

Victoria Ave./Emmanuel Baptist

Sunday, August 30, 2020

Acts 2:22-41: What's so important about Baptism?

Part 1

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." -Mt. 28:18-20

So we have defined Christianity and we have talked about call. We have been asked to "count the cost" of following Jesus. ***So what now?***

Today we are touching on a subject that is incredibly important and somehow with that importance, it can be incredibly controversial.

It is an integral part of the our "Great Commandment" and it is called **BAPTISM!**

To begin, let's go to our Scripture Lesson: Acts 2:22-41:

²² "People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. ²³ But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. ²⁴ But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip. ²⁵ King David said this about him:

'I see that the LORD is always with me.

I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.

***²⁶ No wonder my heart is glad,
and my tongue shouts his praises!***

My body rests in hope.

***²⁷ For you will not leave my soul among the dead
or allow your Holy One to rot in the grave.***

***²⁸ You have shown me the way of life,
and you will fill me with the joy of your presence.'***

²⁹ "Dear brothers, think about this! You can be sure that the patriarch David wasn't referring to himself, for he died and was buried, and his tomb is still here among us. ³⁰ But he was a prophet, and he knew God had promised with an oath that one of David's own descendants would sit on his throne. ³¹ David was looking into the future and speaking of the Messiah's resurrection. He was saying that God would not leave him among the dead or allow his body to rot in the grave.

³² "God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. ³³ Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today. ³⁴ For David himself never ascended into heaven, yet he said,

***'The LORD said to my Lord,
"Sit in the place of honor at my right hand
³⁵ until I humble your enemies,
making them a footstool under your feet.'"***

³⁶ "So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!"

³⁷ Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

³⁸ Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God." ⁴⁰ Then Peter continued preaching for a

long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!"

⁴¹ Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

Our discussion on baptism is going to be a two-parter. This week we are going to look at definition and understanding of what it is and next week we are going to go a bit deeper into the theological significance of baptism. My thanks once again to Peter Bongers and my father David Smith for the research they did on Baptism in their book ***"Joining Jesus – A Manual for New Believers."***

So why do we need to understand baptism? I, of course, am coming at it from a Baptist perspective. It is literally in our name! As much as I am a life-long Baptist and fourth generation Baptist pastor...the basis of my belief is on what we find in scripture. I believe that scripture teaches us that for all those who would commit their lives to Christ and be his true disciples, baptism is necessary and of first importance!

DEFINITION

So what is baptism? First let me qualify that we are discussing what is known as "believer's Baptist." For those who have accepted the Gospel, it is the public declaration of our love, surrender and commitment to Jesus Christ as our Leader and Forgiver.

We need to remember that Jesus submitted to it, he preached it, and he commanded the church to baptize all new believers.

ACT OF OBEDIENCE

A major theme running throughout scripture is the fact that obedience to God is necessary. In many passages talking about loving God you could easily substitute "obedience." We are called to obey.

Last week we talked about the person who is deciding on answering the call to discipleship and becoming a believer. Most people making major life decisions want to make the best decision they can, and they want to give their all to that decision. When a person accepts Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, it is

expected that they will affirm and “own” that lifelong commitment by being baptized. Right from the start baptism has been identified with the Christian faith and community.

When an individual submits to baptism, they are submitting, in obedience, to God’s revealed will. I started with the Great Commission – “**...go and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...**” Baptism is plainly set out as the first order of business in making disciples. Logically, if baptism is optional or unimportant, why would it be commanded by Jesus? Some might argue that this is a small issue...but to disobey, even that which you might see as insignificant, is still disobeying the revealed will of God!

Our scripture lesson today centered on Peter’s sermon after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost. When Peter preached his powerful, Spirit guided sermon...the people responded! We are told the truth of who Jesus is pierced their hearts and they cried out for the next step they needed to take. Peter’s response was:

“Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:38).

Once again, it is pretty hard to justify not obey such a command: ***“Repent and be baptized...each of you!”*** The response to the call to discipleship is still the same today. The new believer must respond and obey.

Baptism, in the time of the early church right up to 2020, is an incredibly wonderful and powerful act of all those who would be true disciples. For those of you who have been baptized, think of your response and the response of others. Baptism is a simple, yet powerful testimony to the world around us. I always encourage those getting baptized to invite friends and family to come and join them on the day of their baptism. It is a simple way to open up a dialogue of the “what’s” and the “why’s” of following Jesus.

Over and over in scripture we see this response to the Gospel message. Philip and the Ethiopian, Peter and Cornelius, Paul...baptism as a public indication of belief, the sure sign of acceptance of the Gospel message.

ORDAINED BY JESUS

The most powerful argument for baptism comes from the example of Jesus, himself!

The last great Old Testament prophet, John the Baptist, was preparing Israel for the arrival of their long expect, long awaited Messiah. Baptism was not unusual for Jewish people. Many homes in Israel has cisterns of water that were deep enough for a person to walk in and be fully covered. This was to allow for a ceremonial cleansing before a person entered their house.

John the Baptist was calling the people to confess and repent so they would be ready for the Messiah. He baptized many to show that they had repented. Then Jesus shows up...

¹³ Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?"

¹⁵ But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires" So John agreed to baptize him.

Jesus was the Messiah. The people were being baptized to prepare themselves for his arrival. He is sinless. He is the Son of God. He did not need to be baptized. Yet he did it to "carry out all that God requires." Once again it seems pretty straight forward how important baptism is. This is not a human-created ritual but rather a God-mandated practice. It is why we call it an "ordinance." Jesus "ordained" or "proclaimed" for it to be done.

The prophet of God proclaimed its necessity. The Son of God responded to the proclamation of God and modelled perfect obedience to the Father's will. He had no need of it spiritually but was eager to please the Father!

¹⁶ After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened^[a] and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." (Mt. 3:16-17).

TODAY

The call to obedience for the believer is still the same..." Believe and be baptized." Our love for our Heavenly Father and our gratitude for Jesus, the Son, means that we are obedient. Through our obedience we please the Father, show our love and willingness to follow. Should we not desire to please God?

Baptism is not ritual. It is not insignificant. It is a heartfelt step for the disciple of Jesus to take. It is a public profession, not only of faith, but the willingness to be obedient.

If you have felt God's calling on your life to follow him. I encourage you to come and talk to me and let's prepare you for that next step...baptism.

If you have been a believer for some time and for whatever reason you have not been baptized, I encourage you to come and talk to me about baptism and how it can be a step of obedience for you to "carry out all that God requires" and be a powerful witness to all around you.

As the Ethiopian responded to Philip, I ask you..." Look, here is water, what prevents you from being baptized?"

Let's pray...