

# Understanding Jesus' Command to Baptize:

## What is a Covenant Ceremony?

Genesis 15:13–21

January 18, 2015

Sermon Outline

Notes:

### I. Introduction:

- A. What I Hope to Gain from this Study? Clarity, Humility and Charity
  1. Taking our discipleship seriously

#### Core Conviction:

*We should obey every command Jesus gave us deliberately. (With understanding)*

Christians who take their faith seriously also take baptism seriously, and they want to get it right. They care enough about baptism to debate areas of uncertainty.<sup>1</sup>

### 2. Baptism is necessary for Christians

...baptism is not necessary for salvation. However, if you were to ask me, "Is baptism necessary for the Christian?" I would say, "Absolutely." It is not necessary **for salvation**, but it is necessary **for obedience**, because Christ, with no ambiguity, commanded that all of those who belong to Him, who are part of the new covenant family, and who receive the benefits of His salvation are to be baptized in the Trinitarian formula.<sup>2</sup> (emphasis mine)

### B. Children's Sermon

#### 1. Review:

#### Baptism Grammar:

1. **Baptism** – To dip or immerse in water/wash
2. **Means of Grace/Mediated** – The way God gives us His gifts
3. **Credobaptism; Believers Baptism** – Believers only Baptism
4. **Paedobaptism** – Infant Baptism
5. **Ordinance** – A Command (Given by Jesus)
6. **Sacrament** – WC, "holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace"
7. **Covenant** – A Relationship Bound Together with Vows
8. **Covenant of Grace** – God's promise to bless His chosen "seed" (Cf. Genesis 17:6–7), fulfilled in the New Covenant

<sup>1</sup> Sproul, R. C. (2011). *What Is Baptism?* (First edition., Vol. 11, p. 3). Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. (p. 21).

## 2. What is an Oath?

**The Hippocratic Oath**, (which is taken by Doctors)

**The Oath of Office**, which is taken by the President of the United States: “*I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.*”

**The oath to testify in court.** “Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God?”

**Can you think of any others:** (Wedding Vows)

### C. Review: What is Baptism?

1. ...it is an **Ordinance/Command** (Mt. 28:19)
2. ...it is a literal dipping, etc. in/with **Water**
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)
4. ...it is a **synecdoche** (e.g. Mark 16:16 “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved”)

## II. What is a Covenant Ceremony? How Does it Work? What Purpose do they Serve?

### A. God Swears an Oath to Abram

#### Genesis 15:6–9

<sup>6</sup> And [Abram] believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness. <sup>7</sup> And he said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” <sup>8</sup> But he said, “O Lord God, ***how am I to know that I shall possess it?***” <sup>9</sup> He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ...

### B. Circumcision

#### Genesis 17:4–14

<sup>4</sup> “Behold, ***my covenant*** is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ... <sup>7</sup> And ***I will establish my covenant*** between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, ***to be God to you*** and to your

offspring after you. <sup>8</sup> And I will give to you and to your offspring (seed) after you... all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and ***I will be their God.***”

<sup>9</sup> And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. <sup>10</sup> ***This is my covenant, which you shall keep,*** between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and ***it shall be a sign of the covenant*** between me and you. <sup>12</sup> He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring... <sup>14</sup> Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; ***he has broken my covenant.***”

### C. The Word, Faith & the Holy Spirit

...first, the Lord teaches and instructs us by his Word. Secondly, he confirms it by the sacraments. Finally, he illumines our minds by the light of his Holy Spirit and opens our hearts for the Word and sacraments to enter in, which would otherwise only strike our ears and appear before our eyes, but not at all affect us within.<sup>3</sup>

### **Romans 4:7–12**

<sup>7</sup> “*Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;* <sup>8</sup> *blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.*”

<sup>9</sup> Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that ***faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.*** <sup>10</sup> How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. <sup>11</sup> ***He received the sign of circumcision***

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<sup>3</sup> Calvin, J. (2011). *Institutes of the Christian Religion & 2*. (F. L. Battles, Trans., J. T. McNeill, Ed.) (Vol. 1, p. 1284). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was . . . ,<sup>12</sup> and to make him **the father of the circumcised** who are *not merely circumcised* but *who also walk in the footsteps of the faith* that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

### **John 6:44–45**

<sup>44</sup> No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

<sup>45</sup> It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—

## **III. Things to Take Away from Today’s Sermon**

### **A. Clarity**

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.<sup>4</sup>

Both these signs [Baptism & Circumcision] have to do with the benefits of salvation that God brings to pass in the lives of those who believe. Both circumcision and baptism signify God’s promises. And in both cases, it is God who institutes the sign.<sup>5</sup>

### **B. Charity**

God does not promise any of the benefits of salvation to unbelievers. The promise is only to those who believe, and the promise is absolutely sure for them. Therefore, baptism is infinitely valuable.<sup>6</sup>

### **Key Idea**

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

<sup>4</sup> **Sproul, R. C.** (2011). *What Is Baptism?* (First edition., Vol. 11, pp. 7–8). Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* (30–31).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* (p. 8).