God, as an argument why we should not live any longer therein. And are there no force, power and cogency in this argument? Again, in baptism we profess our faith in the resurrection of Christ, which is represented hereby, and that we are risen with him, and therefore are under the highest obligations, to walk in newness of life, as the apostle himself argues. Moreover, what can have a greater tendency to strengthen our faith in the doctrine of justification, than this ordinance has? by which it is led to see where our Lord lay, and how our sins were left in the grave by him; and he, as our glorious representative, rising again for our justification, by whom we are acquitted and discharged from all sin and condemnation; and is such a way of arguing from hence, to promote holiness, and strengthen us in the doctrine of justification, to be wondered at, what is meant by it?

baptism in their infancy, which to us is none at all

Custom, and the common use of writing in this controversy, have so far prevailed, that for the most part immersion is usually called the "mode" of baptism; whereas it is properly baptism itself; to say that immersion or dipping is the mode of baptism, is the same thing as to say, that dipping is the mode of dipping; for as Sir John Floyer^[14] observes "Immersion is no circumstance, but "the very act of baptism," used by our Saviour and his disciples, in the institution of baptism." . . . And as for sprinkling, that cannot, with any propriety, be called a mode of baptism; it would be just such, good sense as to say, sprinkling is the mode of dipping, since baptism and dipping are the same

The end of baptism, which is to represent the burial of Christ, cannot be answered in any other way than by immersion, or covering the body in water; that baptism is an emblem of the burial of Christ, is clear from Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12. It would be endless to quote the great number, even of "paedobaptist" writers, who ingenuously acknowledge that the allusion in these passages, is to the ancient rite of by immersion: as none but such who are dead are buried, so none but such who are dead to sin, and to the law by the body of Christ, or who profess to be so, are to be buried in and by baptism, or to be baptized; and as none can be properly said to be buried, unless under ground, and covered with earth; so none can be said to be baptized, but such who are put under water, and covered with it; and nothing short of this can be a representation of the burial of Christ, and of ours with him; not sprinkling, or pouring a little water on the face; for a corpse cannot be said to be buried when only a little earth or dust is sprinkled or poured on it.

Chapter 29 Of Baptism paragraph 1

Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party baptized, a sign of his fellowship with him, in his death and resurrection; of his being engrafted into him; of remission of sins; and of giving up into God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:3-5 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? (4) Therefore we were 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. (5) For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

Colossians 2:12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Mark 1:4 John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Acts 22:16 And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

Grace Bible Church of Sherman, TX

We believe that the mode of baptism is to be immersion, which symbolizes the spiritual significance of what took place at conversion. In union with Christ, one has died to the old life and has risen in newness of life.

Grace Community Church of Sun Valley, CA John MacArthur

We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42). Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1-11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).

Baptist Faith and Message 200

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life,

and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead.

New Hampshire Confession 1833

We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost; to show forth, in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life;

The church's one baptism is the baptism that symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; more specifically, our fellowship with Christ, through faith and repentance, in that death, burial, and resurrection, unto forgiveness of sins, a walk in newness of life, and sure hope of resurrection and eternal life.

The baptism of a person represents the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The baptism of a specific person represents that person's union with Christ, his fellowship with Christ, in that death, burial, and resurrection; which union is through faith and repentance; and results in forgiveness of sins; and which produces a new walk by the Spirit; and which produces sure hope of resurrection and eternal life.