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Topic: Baptism
Text: Matthew 28:18-20...
Series: Baptism
Title: Baptism's Significant Place In The Family Of God

Baptism's Significant Place in the Family of God

INTRODUCTION

Today we have the distinct privilege of participating in a baptism. So to prepare us to rightly observe and wholeheartedly appreciate God's intention for baptism we are going to focus on it during our time in God's word this morning.

It strikes me that Baptism is like C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia which can be enjoyed by children as wonderful stories of three young children and a magic lion. They can also be enjoyed by full grown adults who delight in catching Lewis' story of redemption in Christ that lies just under the surface.

On the one hand baptism is simply what believers in Jesus do when they want to be all in with God. And at the same time baptism, just underneath the surface is rich in meaning placed there by the Author of our salvation of which it testifies.

I was baptized in the winter of 1981... [share experience]

I still remember my baptism so well. It is a great occasion.

I. What's so GREAT about Baptism

A. The Greatest Commandment

Coming out of God's greatest commandment to love Him and our neighbor comes the...

B. The Great Commission

After Jesus died on the cross as a substitute sacrifice for our sins, satisfying God's righteousness, and after He was raised from the dead proving to be able and inclined to bring new life out of death, before He ascended into heaven to sit at God's right hand where He is now making intercession for us, Jesus commissioned His disciples to make disciples. Listen to what He told them:

Mat 28 -

18 And Jesus came up 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,
baptizing them
in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
20 **teaching** them
to observe all that I commanded you;
and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

1. What's so great about the Great Commission?

a) **The Great Commissioner is Jesus, the Greatest King**

b) **The Great Scope is "All Nations"**

c) **The Great Result is Disciples**

Now this result may not at first glance appear so great. But that could be because we don't appreciate what a disciple is. A disciple is one who has been joined to Jesus by God's grace through faith and who has been granted new life in union with Christ and a new identity as an adopted child of God's. A disciple is one who is following Jesus and being transformed into a His likeness, enjoying the closest of all friendships with the living God. A disciple is one who out of the genuineness of their new creation selves loves God with everything they've got and loves their neighbors as themselves. The great result is people like you and me living the lives God intended, lives of intimate communion with Him.

Global Intimacy – Isn't that at the heart of what God is doing, redeeming people who were estranged from Him, to people who are His sons and daughters living in close intimate familial relationship with Him.

Baptism displays this truth to the world.

To understand and appreciate any great thing, we really need to know its story. Like a tray used to serve food is appreciated so much more when you know the story: this one was hand made by my brother from the tree we used to climb together as kids. Baptism likewise, is most appreciated when we know its

origins. So where did we come up with this practice and what all would God have us understand about it today in our local church family?

II. Baptism's ROOTS in God's History with His People

A. God's Special Dealings with the POG

From very early in the story of God's dealings with mankind, it is clear that God chose certain people to be His people in a special way that was unique from others. This is to say that from very early there has been a People of God.

The first man Adam had many sons and daughters but we see God dealing with his son Seth in a special way. Lamech had other sons and daughters, but Noah was distinguished by God from the rest of them and from the rest of all the people of his day. The man Terah had several sons, yet God called out his son Abram to advance His plans for mankind.

He spoke to Abram and told him to leave his homeland and go to a place God would show him (Gen 12:1)... God promised Abram that He would make a great nation of him, that He would bless him, and that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3). Then God made these promises even more formal in Gen 15 by entering into an actual covenant with him, promising him that He was his shield and that He would be his rewarder (Gen 15:1) that He would give him many descendants (15:5) and much land (15:7, 18).

God then directed Abram to not only know this in his mind, but to set on his body a physical sign of this covenant.

B. Circumcision was the Sign of OT POG

1. Genesis 17

a) Read Verses 1-8

b) Read Verses 9-11, 14

- As I read this passage afresh I see that circumcision would require a costly human response of faith – faith that God would bring about what He promised but what was, by all accounts, impossible. Listen to the story continue...

c) Read Verse 15-19, 21

- The text continues showing that Abraham obeyed God that day and did circumcise himself, his son Ishmael and all the men of his household.
- It was an intentional, costly act of faith that outwardly displayed that they were in Abraham's family and that Abraham was in covenant with God who had promised to be his God (17:7) and bless him with

descendants (nations and kings) and land and with the added blessing of being those through whom God would bring His blessing to all the families of the earth.

So, the **sign** that the descendants of Abraham, the people of Israel, in the OT were the covenant people of God was physical **circumcision** of the flesh. God has done much since those days of promise and covenant. But much has remained exactly the same. He has advanced His same purpose: restoring mankind and all of creation from its fallen state to the order of His original intentions. In Jesus Christ, God has brought about the fulfillment of His promises and made a new covenant with His people. This new covenant has called forth a new sign, the sign of baptism. There is therefore a continuity between the sign of the old covenant and the sign of the new, i.e., between circumcision and baptism. John Piper has said...

C. Baptism's Continuity with Circumcision

Piper: "The continuity is expressed like this: Just as circumcision was administered to all the physical sons of Abraham who made up the physical Israel, so baptism should be administered to all the spiritual sons of Abraham who make up the spiritual Israel, the church. But who are these spiritual sons of Abraham who constitute the people of God in our age? Galatians 3:7 says, "So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham." The new thing, since Jesus has come, is that the covenant people of God are no longer a political, ethnic nation, but a body of believers."

There are many advantages to having been born this side of the cross of Christ. That we have transitioned off of physical circumcision and on to baptism as the sign of the believer's membership in the family of God is not the least of these benefits. Better to be dipped than to be cut, you would have to agree. So, there is continuity between circumcision and baptism and baptism has its roots in the OT, but let's see now how it is developed in the New Covenant which relates us to God in this day. Let's look at...

III. Baptism's BLOOM in Jesus' Church

A. Meaning of Baptism

1. Baptism's Discontinuity (Growth/Development) with Circumcision

a) A New Action to Take

John the Baptist called Jews (circumcised Jews) to repentance and was baptizing them as they confessed their sins. Mat 3

b) A Change in Covenant: From the Sign of Israel's Old Covenant Relationship to God, to the Sign of New and Better Covenant Relationship to God

c) A Shift in Focus: From Physical to Spiritual

Now that Jesus (the fulfillment of the God's promises and covenants of the past) has come; those who trust in Him have come into a new covenant relationship with God.

Though both circumcision and baptism were acts of faith, Circumcision which was a sign of being in covenant relationship with God for the **physical** descendants of Abraham by the **physical** removal of flesh by the hand of man has been replaced by baptism which is a sign of being in new covenant relationship with God for the **spiritual** descendants of Abraham, by the **spiritual** removal of sin by the power of God.

Paul sees that the circumcision of the past is replaced by a spiritual circumcision conducted by Jesus. Col 2:11

d) A Broadening of Scope: From Local to Global

This sign would prove to be available not just for Abraham, his descendants and those who would associate with him; but to all the families of the earth, both the descendants of Abraham and all others, Jews and Gentiles alike!

e) A Change in the Sign Itself: From Cutting of Skin to Dipping in Water

f) A Change in Severity of Ceremony: From harsh, painful, and wounding to a much more gentle cleansing

This speaks to Christ's suffering **in our stead**. We did not have to physically die on the cross as the just penalty for our sins, rather Christ did that for us; it remained for us only to be joined to Him through faith in order for us to experience both forgiveness and new life. Even though the actions of the baptism ceremony are much more gentle, they actually stand for a reality that is much more extreme.

g) An Intensifying of the Cost Signified: From losing a piece of your flesh in circumcision to the death of your old nature

Baptism speaks to death of the natural person we were all born into. The believer who has trusted in Jesus and His death and resurrection has died to their old sinful nature and is living in the newness of life Christ has for them.

h) A progression from the destruction of flesh to new life in Christ

- Colossians 2:8-15 esp. 11 and 12
- “having been buried with Him in baptism, in which **you were also raised up with Him through faith** in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”

So, with roots in its OT predecessor of circumcision as the sign of the OT covenant God had made with His people, baptism now distinguishes itself as a more fitting sign of a new and better covenant. Let’s look a little further into the meaning of baptism.

2. Similar in Significance to the Lord’s Supper/Communion

Profound and loaded with meaning...

3. “In the Name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit”

We have been instructed by our Lord to baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. When someone is being baptized they are expressing their faith and dependence and association with God in His fullness. If we only acknowledge one person of the triune God we are not really acknowledging the true God.

4. Water’s Significance

a) Water Can Bring Death

My dad grew up in Rochester New York. For fun he would read books. He raised his kids in Hawaii. For fun we’d head to the beach and the waves. I would often spend hours in the water bodysurfing, surfing, or swimming. My dad is famous around our house for saying, “Swimming to me is staying alive in the water.” Water can drown, some of you in this room have come close. The water just claimed another life at Monastery beach this past Friday. It brought death to the unrighteous in Noah’s day. It brought death to the Egyptian army that pursued the people of God across the Red Sea.

b) Water Can Give Life

Second only to our need for the oxygen in the air we breath is our need for water. We can go without food for longer than we can go without water. Without it we would perish. Without it my lawn does perish. Without clean water millions of people die every year: “More than 1 billion people worldwide do not have access to safe water. Five million people die each year because of water-related disease.” Marla Smith Nilson from: <http://www.parentmap.com/content/view/531> 3900 children die every day from water borne diseases ([WHO 2004](http://www.who.int)). From: <http://www.worldwatercouncil.org/index.php?id=25> God provided water for the thirsty people of Israel in their days of wondering in the desert.

c) Water Can Cleanse Us

We are all familiar with this fact. The Scripture teaches both of physical washings and spiritual washings. The priests were commanded by God to wash before performing their priestly duties: Exodus 30:17ff “The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base of bronze, for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it. Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet from it; when they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, so that they will not die; or when they approach the altar to minister, by offering up in smoke a fire sacrifice to the LORD. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they will not die; and it shall be a perpetual statute for them, for Aaron and his descendants throughout their generations.””

Paul exhorts husbands to love and then speaks of the spiritual cleansing of Christ that we come to understand by what we already know about the natural cleansing characteristics of water. Eph 5:25ff, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”

5. Descending Under Water – Death, Burial and Cleansing

In the baptism of a believer in Jesus, our descent under the water as we hold our breath speaks of the death of our old nature and the burial of the old man and our cleansing from sin.

Romans 6:3-4a – “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized in His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death...”

6. Coming Up Out of the Water – New Life Now and Forever

As we come up out of the water we take a wonderful first breath and return from the picture of death to the picture of life – new life in Christ to be enjoyed now and forever.

Romans 6:4b-5 – “...so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in the newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.”

7. Welcome Into the Arms of Family and Church Family Alike

Baptism is not a solo affair. Coming up out of the water of His baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist, this Scripture says of Jesus, “...He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”” Mark 1:9ff

When a Christian is baptized and comes out of the water she is to be embraced and affirmed and welcomed by the body of believers in Jesus Christ. We can take this opportunity to officially welcome the ones baptized into the family of God.

B. Reasons Believers Are Baptized

1. To Respond in Faith and Obedience to the Command of God

Mat 28:18-20

2. To Follow the Example of Jesus who was Baptized

Mark 1:9ff

3. To Respond to the Apostles Teaching

Acts 2:37-42

4. To Continue the Norm Established in the First Century of Baptism following Faith in Jesus.

- Acts 8:25ff – Ethiopian Court Official
- Acts 16:14ff – Lydia and her household
- Acts 16:31ff – Jailer and his household

5. To Make a Public Proclamation of Faith in Jesus

a) Similar to Romans 10:9-10

6. To demonstrate our union with Jesus and our sure hope that in Him we have been made new and now live according to a new nature – the nature of God’s intention, the nature of Jesus Christ.

Jesus was baptized not in symbol but in fact. He died on the cross covered in His own blood, He was buried, He rose again and lives today and for all eternity.

Our baptism demonstrates our union with Him and the blessings God has given us of forgiveness of sin, new life according to His intention, even the hope of our future resurrection. Jesus was the first fruits of the resurrection and we who are in Him, because we are in Him will share even in that. (Cf. 1 Cor 15)

Conclusion

Baptism is profound and rich in meaning with layer upon layer to be enjoyed each pointing to Christ, but as we noted at the start of this message, baptism is also the simple act that genuine believers in Jesus do to show Him and the world that their faith is genuine and that they want to live children of God.

Let’s hear from some of those being baptized and then we’ll head out to the back yard for the baptism.

Testimonies - Baptism - Poolside Remarks - Reading of Scripture

Transformation Card

This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.

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Short Title: Baptism in the Family of God

Message Outline

Baptism's Significant Place in the Family of God

- I. What's so GREAT about Baptism
- II. Baptism's ROOTS in God's History with His People
- III. Baptism's BLOOM in Jesus' Church

Related Scripture

1. Mat 28:18-20
2. Gen 17
3. Mat 3, Mark 1
4. Acts 2 (esp. 37-47)
5. Romans 6:1-11
6. Col 2:12, 1 Pet 3:21
7. Gal 3

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. What is it to baptize someone "in the name of" God...?
2. What were the Old Testament roots of baptism?
3. In what way is baptism similar to circumcision?
4. In what way is it different?
5. To what truths do the symbols of baptism speak?
6. Have you been baptized as God intended?
7. What truth regarding baptism do you need to refine and/or own?

Memory and Meditation Verse

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying,
"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;
and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Mat 28:18-20 NASB

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