

Baptism Matters: The Importance & Priority of Baptism

INTRODUCTION

I want to talk to you this morning one of the primary celebrations of the Christian faith...namely, **baptism**. It's one thing to be committed to God in the privacy of your own home and heart and it's another thing to stand before people and say, *"I am now on record. I publicly proclaim myself to be a follower of Jesus Christ, and this is the primary commitment of my life."*

For this morning, I want to explore with you the importance and priority of baptism.

**Baptism matters because it is the _____
of genuine saving faith.**

Please note...

I. The _____ of baptism

The consistent testimony of Scripture is that people who trust in Christ as Savior and Lord get baptized. In fact, please note that it is impossible to obey the Great Commission and neglect baptism. It is an integral part of Jesus' final command to His disciples. Frankly, that's a bit surprising, because Jesus did not emphasize baptism during His earthly ministry. But He puts it right there in the context of making disciples and teaching them to observe His commandments. **That fact alone should convince us that baptism is important.** In the book of Acts alone, please note the following references to believing and getting **baptized**:

- **Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 36-38; 10:44-48; 16:30-34; 18:8; 19:1-5.**

All of these references show that there was a clear pattern on the part of those who responded to the preaching of the gospel in the Book of Acts, namely belief followed by baptism. The apostles were following the pattern that the Lord gave them in the Great Commission: make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to observe all that He commanded them.

At this point, let me make...

A. A _____: baptism is _____

the same as saving faith

In baptism, a person confesses his or her faith in Christ publicly. But saving faith is distinct from baptism, and it is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that saves, not baptism. **Baptism** is not a way to wash away sins. The waters of baptism cannot cleanse a person from their sins. According to the Bible (**1 John 1:7**), only the blood of Jesus can cleanse us of our sin. **Baptism** is not a means of salvation. The act of baptism has no power to achieve a right standing before God. **Baptism** is not necessary for salvation. **The call to salvation is to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.** That means a turning of the heart from trusting ourselves and in our *'best efforts'* to trusting only in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. **It's a turning from independence to dependence.**

Let me put it another way:

**1. Saving faith is our _____
to Christ's sacrifice for our sins.**

Paul summarizes the gospel message (**1 Cor. 15:3-4**), *"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."* Or, as he gives his own testimony (**1 Tim. 1:15**), *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all."* The point is, Christ didn't die to help us have better self-esteem! He didn't die so that we could have happier marriages or more successful careers. He died for our sins. If you take sin out of the picture (as many popular TV preachers do), then Christ didn't have to die. And, you do not have any good news.

The Bible is clear that our sins have alienated us from God. If we die in our sins, we will spend eternity separated from God, paying the just penalty for our sins in conscious torment in hell. But the good news is that Jesus, the eternal Son of God, came to earth to bear the punishment that we deserve. He lived

a perfectly righteous life, so that He had no sin of His own to atone for. **Being fully human, His death could atone for human sins. But He was also fully God, so that His death had infinite value.** As Paul put it (2 Cor. 5:21), *“He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*

2. Baptism is the _____
of the inward reality of saving faith.

B. A _____ reality: baptism is the _____
of saving faith

What does this mean?

1. True faith _____ in obedience.

2. Baptism is a matter of _____
_____ to Christ.

II. The _____ of baptism

A. Baptism matters in your _____
to God

B. Baptism matters to the _____

C. Baptism matters to those _____
the church

D. Baptism matters to _____

The waters of baptism symbolize both tomb and womb. You used to be a person, under the power of sin, under the reign of death. **But now you are an in-Christ person, set free to live a new life.** You are a new person with a new life to live. The waters of baptism symbolize both tomb and womb—a place for the burial of the old self and a place for the birth of the new self.

CONCLUSION

What can we take with us this morning? The most important question from today's message **is**, "*Have you truly repented of your sins and trusted in Christ alone to save you from God's judgment?*" If not, why not?

As we head into 2022, I imagine we are more aware than ever that we don't know what these next months might bring. We may face worldwide challenges and global concerns. We may face changes closer to home that we did not anticipate. We may thrive, or we may struggle. How should we head into the unknown? **It is always a good idea to check our foundations and get back to basics.**

So, what are the foundations we should evaluate? We need to evaluate how we answer four basic foundational questions:

1. Who is _____?

2. What is a _____?

3. What is our _____?

4. What is the _____?