

BAPTISM: JESUS' GREAT SHOW AND TELL IDEA
Matthew 28:18-20

INTRODUCTION:

- A. In the old classic movie, **“Life with Father”**, [based on stories by Clarence Day; starring William Powell and Irene Dunn] dedicated Episcopalian Vinnie discovers that her husband, Clare, has never been baptized. She is horrified and the shock waves spread through the whole family. A few days later the third son is working on his catechism when his little brother asks:
“Why do you have to learn that?”
“Because if I don’t, I’ll go to hell. Father’s going to Hell.”
“He is not!”
“Yes he is, because he isn’t baptized. He’ll go to Hell and burn for a thousand years.”
“He won’t! He won’t!”
“He’ll be in a lake of fire and brimstone and a thousand devils with pitchforks will be poking at him.”
- B. Well, in the end, father finally breaks down and consents, much to his displeasure, to be baptized privately in an adjoining town so his family won’t have to worry about the destiny of his soul. If you asked Clare why he should be baptized, he would respond that it was to get his wife off his back. If you asked Bitty why her husband should be baptized, she would respond that it would keep him out of Hell.
- C. What do you think is the reason to be baptized? Do you have to do it to be saved? Is it imperative for a Christian or is it just a nice idea just for those who want to do it? Is it just for kids or should an adult do it? How did baptism get started? What does it mean?
- D. We’ll get to all that as we boil this down to one question I want to answer this morning: **WHY SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BE BAPTIZED?** As I read my Bible, there are three reasons.

I. BECAUSE BAPTISM IS LOGICAL

- A. For Anyone Who Is **Saved**
1. The witness of the **Book of Acts**
- a. Chronicle:
- (Acts 2:41 NIV) *Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*
- (Acts 8:12 NIV) *But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*
- (Acts 8:36 NIV) *As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" (Acts 8:38 NIV) And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.*
- (Acts 9:18 NIV) *Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized,*
- (Acts 16:15 NIV) *When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.*
- (Acts 16:33 NIV) *At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.*
- (Acts 18:8 NIV) *Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.*

- b. **Conclusion:** In the early church, practically the minute a person accepted Christ as Savior, he was baptized. It appears that to these folks, getting saved and getting baptized were **like white on rice**. Salvation and baptism just went together. There was no argument. There was no delay. They just did it as the logical thing to do.
- c. Now, you need to know that there are some churches that teach that the reason baptism is so prominent in the Book of Acts is because you have to be baptized in order to be saved, just like Clare in "Life with Father." This teaching is called, "**Baptismal regeneration**." These folks teach that you have to believe in Jesus **and** you have to be water baptized if you want to be saved.
- d. Here is one of the verses in the Book of Acts that persuaded them to this doctrine (cf. also: Acts 22:16 "And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.")

Acts 2:38 "Peter replied, "**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.**"

This verse makes it sound as if baptism **is** one of the requirements for salvation. What are we to think?

- 1. **First**, we look at the dominant evidence of the New Testament. [USE "SAVED BY FAITH" OVERHEAD] Repeatedly, the Bible teaches that "forgiveness of sins is based on faith alone (**John 3:16, 36; Acts 16:30**; Romans 4:1-7; 11:6; Gal. 3:8-9; etc.)." (Stanley Toussaint in BKC)
 - 2. Second, we check the grammar:
 - a) "The verb makes a distinction between singular and plural verbs and nouns. The verb 'repent' is plural and so is the pronoun 'your' in the clause so that your sins may be forgiven Therefore the verb 'repent' must go with the purpose of forgiveness of sins. On the other hand the imperative 'be baptized' is singular, setting it off from the rest of the sentence." (Toussaint in BKC)
 - b) **Conclusion:** the clause, "*and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ*" is a **parenthetical comment**.
 - c) Note that the same speaker, Peter, says in Acts 10:43 that forgiveness of sins is based on simply believing in Jesus: "All the prophets testify about him that **everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins** through his name."
 - e. So what we've seen so far is that although water baptism isn't required for salvation, getting baptized seemed very logical to the Christians in the Book of Acts.
2. The argument of **Romans 6** [*supporting the idea that baptism is logical for all who are saved*]
- a. **Romans 6:3**, "*all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*
4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."
 - 1) The Bible talks about two kinds of baptism: water baptism and Spirit baptism.

- 2) You know what water baptism is but you may not understand what Spirit baptism is.
Acts 1:5 *“For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*
I Corinthians 12:13 *For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—*
- 3) I am convinced that Romans 6 is talking about Spirit baptism, with the symbol of water baptism clearly in view. When I prayed and asked Jesus to forgive my sins, God the Holy Spirit placed me, or baptized me, into a vital connection with the death and resurrection of Jesus. In other words, when you say, “Jesus, save my soul!” the Holy Spirit makes the death and resurrection of Jesus **work for you** personally.
 - **Jesus died** to destroy the mastery of sin; by the Holy Spirit’s baptism, **I died with Jesus** to the mastery of sin over me.
 - **Jesus rose** from the dead with a resurrection body that can never die again; by the Holy Spirit’s baptism, **I rose with Jesus** from the deadness of sin to a new life now and forever.
- 4) Holy Spirit baptism isn’t something you can touch or see, but **WOW IS IT EVER REAL!** it means you are really “in Christ”. You are a new creation of God. Your sins are forgiven. You’re saved from the threat of Hell and on your way to Heaven.
- 5) When you understand the reality of Spirit baptism, water baptism makes a lot of **logical sense**. It is the **visible celebration** of an invisible spiritual blessing. Water baptism is the **reenactment of the drama of our salvation**.

B. For Anyone Who Is a **Disciple** (**Matthew 28:18-20**, *Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*)

1. The core command is to “**make disciples.**”
2. What is the meaning of discipleship?
 - a. A disciple is a **learner**, a learner in the sense of being a dedicated **follower** or **imitator**. It means much more than simply the idea of being a student. I have been a student of many different teachers, hundreds in my life. But of only one of those teachers would I say that I have been a disciple and that is Pastor Lowell Wendt, the pastor under whom I interned after graduation from Bible College. I studied him carefully and became an adherent, a follower of his style of preaching, of leadership, of pastoral care. If you know Lowell Wendt well, you will easily recognize his impact in my life as I have consciously patterned much of my ministry after him.
 - b. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ means that you are a learner, a follower, an imitator of Him. Paul was calling people to Christian discipleship when he wrote in **Ephesians 5:1**, *“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children...”*
 - c. Discipleship means that you are so closely identified with God that you begin to look like Him as to His character.
3. How does discipleship connect with the meaning of “baptism”?

- a. Baptism is logically connected to discipleship because **baptism always means identification** (Enns and Ryrie) just as discipleship means identification.
 - When a new Gentile convert to Judaism baptized himself, he was by that act identifying himself with Judaism.
 - When Jews came out to be baptized by John the Baptist, they were identifying themselves with the coming Kingdom of God.
 - When Jesus Himself was baptized by John he was identifying Himself with the kingdom and with righteousness.
 - When people were baptized by Jesus and the Apostles, they were identifying themselves with Jesus.
- b. A Christian disciple is identified with Jesus. Baptism is the outward symbol of that relationship of identification. *It's like the ring I wear on my left hand. I am identified with Merilee as my wife. Twenty-three years ago she slipped a ring onto my finger which I received as the outward symbol of our relationship. Baptism is like wearing the ring.*

II. BECAUSE BAPTISM IS **OBEDIENCE**

- A. Are You Convinced of the **Authority** of **Jesus**?
 1. Just because baptism makes logical sense for a Christian doesn't mean that every Christian will get baptized. A lot of people smoke tobacco who know that it makes logical sense to quit. Knowing doesn't necessarily mean doing. Sometimes we need more than knowing. "All authority"
 2. Have you ever heard of the "**halo effect**"? You see it when I-5 traffic that has been moving at 75 mph suddenly slows to 60. You wonder what happened and just then you see what everyone else saw, a state trooper with a radar gun off the side of the road. Suddenly everyone is driving like little angels: that's it: the "halo effect." You knew the speed limit was 60 but **knowing it** didn't make you **do it**. However you were convinced of the authority of the State Trooper and that made you hit the brakes and watch the dial.
 3. Just as there's authority behind speed limits, there's authority behind baptism. **Matthew 28:19** says that **disciples are to be baptized**. Jesus is the one who said it...and in the verse just before that Jesus said, "*all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.*" (v.18) Jesus wears the biggest badge in the universe and nobody slips by His radar gun.
 4. Are you convinced of the authority of Jesus Christ? If you are, and if you are a Christian who has never been baptized, you **will** get baptized. Now that I've told you about this I've put you in a bind. You will either get baptized or you will have to live with the uncomfortable pricking in your conscience that you are rejecting the authority of Jesus in that area of your life.
 5. But why would a Christian **not** want to be baptized? There are a number of reasons: fear of water, fear of crowds, but I think the main reason is the fear of being humbled.
- B. Are You Willing to Be Humbled?
 1. There **is** a humility in baptism.
 - a. Christian Baptism is humbling because it is a public declaration of **sinner status**.
 - 1) You have broken God's holy laws.
 - 2) You deserve to go to Hell.
 - 3) You are incapable of doing anything on your own to save yourself.
 - 4) God took pity on you and sent Jesus to take your punishment on the Cross.

5) You have turned to Jesus and told Him that you want His gift of forgiveness of your sin.

When you get baptized, you're "**coming out of the closet.**" No more pretending that you're really basically a pretty **good person**. You're confessing that you're basically a pretty **bad person**. Your ace in the hole isn't your goodness, it's the grace of God.

b. Christian baptism is humbling because it forces you into a posture of dependence.

1) When Gentiles converted to Judaism, they baptized themselves. When John the Baptist came along, he created quite a stir because **he** did the baptizing. Jesus and His Disciples did it the same way. **No more do-it-yourself**. For Christian baptism you have to put yourself into someone else's hands. You are lowered into the water and lifted out as if you are helpless. And beside that, it wrecks your hair and your make-up runs, and your clothes stick all funny to you...all in front of other people.

2) The humbling posture of baptism is a lot like kneeling for prayer. In that movie, "**Life with Father**" Clare doesn't kneel in church either. When everybody else slips to their kneel, he sits there bolt upright, a symbol of unmoveable pride. And when his wife urges him to be baptized, he snorts that grown men don't do things like that, it's just for children. When the cab is at the door and Clare realizes that even the children are coming to his baptism, he shouts, "Vinnie, are you mad?! Is it your plan that my own children should witness this indignity?" If pride is what's keeping you from being baptized, let me point out that...

2. Jesus was willing to be humbled in baptism for us.

a. Jesus didn't need to be baptized because He never sinned. And He didn't need to be identified with anybody else because He is Lord of all.

b. John the Baptist knew that, because when Jesus waded into the Jordan River and splashed up to John, John protested, "*I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?*" (**Matthew 3:14**)

c. So why did Jesus submit to a baptism meant for sinners: John's baptism of repentance? Jesus answered that question Himself when He said to John, "*Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.*" (**Matthew 3:15**) Although He wrote the Book, He submitted to the Book. Why should the Son of God be **circumcised**, and why should He have to **obey His parents**, and why should He observe the Passover Feast, and why should He be **baptized**? Because it was the right thing to do in the eyes of God. It was what God required of men. So, as the God-man, Jesus humbled Himself and He did it.

d. Jesus humbled Himself to be baptized in the working out of your and my salvation. His baptism was **one of many humbling mileposts** along the road that led to Calvary. Since He was willing to be humbled in baptism for me, then I should be willing to be humbled in baptism for Him.

III. BECAUSE BAPTISM IS WITNESS

A. At Least One Other Person Has to Know

1. You can't baptize yourself.

- a. Those Gentile converts to Judaism could, but Jesus hasn't left us that option.
 - b. If you try to baptize yourself, you're just going for a swim, or taking a shower, if you prefer the sprinkling method.
 - c. Every instance of New Testament baptism was performed on the subject by a recognized leader of the church.
 - d. This is where the subject of baptism **gets really exciting to me**. Because baptism is **about witnessing**. You can't get baptized without at least one other person knowing that you are a Christian; that you are openly pledging your allegiance to Jesus Christ.
- B. It's an Opportunity for Many Others to Know
- 1. In **Acts 2**, that first church baptism service was performed in the presence of 3,000 people who were getting baptized that day. And who knows how many other people were watching from the sidelines.
 - 2. When Philip baptized the Ethiopian, it was in front of his entire caravan.
 - 3. The Philippian jailer was baptized in front of his whole family. Then they were all baptized, too, by Paul and Silas. (**Acts 16:33**)
 - 4. Many Christians invite to their baptism as many unsaved friends and relatives as they can. It's a wonderful to expose your loved ones to the Gospel message. In fact, this has so impressed Gordon and me lately that we are going to provide invitation cards from now on for people to use to invite others to their baptism.
 - 4. Your baptism provides you with a golden opportunity to do a little personal missionary outreach to the people you care about who don't yet know Jesus.
- C. And You Know!
- 1. Baptism is one of 2 ways to drive a stake of assurance about your salvation.
 - a. The first way is to record your **decision** to accept Christ. I suspect that a lot of the Bibles in this room have dates written in them. Many Christians like to write in the cover of their Bible their spiritual birthday: the date you remember that you prayed to receive Jesus as your Savior.
 - b. The second way is to be **baptized**. Now don't get me wrong. Getting baptized doesn't save you, nor does it make you more saved. Getting saved is a matter of believing in Jesus as your Savior. But when the Devil whispers doubt in your ear, "Are you really a Christian?" you can say to the Devil, "Where have you been? I publicly declared my faith in Jesus on May 12, 1989, and I have witnesses to prove it."

CONCLUSION:

- A. This is an easy sermon to respond to. The application is crayon simple. It won't belong before we will announce a baptism service.
- B. If you're a Christian and you've never been baptized, here's your chance!
- C. If you're **not** a Christian, I invite you to believe in Jesus as your Savior right now and be part of our next group getting baptized.
- D. If you are a baptized Christian, join us at the river on the 17th and share the joy of hearing people tell of their faith in Christ. Having you there will make the celebration even more fun!
- E. Pastor Greg Asimakopoulos was playing a last game a golf with 3 three guys from his California church. He was soon to leave for a new pastorate in Chicago. Marty was in the foursome. He had accepted Christ in church one Sunday morning some years before but for some reason had never been baptized. Greg finishes the story,
 - “As we approached the ninth tee, with a meandering brook and a cascading waterfall, Marty surprised me with a question: ‘Pastor Greg, would you baptize me?’
 - “I thought he was joking and reached for my driver. Marty reached in his golf bag and retrieved the Bible I'd given him the day he became a Christian.

“I’m serious,’ he said. He handed me the Bible. ‘You know I’ve never been baptized. And, well, here’s water. What’s standing in the way?’

“My open mouth widening into a smile; my eyes teared up. I remembered the Ethiopian’s request of Philip in Acts 8 and decided there was a precedent for unorthodox baptisms. We removed our shoes and socks, rolled up our slacks, and stepped into the flowing brook. While our friends looked on, I read aloud the Twenty-third Psalm (somehow ‘green pastures’ and ‘still waters’ seemed appropriate). I quizzed Marty about his faith in Christ. I applauded his boldness....Then I baptized him in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

“I welcomed my brother with a bear hug as he stepped out of the water.

“A circle of four men holding hands and praying God’s blessing on Marty could be seen by the twosome on the green behind us. They smiled their approval, although I’m not sure what they thought was going on.

“A water hazard on the ninth hole had become holy ground.” (“Baptism on the Ninth Hole”, Leadership, p.64-65, Spring 1995)

F. There’s a gravel bar on the edge of the Pilchuck River that is going to become holy ground in a few weeks. Let’s make it a date!

G. Closing comment: As Clare continues to protest going to his baptism appointment, Vinnie explains, “You’ve got to make your peace with God.” Clare responds, “Until you stirred Him up, I had no trouble with God!”

We want you to have the peace of obedience with Christ.

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