

BC 34 -1 – Enjoy the Richness of Baptism

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: **Jesus gave** us 2 covenant sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both sacraments are signs (memorial) and seals (showing God's ownership of you). **When you receive these sacraments by faith, they nourish your soul.**

Let us now move from the general teachings on the sacraments to the specifics of the sacraments. We will start with the specifics of baptism over 2 weeks.

There are good reasons for taking our time through this: The historical and biblical **doctrine of baptism is under attack**. First, many people take the **sacraments as purely signs**...and nothing more. Second, many **refuse the give these signs of the covenant to their children**, in rejection of God's command. Third, **many have developed a man-ward view of the sacraments instead of a God-ward view**. So let's begin examining the Lord's teaching on baptism in more detail.

Our headings are:

The Significance of Baptism

The Command of Baptism

The Method of Baptism

Our goals are: **That you will learn how much God cherishes you and marks you as his own through Jesus, and that that will move you to love and serve him better.**

The Significance of Baptism

We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is **the end of the law**, has made an end, by the shedding of His blood, of all other sheddings of blood which men could or would make as a propitiation or satisfaction for sin; and that He, **having abolished circumcision**, which was done with blood, has instituted the **sacrament of baptism instead thereof**; by which we are received into the Church of God, and **separated from all other people** and strange religions, that we may wholly **belong to Him** whose mark and ensign we bear; and which serves as a **testimony to us** that He will forever be our gracious God and Father.

1. Circumcision, the first covenant sign, was fulfilled so it was no longer useful.

Circumcision was a temporary covenant sign pointing to the death of Christ, by which the sinner is made clean.

Circumcision was completed when Jesus died on the cross. And **since a covenant must always have a sign**, and since a bloody sign was no longer appropriate, God graciously **replaced covenant circumcision with a non-bloody sign, covenant baptism.**

It is illogical to have a sign for that which is in front of you. **No one looks for his house number when he sees his house?**

2. Baptism is a sign, but baptism was not an arbitrary or insignificant sign that God just

made up.

It was much more than a red ribbon on a suitcase when traveling. Baptism is a sensible sign with special significance. God used water for baptism because it pictured how he made the sinner clean, just like circumcision pictured the baby being made clean.

Baptism reminds you that your sins have been washed away, just as water washes away dirt from the body.

3. Baptism is also a seal.

Baptism shows ownership...you are branded, as it were, with Christ's mark. You are his property.

Baptism shows love. Christ loves you and marks you as his own. A man proves he loves his bride and assures her of his love. He gives her a ring, AND publicly and privately displays his love. The ring on the finger does not make the marriage. It is the regular assurances of love on the heart! Remember Christ's love to Abraham!

Romans 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith...

Baptism binds Jesus to you forever. He does not divorce.

4. Baptism means you are joined to Christ and to each other in the covenant family.

You were in Christ when he died, when he was buried, and when he rose again from the dead.

Romans 6: 3 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. [8] Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All baptized are inexorably united in Christ. BTW, Apostle Paul did not intend to teach of the mode of baptism here, but he wanted to remind Christians they were united with Christ and therefore could not live however they wanted. (Remember, context is king.

This section of Romans teaches about man's salvation.) Because Christ died and rose again from the dead and you were in him, death no long has dominion over you. All baptized believers live for Jesus, serving alongside each other.

Those who carelessly argue that being "buried with Christ" was a symbol of the

method of baptism are ignoring the context. They will have a hard time explaining how we “put on” Christ in baptism, or how the Holy Spirit was “poured out” in baptism. (Gal 3:27 “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have **put on Christ**.” Acts 2: 17 ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That **I will pour out** of My Spirit on all flesh...”)

The truth is, those who were “put under” water usually symbolized destruction in the Bible. Pharaoh and his army were put under water, not Israel. The people of the flood were put under water, not Noah. On the other hand, the Bible teaches Noah’s baptism symbolized our baptism – as rain fell on him. (1Pet 3:20)

Don’t forget this point. **It is hard to imagine God using a picture of judgment and destruction as a symbol of saving and safety!**

5. You are to be baptized because God wants you to be a witness of him.

You publicly state, as Israel when they painted the blood on the door posts in Egypt, that you belong to your faithful Savior.

The Command of Baptism

Therefore **He has commanded all those who are His to be baptized** with pure water, into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, thereby signifying to us, that as water washes away the filth of the body when poured upon it.

1. As a believer, God, who freed you from your sins through his Son, commands you to show your redemption by submitting to baptism.

See how baptism is God-centered! **God demands that you accept the mark he puts on you** – and it is his mark. Jesus instituted (Matthew 28) this and his disciples reiterated this command.

Acts 2: 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and **let every one of you be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins...

In Genesis 17 and Exodus 4 the Lord threatened death to the person who refused to take the sign of the covenant. So baptism was not something to spurn. God was about to kill Moses for not putting the covenant sign on his son.

The believer simply receives baptism, just as he receives the forgiveness of sins.

2. Those who refuse to submit themselves or their children, as you shall see next time, to baptism are therefore in open defiance against the Lord and show a dismissive attitude to what Christ has done on the cross.

Don’t abandon your children and place them under judgment. **Don’t avoid being baptized yourself.**

3. When you submit to Christ’s baptism, you are honoring him – showing the world that you

belong to him and he has promised to take care of you!

The Method of Baptism

...and is seen on the body of the **baptized when sprinkled** upon him, so does the blood of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit internally **sprinkle the soul**, cleanse it from its sins, and regenerate us from children of wrath unto children of God. Not that this is effected by the external water, but by the **sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God**; who is our Red Sea, through which we must pass to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, that is, the devil, and to enter into the spiritual land of Canaan.

1. Baptism is properly done by sprinkling or pouring.

a. You must look at how “baptism” was done in the Bible. If you imagine Sri Lankans eating, you might think of a table with some knife and forks and napkins...but Sri Lankans rarely ever use knives and forks. They eat with their fingers...or with spoons. You may not implant your idea of eating on them. The reason I mention this is because one of the meanings of baptism is to immerse – and therefore many people argue that baptism must be done by immersion. But you must consider the historical biblical context.

b. Ezekiel stated that Christ would sprinkle his church and make her clean.

Ezekiel 36:25 "Then **I will sprinkle clean water** on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

Moses taught about the **sprinkling of sinners and their possessions** to declare them clean.

Leviticus 14:51 "and he shall take the cedar wood, the **hyssop**, the scarlet, and the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird and in the running water, and **sprinkle** the house seven times...

Exodus 29:21 "And you shall take some of **the blood** that is on the altar, and some of the **anointing oil**, and **sprinkle it on Aaron and on his garments**, on his sons and on the garments of his sons with him; and he and his garments shall be hallowed, and his sons and his sons' garments with him.

Leviticus 14:7 "And he shall **sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy**, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.

Exodus 24:8 And Moses took the blood, **sprinkled it on the people**, and said, "This is the **blood of the covenant** which the LORD has made with you according to all these words."

David asked for sprinkling in Psalm 51. **This was the work of the hyssop above**. There was not immersing!

Psalm 51:7 Purge me with **hyssop**, and I shall be clean; **Wash me**, and I shall be whiter than snow.

c. The writer of Hebrews testified that Jesus sprinkled you because animal's blood wasn't enough to clean you!

Hebrews 12: 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the **blood of sprinkling** that speaks better things than that of Abel.

d. How does a fountain work?

Zechariah 13: 1 "In that day **a fountain shall be opened** for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, **for sin and for uncleanness.**

Interesting thought: If you were under the cross you would have been sprinkled with the blood and then water of the cross. (Remember the spear in Jesus' side? So God instituted that we use water. But the meaning is the same.

2. What about immersion, then, isn't immersion a possible translation of the word "baptism?"

Because Jesus came "out of the water" is not proof that he was immersed. (The Jordan can be ankle deep.) You would have to go in to be sprinkled! Those who argue that baptism must be by immersion only would have to prove that baptism by sprinkling and pouring was abolished by God – since sprinkling is clearly taught. But keep in mind the amount of water used in your baptism does not make it more or less effective. **It is the one who works in you and indeed washes away your sins that makes the difference.** So if you were baptized by immersion, don't worry. It is still valid.

3. But look at 2 illogical things from those who oppose sprinkling or pouring.

a. They argue that the sign must be a washing of dirt from the body. But is the person made clean by **dipping into water with their clothes on**? Does anyone wash like that? To keep their argument, the minister would literally have to wash each person with soap.

b. To insist on the large volume of water and immersion, the sign would lose its consistency with what it signifies. How? While the Bible does say the blood of Christ washes away sins from your soul, it isn't a literal washing of the soul; the blood of Christ doesn't literally wash your conscience. So to be consistent, you cannot have a literal washing of the body—like immersion!

Conclusion:

Baptism is significant because it is a sign and a seal of Christ's promise to forgive you your sins and incorporate you into his body. All believers and their children are required to be baptized. Baptism is done by sprinkling or pouring.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

a. Know how precious you are to God that he wants to mark you – mark you outwardly (sign) and inwardly (seal). Take his mark. Love his mark. Thank him for it. Know what the mark signifies.

b. Be a testimony to others of the work of the one who baptized you and forgave you your sins. (This is where doctrines get teeth.) You are clean and others will see you as clean...and you will tell others why you are clean. Never be ashamed to speak of your baptism. The **Israelites had the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts and lintel of their front doors**, not just as evidence their sins were forgiven, **but also as a public testimony**-and what a testimony that was to the Egyptians. **No wonder many of them left with the Jews**. They knew beyond doubt the Jews were the people of God by their testimony...and so others should know about you!

Finally, baptism doesn't save you. It saves no one. But it does show that you belong to Christ and he to you. But if you are not a Christian, you are a child of the Devil...a child of the Devil who will be justly condemned... if you don't look to Christ for pardon. Look to him for pardon!