

*Understanding Jesus' Command to Baptize:
The Practice of Baptism in the New Testament*

Acts 2:38–41

January 25, 2015

Sermon Outline

Notes:

I. Introduction:

A. Children's Sermon

1. Review:

Baptism Grammar:

1. **Means of Grace** – The things God uses to give us His gifts
2. **Credobaptism**; Believers Baptism
3. **Paedobaptism** – Infant Baptism
4. **Ordinance** – A Command (Given by Jesus)
5. **Sacrament** – WC, “holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace”
6. **Covenant** – A Relationship Bound Together with Vows
7. **Covenant of Grace** – God's promise to bless His chosen “seed” (Cf. Genesis 17:6–7), fulfilled in the New Covenant

2. God is calling you to baptism; it is a special ceremony that says...

- a. God has shown me I need to turn away from serving myself
- b. God has shown me I need to trust in Jesus to pay for my sins so I can be forgiven
- c. God has given me the Holy Spirit!

B. Review: What is Baptism?

1. ...it is an **Ordinance/Command** (Mt. 28:19)
2. ...it is a literal dipping, etc. in/with **Water**

Key Idea

*Baptism is a **covenant ceremony** that **signifies** all the promises of the New Covenant and seals those promises to all who have been **given** to **trust** Jesus.*

3. ...it is a **Sacrament**... it is a **Covenant Ceremony that Signifies all the Promises of the New Covenant** (Marriage, Union with Christ's body, Bond of Discipleship, Citizenship)

...because baptism is the sign of the new covenant, it signifies *all* of the benefits that God gives to His people under that covenant, all of the fruits we gain when we embrace the gospel of salvation through Christ alone.¹

When God gives the sign of baptism to a person, He gives a promise of all of the benefits that He will bestow on all who believe. Therefore, a person can be baptized and yet never come to faith and never experience all of the benefits that we have enumerated. So classical Reformed theology repudiates the idea of any kind of automatic efficacy of baptism.²

4. ...it is a *synecdoche* (e.g. Mark 16:16
“Whoever believes and is **baptized** will be saved”)

C. How is Our Baptism Used to Bolster Our Faith?

When a person is baptized and comes to faith, if he later worries about the loss of his salvation, he can recall his baptism—not because the baptism guarantees his salvation, but because it reminds him of the unfailing promise of God to preserve all those who are grafted into Christ.³

The Case for Today’s Sermon:

The better we understand Christian Baptism the more God uses it to bolster our faith.

The better we understand the way baptisms were understood when Jesus commanded its’ use as a sign for the New Covenant, the better we will understand Christian Baptism as practiced by the Apostles...

II. How was “Baptism” Practiced in the NT?

A. Washing

Mark 7:4

...and when [the Pharisees] come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they *wash*. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the *washing* of cups and pots...

¹ Sproul, R. C. (2011). *What Is Baptism?* (First edition., Vol. 11, pp. 33–34). Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust.

² Ibid. (p. 7).

³ Ibid. (pp. 7–8).

B. John's Baptism (Cf. Acts 19:2–5)

Luke 3:2b–5

...the word of God came to **John** the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.³ And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.⁴ *As it is written* in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*”⁵ *Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways...*

C. Jesus' Baptism

As the Messiah, Jesus had to submit Himself to the entire law of God. His vocation was not simply to die for the sins of His people, He also had to obey the law perfectly to achieve the righteousness that would be imputed to those people.⁴

John 1:31 (14:6 - Jesus said “I am the way...”)

“...for this purpose I came *baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.*”

D. Jesus' Public Ministry

John 3:25–26 (4:1-2)

²⁵ Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification.²⁶ And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—*look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him.*”

III. Establishment & Practice of Christian Baptism

A. The Establishment of Christian Baptism

Matthew 28:19–20 (Cf. Mark 16:16)

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, *baptizing them* in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

⁴ Ibid. (p. 19).

Having risen from the grave, He had the authority, because of His finished work, to create a **new sign** for the new covenant, and He did just that in commanding baptism. (Bold mine) ⁵

B. The Practice of the Apostles (Read **Acts 2:14–41**)

1. The Sign of Water Baptism

Acts 2:37–39, 41

³⁷ Now when they heard *this* they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “*Brothers, what shall we do?*” ³⁸ And **Peter said to them**, “*Repent and **be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* ³⁹ For **the promise** is *for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.*” ... ⁴¹ So those who received his word **were baptized**, (e.g. Acts 8:36 – The eunuch, “here is water!”) and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

2. The sign points at...

- a. The gift of **Repentance**...
- b. The gift of **Faith** (Trust & Submission to the Name...)
- c. The gift of **Washing/Forgiveness**...
- d. The gift of the **Holy Spirit**...

3. Who are these promises for...

- a. You and your children... (You who rejected God! - Matt. 27:25)
- b. All who are far off...
- c. All who are called... (Elect)
- d. All who receive God’s Word... (Faith)

Key Idea

Behold the promises declared by our Baptism into Jesus Christ, cling to them and be strengthened in them!

⁵ Ibid. (pp. 20–21).