

Sermon Notes

Title: Baptism: A Key Step in Discipleship

Theme: Baptism does not save, but it is God's commanded first step of obedience and public identification with Christ—carried out under the authority of the local church.

Primary Texts: Luke 3:21–22; Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 2:41; John 3:5–6; 1 Corinthians 1:17

1) Why Baptism Matters

A. Baptism is a significant step for every believer

- Not uncommon, but often misunderstood or delayed
- Part of discipleship: a believer should be guided to obedience

B. Jesus Himself was baptized (Luke 3:21–22)

- Before public ministry, Christ submitted to baptism
- Not because He needed salvation
- But to “fulfill all righteousness” and picture His mission:
 - **Death**
 - **Burial**
 - **Resurrection**

Teaching point: If Christ set the example, His followers should not treat baptism lightly.

2) Is Baptism Required for Heaven?

A. Not required to go to heaven

- Salvation is by repentance and faith in Christ alone

B. But baptism is required for obedience

- God doesn't want excuses; He wants obedience
- Basic discipleship order emphasized:
 1. **Salvation**
 2. **Baptism**
 3. **Church membership**

Line of emphasis: “Show me from the Bible” — the speaker stresses confidence in this sequence as biblical.

3) The Great Commission Includes Baptism (Matthew 28:18–20)

A. Christ’s authority is the foundation

- “All power... in heaven and earth”
- Authority belongs to Jesus; He delegates it

B. Disciple-making pattern

1. **Evangelize** (“teach all nations” / make disciples)
2. **Baptize**
3. **Teach them to observe**

C. Ongoing mission

- Not limited to the original disciples (they are dead)
- Continues through the living churches Christ established

Key idea: Baptism is not an optional add-on; it is built into the commission.

4) Baptism Is Not Salvation

A. Clear warning against baptismal regeneration

- Some teach you must be baptized to be saved (rejected as unbiblical)
- Baptism is a **picture** of salvation, not the cause of salvation

B. Helpful illustrations

- Water doesn’t save; otherwise “salvation goes down the drain”
- Baptism is like a picture of a person:
 - real salvation = the reality
 - baptism = the visible picture

C. The thief on the cross

- Not baptized, not a church member
- Why did he go to heaven?
 - “Because the Man in the middle said I could.”

Gospel summary: repentance + faith in Jesus, based on His authority and promise.

5) What Baptism Does Mean

A. Identification with Christ

- Public declaration: Jesus is my Savior and my Lord
- Baptism signifies:
 - crucified with Christ
 - buried with Him
 - raised to walk in newness of life

B. Reinforces gospel clarity and assurance

- When someone understands baptism, they face the question honestly:
 - “Am I truly saved before I identify publicly?”

C. Clarifying the Holy Spirit

- The Spirit indwells at salvation, not at baptism
 - Salvation is sealed by God’s work, not ours
 - Security emphasized: salvation cannot be lost because God perfects/seals the believer
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6) Timing: Should Baptism Be Immediate?

A. Biblical pattern leans immediate (Acts 2:41)

- “Same day” baptisms after receiving the Word
- The speaker’s preference: don’t delay unnecessarily

B. Why delays happen (practical realities)

- Some churches schedule baptisms infrequently
- Sometimes people don’t understand urgency/meaning
- Some churches require long classes

Pastoral approach emphasized:

You don't need weeks to understand enough to obey—teach the essentials and proceed.

7) Common Questions and Corrections

A. Is infant sprinkling “good enough”?

- Rejected: no biblical example of infant baptism
- Babies can't repent or believe
- Sprinkling cannot picture death/burial/resurrection

Punchline: If a person isn't saved, all they did was “get wet.”

B. What about baptism before salvation?

- If someone was baptized before truly saved:
 - once saved, they should be baptized scripturally
- The speaker shares personal testimony of this scenario

C. John 3:5—“born of water and Spirit”

- Not teaching baptismal salvation
- Interpreted as:
 - physical birth (“flesh”)
 - spiritual birth (“Spirit”)

Reasoning: If baptism saved, salvation would be by works—contradicting grace.

D. 1 Corinthians 1:17

- Paul: “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel”
 - Gospel and baptism are not the same thing
 - Baptism follows the gospel—it does not replace it
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8) Authority to Baptize: Who and Where?

A. Authority originates with Christ and is delegated to the church

- Matthew 28: Jesus has authority → sends His church to act

B. Does it have to be the pastor?

- Not necessarily
- Could be another church-approved leader (e.g., youth pastor)
- Key is not the individual's status but **church authorization**

C. Missions-trip dilemma (practical tension)

- If someone is saved on the field and wants immediate baptism:
 - don't "freelance" authority
 - church should be informed/authorize/recognize the action
 - if no local church exists, seek missionary help or work toward starting one

Core principle repeated:

Church authority is not "one-person show" or "two-person show"—it's the whole church acting.

9) Closing Challenge

- God expects obedience after salvation
- Refusing baptism is framed as disobedience and rejection
- Discipleship requires both:
 - someone willing to be discipled
 - someone willing to disciple

Prayer emphasis: wisdom on hard questions; courage to obey Scripture without violating it.