

The Baptism of Christ

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Bible Text: Matthew 3:1-17

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...Take your Bibles, please and turn to the Book of Matthew the third chapter. I want to consider with you the subject of the baptism of Jesus Christ. This account of the baptism of Christ is recorded for us in all four gospels: Matthew, the third chapter; Mark, the first chapter; Luke the third chapter and the gospel of John. They each had some different viewpoints or some thing different to contribute in the discussion of this subject.

In Matthew, chapter three and verse one we read,

“In those days came John the Baptist...”¹

I am going to change the word “baptize” or “baptism” every time I come to it if I remind myself to do so. I am going to change it to how the Greek word should have been translated, “to immerse” or “immerser” because that is exactly what the Greek word means.

In those days came John the [Immerser], preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan.²

Just for a little side note, look at the words “all” here in verse five. You might even circle them; note them because certainly it is not every single individual. Every time we read the word “all” it does not necessarily mean every single individual. The importance of that is when we talk about the death of Christ that He died for all. We believe that Christ died for all of His elect people. Certainly there were people in those days, many who did not receive John's baptism. The word “all” simply means all classes and people from various walks of life came to John and were immersed in water.

¹ Matthew 3:1.

² Matthew 3:1-5.

“And were immersed of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”³

Here is a very important verse. They were immersed in Jordan confessing their sins.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.⁴

We believe the Bible teaches that there are four essential, vital issues for a scriptural baptism and here is one of the first ones, a Proper Candidate. The Bible teaches that a person must have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God and confessed Christ as their Lord and Savior. They manifest regeneration by repentance of sins and a change in their life, a change of conduct in their behavior.

That is one of the reasons—not the only reason—but that is one of the reasons why we reject the teaching of infant baptism. It is a prerequisite for baptism that a person have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God and that there has been a work of God wrought in their heart and life evidenced by a confession of sin and acknowledgment of Christ as Savior.

So John, when these people come to him, you know, they are just crowd followers. They are going along with everyone else, and we have that today in religion. They wanted to become part of the movement and so they go out to John, these religious Pharisees and Sadducees, and, oh, they were so very pious, righteous, self righteous people.

“We are going to be baptized by John too.”

He said, first of all, “Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”⁵

John had never preached to them and they had never brought forth any evidence of repentance.

He said, verse nine, “And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.”⁶

There is a teaching today and it was common among the Jews that simply because we are the descendants of Abraham we are God’s children. Well, Christ spoke to Nicodemus who was a Jew and said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”⁷

³ Matthew 3:6.

⁴ Matthew 3:7-8.

⁵ Matthew 3:8.

⁶ Matthew 3:9.

⁷ John 3:3.

The dominant teaching among what we refer to as being the Pedobaptists—that is the infant baptizers—is that because parents or a parent of this child is a believer, therefore we assume that this child is one of God’s elect and therefore we can baptize this person. Now it has been the great controversy in Christendom today. I just want to make a point that the reason why over 50 million Anabaptists died during the dark ages was not over the doctrine of election and predestination. It was over the doctrine of baptism. Over 50 million Anabaptists died because they refused to submit to the sprinkling of the Roman Catholic Church and did not accept their baptism as being valid baptisms. Let me repeat, over 50 million Anabaptists Christians died during that Dark Ages—a time or period which is marked most normally beginning maybe somewhere about 200 AD up to about 1500 AD, but that is not the end of it. 1500 AD is the time given for the Protestant Reformation, but that is not the end of the blood bath of Anabaptists. Baptists were imprisoned and killed up into the 1700s over this very issue of baptism.

“And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.”⁸

God in a very supernatural way can raise up—as he did Adam out of the dust of the earth—He can raise up His elect people out of stones is actually what John said.

“And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”⁹

In the 21st chapter of Matthew, Jesus Christ makes this much clearer and sets forth that Judaism is coming to an end. You see that, when Christ died on the cross and the veil was rent in twain from top to bottom. That Old Testament mode of worship ceased and all of Judaism, the things surrounding Judaism have also come to an end. Christ established a new mode of worship; it is the New Testament church.

In the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John, Christ said to the woman of Samaria, “The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father... [For] God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”¹⁰

The very reason we can meet here today and worship the Lord is because the bondage of Judaism of the Old Testament has been broken. We worship God the Father by Jesus Christ based upon the satisfactory work of Christ on the cross of Calvary because the Holy Spirit of God regenerates God’s elect people, whether they be Jew or Gentile and brings us into a covenant relationship with each other so that wherever we assemble Christ is there. Our Lord Himself said in Matthew the 18th chapter—“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”¹¹

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Matthew 3:10.

¹⁰ John 4:21, 24.

¹¹ Matthew 18:16.

So we don't have to go back to Jerusalem. We are not restricted to a building. It is where ever saints meet by His authority, even though it may be two or three; there we have Christ with us.

This is what John is speaking about. "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed immerse you..."¹² In our King James we have the word "with." Now I like the King James translation. I keep saying it is the best English translation that we have, but here is a case where the word should be translated differently. It is the Greek preposition "en" and it can be translated; in, by and with depending on the context. So we should read, "I indeed immerse you in water."

We have read already how that John was baptizing in verse six, immersing in Jordan. So John was immersing in water unto repentance- because of or in view of repentance.

"But he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall immerse you in the Holy Ghost."¹³

I believe that happened on the Day of Pentecost when the church assembled there in the upper room, was immersed literally in a physical manifestation of the Holy Spirit by the sound of the rushing mighty wind. That happened and was repeated only again on two other occasions and that was in Samaria where Philip was preaching and then also the household of Cornelius where Peter was preaching. You will read about those accounts in the Book of Acts. You will find that it was a very similar kind of thing. What God was doing at Pentecost and in Samaria and at the house of Cornelius was accrediting His churches as being the house of God. In Samaria and at the house of Cornelius, He was confirming that His church is not restricted to Jews. It is Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles also.

And so we read, "shall baptize in the Holy Ghost and fire."¹⁴

Now there are different ideas about this. Some think that it is referring to what happened at Pentecost and it very well may be. I believe it is talking about the future judgment of the world when it is immersed in fire. I hold to this because of the meaning of the word baptize. The Greek word is "immerse" and so "immersed in fire." This world is going to be immersed in fire. This is what Peter speaks about in 2 Peter chapter three, "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."¹⁵

"Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."¹⁶

¹² Matthew 3:10-11.

¹³ Matthew 3:11.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ 2 Peter 3:10.

¹⁶ Matthew 3:12.

I believe that what happened in 70 AD is a foreshadowing of God's judgment against the world. It was not the conclusive end of the issue, but it is simply a type. It is a foreshadowing, I should say, of what is going to happen at the end of time.

Now we come to verse 13. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be [immersed] of him. But John forbad him,"¹⁷ and naturally so. John had already given record that there cometh one after him whose shoes he is not worthy to tie. John had been told that Messiah would come, and he would be made known by the sending of the Holy Spirit upon Him. This would be the Messiah.

He is saying, "I have need to be immersed of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."¹⁸

Now there are those who say that Jesus Christ baptized John.

That is not what happened! You will read, comparing the other Gospel accounts, John immersed Christ. And you read, "Then he suffered him."¹⁹

But the important phrase in verse 15, Jesus said, "For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."²⁰ And we will have more to say about that later on.

"And Jesus, when he was [immersed],"²¹ very clearly when he was immersed...

...went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.²²

This, I believe, is an accreditation of the baptism of Christ at the hands of John the Baptist. It is also, I believe, somewhat of a prophetic utterance of what Christ was going to do on the cross of Calvary. He would bear the sins of God's elect people and God the Father would see the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

Only in Christ and His death on the cross is God satisfied concerning sin. His death alone is the propitiation for the sins of God's elect people. So here Christ is accredited, acknowledged by God the Father's voice from heaven and by the Holy Spirit as being the Messiah and also the voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."²³ I am well pleased in what he is now doing and what he will do.

¹⁷ Matthew 3:13-14.

¹⁸ Matthew 3:14-15.

¹⁹ Matthew 3:15.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Matthew 3:16.

²² Matthew 3:16-17.

²³ Matthew 3:17.

Everything that the Son did pleased the Father. He in his active obedience fulfilled the law of God and in his passive obedience he submitted unto God's judgment for sin.

So we have here then this baptism of Christ at the hands of John the Baptist.

Now the important issue for God's people, if we want to be true followers of Christ, we need to follow Him as the pattern in all He did and how He lived. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. He is the Captain of our salvation. He is the model Christian after whom we, as God's people, are to identify and be conformed to in every way. You find throughout the New Testament, as you read, that reference is made many, many times to the life and the teachings of Christ. Even the Apostle Paul said in the 11th chapter of 1 Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."²⁴ So whomever the person may be, regardless of how highly esteemed that person may be, we are only to follow that person and listen to that person as they are teaching the principles and the doctrines of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the baptism of Christ is a very significant and very important issue. He was not sprinkled. He was not baptized to wash away sin, because He was without sin. But He was immersed in water as a pattern for all of God's people.

We said then, the first prerequisite for scriptural baptism was that it must be one who has already been regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God and is a child of God.

Now, of course, Christ who is the sinless Son of God does not need to be regenerated. He is completely without any sin, but He is the pattern that we, as God's people, are to follow having been brought into proper relationship with God the Father and God the Son and the God the Holy Spirit. We then are qualified to enter the waters of baptism. So we say that there must be a Proper Candidate, one who has been regenerated, one who has repented, one who has confessed their sin unto Christ, unto God and who is in right relationship with God.

Secondly, we say not only is there to be a proper candidate, but there is also to be a Proper Mode. I changed the English word "baptized" so we would have it set forth in a very clear understanding what this word means in the original language. It means to immerse, always. All the Greek scholars always, of every denomination agree that this is what the word means. The Greek word, "baptizo", means to immerse. Unless they have changed recently, even in the Greek Orthodox Church they immerse even babies. They immerse them because they know the Greek. So it is how a believer is to be baptized, by immersion, not by sprinkling, not by pouring, but by means of immersion.

We read here very clearly, "they went down in the water", "immersing in the Jordan River.

²⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:1.

In the Gospel of John the third chapter you read that “John also was immersing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there.”²⁵

I will tell you, you don’t need much water to sprinkle a person. In fact, many of you go to the churches that practice sprinkling, you will find that they have a little bowl somewhere sitting off to the side up front and when they get ready to do what they call baptize a person, the preacher will put his hand down into that little bowl and pull out some water and he sprinkles it on the person to be allegedly baptized.

Now the only thing that ever gets baptized is the hand of the preacher. It gets immersed in water. That is the only thing that gets baptized.

John had to baptize at Aenon because there was much water there.

You will read in the eighth chapter of Acts, it says that Philip was preaching to the Ethiopian. They came to “a certain water” and the Ethiopian said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”²⁶

Now it has been said by some, “Well, it was just a well of water or what it was a trough of water. Let’s just look at what the Bible says, eighth chapter of the Book of Acts. Verse 37.

“And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”²⁷

And then, verse 38.

“And he commanded,” that is the Ethiopian, “the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water.”²⁸ Now if that is just a bucket of water, it is a big bucket. If it is just a trough of water, it is a big enough trough of water that both of these two men got into it. And they both—Scriptures are very clear—“went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch.”²⁹ Now here is the Word of God clearly setting forth that both of these men went into the water and yet there are Bible commentators who will dare to tell us that there was just this little oasis out there or there was a well. They bring up this water and Philip dips his hand in the water, sprinkles the eunuch and he is baptized.

Take what the Bible says folks. Both Philip and the eunuch got into the water, and he immersed him. So there must be a proper mode.

Thirdly—and I know these are not new to you, but I am just giving them to us to remind us because I will tell you that this is the very first issue in which we as a church will

²⁵ John 3:23.

²⁶ Acts 8:36.

²⁷ Acts 8:37.

²⁸ Acts 8:38.

²⁹ Ibid.

cease to be a New Testament Church. You young people, we old folks are going to be gone some day. You are going to be challenged on every area of doctrine and here is where the first attack is going to come.

“Well, you don’t have to be so extreme and so hard nosed and so radical about this thing. If they are satisfied, if these people are satisfied with their baptism, after all they are Christian people. They are believers. We need to accept them because they are satisfied.”

Listen. It is not “them” that is to be satisfied. It is God’s Word that is to be satisfied. The issue is not how you feel about it, but how does God see it.

Look at the fifth chapter of 1 John for a minute. Many Christians say, “Oh, let’s just love everybody and let’s just all get together. Let’s not be so divisive and so critical.”

But now look at 1 John chapter five. “By this we know that we love the children of God...”³⁰

What is the test that we can put to ourselves to prove that we really love the children of God? Here it is.

“...when we love God, and keep his commandments.”³¹

Underline that, because it is true, because this is the very point where the ecumenical world will try to attack us as Christians and say, “Well, we as Christians, we love each other,” and we do. And we should have fellowship with each other and we should. But who do we love supremely? First of all, it is Christ. And the test that we really love God’s people is that we keep the commandments of God.

Now let me try to illustrate that. Let’s say we sit down to a table to eat and I happen to know that in this glass of water that you are about to drink is very dirty water; someone has put some poison in it. It may not kill you, but it is going to make you sick. So I just sit there and I think, now, I don’t want to offend the host. But I happen to know that there is some poisonous water in the glass. The person who drinks that water is going to get sick. But I like this host and hostess and I just don’t want to offend them so I just keep my mouth shut. The person drinks the water and, sure enough, they get sick. And I go visit them at the hospital.

“I am sorry that you are sick. I knew that there was some poison water in that glass that you were about to drink, but I just didn’t want to offend the hostess and tell you.”

That person would be rightly upset with me. “You knew that there was some bad water in that glass, why didn’t you tell me about it? I thought you were my friend. Why would you sit there and let me drink that bad water?”

³⁰ 1 John 5:2.

³¹ Ibid.

“Well, you have to understand. I didn’t want to offend anyone.”

See, if we love God’s people, we try to teach them the truth and guide them to do as our Lord said, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”³²

And so if we love the Lord, we keep His commandments. We try to set a pattern to teach others to do the very same thing just like the Lord did.

So there must be a proper mode in baptism and there must be a Proper Purpose, also. Every denomination has its own purpose for baptizing. Some would say that when you enter the waters of baptism that is when you are born again.

Baptism does not give you regeneration. I wish it did. That way I could feel more comfortable about some people that I have baptized. There are some people that I have baptized that unfortunately their lives afterwards did not show that they were truly born again people. But if I could just get them down to the water hole and get them immersed, I could get them regenerated.

Now wouldn’t that work real good if we could just get people in the baptism pool and we could thereby get them regenerated? But regeneration is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit of God and it is not anything that we can do by any means or method or any prayer we can get anybody to say, any card we can get them sign, nothing we can do to get a person regenerated. It is of the Lord.

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”³³

It is a sovereign power, instantaneous, miraculous work of God the Holy Spirit, not the waters of baptism. There are those who teach you go down to the waters of baptism and that is where you go to get your sins washed away.

Well, if that is the case, then there is no need for Jesus Christ to die because the Word of God says that it is the blood of Jesus Christ that washes away sin. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. The only reason why anyone is qualified to enter the waters of baptism is because they believe that God has, for Christ’s sake, cleansed them and washed them from all their sins by the blood of Christ.

Yes, the word washing is used in reference to regeneration. It is used in Titus chapter three and verse five. Let’s turn there please and look at that, if you would please. Titus chapter three and verse five.

I will start reading at verse four.

³² Matthew 28:20.

³³ John 3:8.

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.³⁴

Now where do you read water in that verse of Scripture? Can anyone find water in that verse of Scripture? Hold your hand up. How is it that we are washed in regeneration? It is “by the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” It is exactly what Paul said. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”³⁵

That is what God promised. “Behold, I will take out of you a heart of stone and put in you a heart of flesh and give you a new nature and put my Spirit within you.” That is the work of regeneration, not the work of baptism.

Revelation chapter one and verse five, we read, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”³⁶

Baptists believe in blood before water. It must be of that order. You go back to the Old Testament tabernacle, the Old Testament temple, the mode of worship there and you see the altar sacrifice first and then the brazen laver. We must pass by the altar of Christ having our sins paid for by the blood of Christ, washed in the blood of Christ before we are qualified to enter the waters of baptism.

Our Lord said, “it behooves us to fulfill all righteousness.” How can we ever be declared to be righteous apart from the washing of regeneration by the blood of Jesus Christ?

So there must be a proper purpose in baptism.

In the sixth chapter of the Book of Romans, verse three, Paul tells us what this purpose is, what we do in baptism, Romans six and verse three, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized [or immersed] into Jesus Christ were [immersed] into his death?”³⁷

We identify with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the ordinance of baptism the Gospel is proclaimed. What does God say in Romans the 10th chapter? “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”³⁸

Now everyone cannot give a very great profession with the mouth of the Gospel. Not everybody is a preacher, but I will tell you what every born again person can do to confess their hope of salvation. They enter the waters of baptism and say, “This is my

³⁴ Titus 3:4-5.

³⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:17.

³⁶ Revelation 1:5.

³⁷ Romans 6:3.

³⁸ Romans 10:9.

only hope. Christ died for my sins. Christ was buried for my sins. Christ rose again for my sins and I am confessing my faith in His death, burial and resurrection as my only hope of salvation.” In the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, that is what Paul says the gospel is. We preach the gospel in our baptism.

And so what is the proper purpose for which we are baptized?

A lot of people have a problem with Acts the second chapter verse 38. As a matter of fact, whole denominations have built their doctrinal teachings on this very verse of Scripture. Let’s look at Acts chapter two and verse 38.

We read, Peter preaching at the Day of Pentecost, we read, verse 37: “Now when they heard,”³⁹ when they heard. Underline, circle the word “heard.” These people have been pricked in their heart by the Holy Spirit of God. They had been given hearing ears. They had been regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God and they are made to effectually hear. That is the same thing you have in Acts the 16th chapter where Paul is preaching and at Philippi where prayer was wont to be made and the Word of God says, reading in Acts the 16th chapter about Lydia, verse 14, “whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.”⁴⁰ The Lord opened her heart. The Lord gave her hearing ears. She now had been regenerated to hear with an effectual ear, likewise these people here.

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart.”⁴¹ The very first evidence of regeneration is conviction. God shows to us how terrible sinners we are, how lost we are, how much we need Christ.

I don’t ever go to a doctor unless I really need to go. Brother John had some teeth extracted. He still has some pain from it. He didn’t do it just because he wanted to have the doctor gouge around on his mouth. Unless it is extremely needed you don’t go to the doctor for surgery or for dental work. I know that some of you may go and you go and get your teeth cleaned, that is just to keep us from having to go and getting them pulled. It is painful. It hurts!

The reason why we flee unto Christ, the reason why we see Christ as our Redeemer and Savior is because we are made to see our sinfulness and our desperate need of His forgiveness of our sins.

So they were pricked in the heart.

They “said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them...”⁴²

³⁹ Acts 2:37.

⁴⁰ Acts 16:14.

⁴¹ Acts 2:37.

⁴² Acts 2:37-38.

Sign the card. Walk down the aisle. Get baptized.

The first thing he said was, “Repent.”

The first evidence of faith in Christ is repentance and that is an ongoing thing. It is not just something we did one time way back there in the past, but it is a constant ongoing thing.

To the church at Laodicea, the Lord wrote to them and said, “R to repent. God’s people are always in a need of repentance. We ought to always be in the repenting mode every day of our lives, repenting. It is a constant thing that God works in our heart and life. Repent.

“Repent, and be [immersed] every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.”⁴³

Now there is a denomination today that they believe that we ought to be baptized in the name of Jesus only. They are called, Jesus Only. They take this verse. They say, “We just baptize in the name of Jesus only.”

Well, listen to what Jesus said in Matthew the 28th chapter, “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”⁴⁴

I don’t see how we can get confused on that issue, but amazingly people do.

“Well, we are just going to be baptized in the name of Jesus only so we are just going to take the name of Jesus only.”

And then we come to the next word “for.” And that is where many people have a great problem, “For the remission of sins.”⁴⁵

As I said, there are whole denominations built upon this very concept that you get baptized for the purpose of having your sins washed away. Well, we have already mentioned the fact that the Bible sets forth very clearly that the way that our sins are dealt with is by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Now in Mark the first chapter in verse four we read in the King James this phrase, “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”⁴⁶ And you have a similar phrase in Luke the third chapter. “And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”⁴⁷

⁴³ Acts 2:38.

⁴⁴ Matthew 28:19.

⁴⁵ Acts 2:38.

⁴⁶ Mark 1:4.

⁴⁷ Luke 3:3.

Now note the word “for” in these verses. In all these verses there is the Greek word “eis”. This word is used some 1700 times in the New Testament, translated various ways. Now I won’t go into all of them right now but let me go back to Mark and Luke in these phrases here in this in the Greek. It should read this way in the English, “preaching a baptism of repentance.” Not “the baptism of repentance”, because there is no definite article before the word “baptism”. There is no definite article in the Greek. It is “a baptism of repentance.”

In Matthew the third chapter we note that John required confession of sins before people were qualified in the waters of baptism. And so repentance must precede baptism. It is not baptizing in order to get remission of sin, but it is baptized because sins have been forgiven.

As I said, the Greek word, “eis” here translated “for” is used over 1700 times in the New Testament. Sometimes it means and translated “in.” Sometimes it is translated “for.” Sometimes “unto” “by” or “with,” but it is translated 25 times in the New Testament “against,” 28 times “towards” and six times “concerning.”

So it depends on the translator’s, how they understood the context to use this word.

We have in the King James translators, I think, the best English translators possible. They were godly men; some 62 different men, the best scholars of the day and age. They interpreted these Greek words as they understood them into the English, but they had a problem and that was the King James. They could not translate anything in any way that reflected on the teachings of the Church of England over which King James was the head. He was head over it and he was paying the bills and he was paying their salaries. He won’t publish this book if it doesn’t have his approval and so they couldn’t translate any way that reflected on the teachings of the Church of England which came out of the Roman Catholic Church because the pope wouldn’t give King Henry VIII permission to get married again.

So King James had his restrictions and that is the reason why we have the English word “baptize” rather than the word “immerse.” They had to just simply transliterated the Greek word “baptizo” and give us the English word “baptize.”

There are some other places, where this is true and here is one of them, so you look at the word in the context, see how it is used.

In Acts chapter two we have the word “eis” in verse 38, but you have the same Greek word in verse 25. Look at verse 25.

“For David speaketh concerning him [referring to Christ], I foresaw the Lord always before my face, [eis] he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved.”⁴⁸

Now, it would be wrong to read this that he was on because, in order to obtain him being on my right hand. It doesn’t make sense. What he is saying is in view of the fact that he

⁴⁸ Acts 2:25.

is on my right hand—and that is how the word should be understood here in verse 38. “In the name of Jesus Christ [in view of, because of] the remission of sins.”⁴⁹

You have the same word in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 41. The men of Nineveh repented at (“eis”- because of) the preaching of Jonah. They did not repent to get Jonah to preach, it was in view of what Jonah had preached that they repented.

So we have the word “eis” here in Acts 2:38. Baptism is not in order to obtain remission of sins, but because remission of sins have already given.

Then we come to the fourth and that most controversial issue concerning baptism and that is by Proper Authority.

There was only one man on the face of the earth that had authority from God to baptize in the day when Christ went to John the Baptist and that was John. He was a man sent from God. He was a man of prophecy. He was a man divinely ordained to be the immerser. Nobody else had that authority. Jesus Christ walked some 60 miles to the Jordan River to be baptized by John.

Then Christ sent out his apostles to baptize. So we have Christ in Matthew 28th chapter saying:

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.⁵⁰

I don't think I have to belabor the point with you here, but it is this very issue that distinguishes us from other religious organizations. We believe that the Lord's work must be done only in, by and through a New Testament church. Only, by and through a New Testament church.

I don't have the right; no one else has the right to go out here and start preaching and baptizing and starting churches unless I have the authority of God given to them by Christ through a New Testament church. That is what our Lord did in Matthew the 28th chapter. That is what you have a record of in the Book of Acts. They went by, through the authority of the New Testament churches. First the church at Jerusalem recognized and established the church up at Antioch. The church at Antioch where Paul and Barnabas were, Paul went out preaching, establishing churches by the authority of these New Testament churches.

In the book of 1 Thessalonians Paul writing to the Church at Thessalonica let me read to you chapter two. 1Thessalonians chapter two verse 14.

“For ye, brethren, became followers...”⁵¹

⁴⁹ Acts 2:38.

⁵⁰ Matthew 28:18-19.

The word “followers” is a very significant word. The Greek word means to be “imitators.” Now you who have got children, you know what imitators are. They like to imitate Mommy. They like to imitate Daddy. They are imitators. It means to do it exactly like they do it. And so he said, “[You] became [imitators] of the churches...”⁵² note that, not the church, but churches, plural, “of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews.”⁵³

To the churches at Thessalonica, Paul says, “You became the imitators of the churches of God in Judea.” It was churches copying after other churches. We here at Aberdeen Primitive Baptist Church do not follow after any other church except the church at Jerusalem and the other churches of the New Testament.

Now we have a lot of things similar to some other churches of like faith and order, but the only one that we try to follow are the churches of the New Testament. Christ is the Head of each of His churches. Christ is the law giver. The Holy Spirit is our guide. The Word of God is our rule book and we do so following the churches of the New Testament.

And so by the authority of Christ given unto His churches we do mission work. By the authority of Christ given unto His churches we preach the Word of God. By the authority given unto Christ given to His churches we baptize, we set the Lord’s Table. It is not my table. It is not by my authority; it is the Lord’s church and by His authority.

As I said to you earlier this is a very critical, vital, critical issue on which you as young people are going to be challenged in the days to come in the future, even of this church. Many, many even some Primitive Baptist churches have gone off the brink into Protestantism because they abandoned the very critical issue of a the Proper Administrator of baptism.

The old Anabaptists that died at the hands of, first of all, the Catholics and then later on by the hands of the Protestants, it wasn’t just over the doctrine of infant baptism. It was over the doctrine of the proper administrator of the ordinance of baptism. Even if a person was an adult person; and this is what the church historians don’t want you to understand and believe, even if it was an adult person who had been sprinkled or immersed by a Catholic priest or a minister of any other religious order, they would not accept them into their membership unless they were baptized by the authority and the hands of their own ministers, by the authority of Jesus Christ.

So Christ goes to John. Here is the King of kings and Lord of lords, creator of heaven and earth and he submits himself to the baptism of John.

⁵¹ 1 Thessalonians 2:14.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

Now I want to tarry here just a minute and I want us to consider how important this is. When Christ is baptized by John there comes, first of all, the Holy Spirit upon him signifying that this is the Messiah.

In the second chapter of Acts you have a statement made here by Peter that we need to see, Acts chapter two verse 38 again. “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”⁵⁴

I believe that every born again person is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God by at the time of their regeneration. From that time on they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. But I will also point out to us that there is a guidance, there is a favor, there is a blessing that God gives to those who follow in the pattern of Christ and are immersed as Christ was immersed and just as the Holy Spirit of God came upon Christ they are anointed, they are accredited as being true followers of Christ and there is a witness and a seal given to their hearts that this is of God.

I know that, not just as a theological concept, but from personal experience. I know from talking with many other Christians, I have heard them say the very same thing. Yes, when I entered the waters of baptism, God gave a witness to my heart that this was right.

In the 11th chapter of Matthew the Lord is speaking, and I want to direct your attention there. There is a phrase in verse nineteen that is unusual.

Christ is speaking about John the Baptist and his Baptism. Let me start reading at verse eight to try to save some time here.

But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.⁵⁵

Note that. Not risen a greater. That includes Moses. That includes Elijah. That includes Isaiah. That includes Daniel, Jeremiah. There is none greater than John the Baptist. And yet we have people today who are trying to belittle and make light of John the Baptist.

“Notwithstanding he that is...”⁵⁶ And I have already noted to you before, “...he that is [later] in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”⁵⁷ That is referring to Christ.

⁵⁴ Acts 2:38.

⁵⁵ Matthew 11:8-11.

⁵⁶ Matthew 11:11.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.⁵⁸

Now I want to skip down to verse 18. “For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.”⁵⁹

John was a Nazarite, under the vow of a Nazarite. He ate only locusts and honey. The vow of a Nazarite forbids you to eat anything of a grape, wine, et cetera. He was a Nazarite and John had long hair.

Verse 19. “The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber.”⁶⁰ Jesus Christ did not have long hair and yes, Christ drank wine. “A friend of publicans and sinners.”⁶¹

Now note this phrase. “But wisdom is justified of her children.”⁶²

Now go with me to Luke the seventh chapter for a minute, a couple of verses here in the Gospel of Luke the seventh chapter and I will begin reading in verse 28. And you will recognize this as being the same context which Christ is in Matthew chapter 11.

Verse 28 of Luke chapter seven.

For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. And all [verse 29 now]... And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.⁶³

Now what in the world does it mean that they “justified God”? They were saying that God is right! God is righteous! They submitted to John’s baptism confessing their sins. They were immersed in water, acknowledging that God was right and that what John was preaching was right. So baptism is a public demonstration by which we acknowledge that God is right and we have been wrong. It is the first act of public obedience in the life of a child of God. It is not to be taken lightly.

So the baptism of John the Baptist is a critical, vital issue. Christ was baptized by John the Immerser. All the apostles were baptized by John the Immerser. And all who follow in the teachings and doctrines of the apostles have the same kind of baptism, the same

⁵⁸ Mathew 11:12-15.

⁵⁹ Matthew 11:18.

⁶⁰ Mathew 11:19.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Luke 7:28-29.

kind of baptism that Christ had and the apostles had. That is the reason why it is a critical, vital issue. If we follow the Word of God, we are followers of Jesus Christ and of the apostles and their doctrines and their practices.

May God be pleased to keep us faithful to Him in all things.

Let's pray.

Our heavenly Father, we thank you for your Word. We thank you for the truths that we have in it.