

We have gathered this morning to witness the most important public event that any person can ever experience—more important than graduation from High School or College, and even more important than exchanging vows on our wedding day—for in baptism a person exchanges public vows with God Himself—in baptism Christ vows to take us as His bride and we vow to take Him as our Head—in baptism God makes promises to us and in baptism we make promises to God, as Pastor Sam Waldron says—“...baptism is a covenantal transaction or ceremony between God and the individual...”

- I. The Meaning of Baptism
- II. The Recipients of Baptism
- III. The Importance of Baptism

I. The Meaning of Baptism

1. In order to simplify things I want to state at the outset that baptism signifies our union with Christ—it pictures us being put into Christ...
2. Thus twice we find the phrase—“baptized into Christ”—that is—we were placed in union with Christ or made one with Christ...
3. This is what baptism signifies—it symbolizes our identification with Christ—that we have union with Him through or by faith...
4. This can be illustrated from 1Cor.10:2 where the Israelites were said to be—“baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea...”
5. This has reference to when Moses led the Israelites through the Red Sea—they were baptized into Moses in that they associated or identified themselves with him...
6. They in a sense made themselves one with him—they followed him as their leader and guide through the water and wilderness...
7. Thus four times we find this phrase within the book of Acts—“baptized in [or into] the name of the Lord Jesus...”
8. Baptism symbolized our identification or union with Christ—we have been put into Christ by or through faith...
9. But to be more specific I want to suggest that baptism signifies three things because of our union with Christ...
10. Notice [1] forgiveness of sin—baptism symbolizes that when we come out of the water our sins have been washed away...
11. Thus Ananias told the apostle Paul—“Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord...”
12. He was to be baptized that his sins would be “washed away” as the washing of water symbolized the washing or cleansing of his record...
13. It is for this reason that baptism is elsewhere associated with the confession of sin—for in baptism we are confessing our need of forgiveness...
14. Mk.1:4-5—“John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. 5 Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins...”
15. Notice two phrases—[a] “a baptism of repentance...”—in other words—baptism is a testimony or profession of repentance...
16. Thus we read in v5—“then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins...”
17. This does not mean that they verbally confessed their sins as they were baptized—but the very act of baptism was itself a confession of their sins...
18. Within baptism we are publicly acknowledging our need for forgiveness—and we are confessing that nothing but the blood of Christ is able to secure forgiveness...

19. Notice [b] “for the remission of sins...”—the term “remission” literally means—“to release”—it refers to the remission or removal of a debt...
20. The Scripture likens sin to a debt—a debt that demands payment—and the payment it demands is punishment...
21. Someone must bear our sins if we are to be released from them, Heb.9:22—“without shedding of blood there is no remission...”
22. There is no release from sin without the shedding of blood—or the payment for those sins by way of suffering unto death...
23. Notice [2] newness of life—baptism signifies that when we come out of the water the old man [with his old ways] is dead and a new man has replaced him...
24. Wayne Grudem—“When the candidate for baptism goes down into the water it is a picture of going down into the grave and being buried. Coming up out of the water is then a picture of being raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. Baptism thus very clearly pictures death to one’s old way of life and rising to a new kind of life in Christ...”
25. Rom.6:1-4—“what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life...”
26. The general purpose of this passage [and indeed the entire chapter] is to address the implied question of v1 —“what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound...”
27. Having opened up the subject of grace in the previous chapters [and especially the latter part of ch.5]—the apostle anticipates this question...
28. His answer is very simple—“Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it...”—Paul here introduces the great fact that the gospel not only saves us from the penalty of sin but also its power and mastery...
29. To stress the impossibility of continuing in sin the apostle Paul reminds the Roman Christians of their water baptism...
30. Notice v4—“we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead...even so we also should walk in newness of life...”
31. How can you continue in sin—how can you continue to life in a manner similar to the way you once did—how can you continue in a life characterized by sin and lawlessness...
32. Do you not know—that in your baptism—you were buried with Christ in His death—the old man was put to death—he was crucified with Christ...
33. Now strictly speaking—this took place before their baptism in their conversion—but because it was symbolized in their baptism he points them back to this historical act...
34. Thus baptism symbolizes the death of the old man and newness of life in Christ—that old things have passed away and all things have become new...
35. Oh my friends—as we have gathered this morning—we have done so as witnesses—witnesses to the profession of four people...
36. For in baptism the person baptized in making a profession—they are professing in the words of Gal.2:20 —“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...”
37. Notice [3] membership in the body—baptism signifies that when we come out of that water we have a new family as found in the church...
38. 1Cor.12:13—“for by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit...”
39. Thus a baptized person who refuses to associate with a local church is no Christian—he is only a person who’s been immersed in water...
40. When a person is truly baptized they are always baptized into the body—into the church—and that necessarily means a church—a local church...
41. When we read through our New Testaments we find the church is described as a gathering of people, governed by officers, for the purpose of worship...

42. There are those who claim to be apart of the church in general—but fail to associate or submit to a church in particular...
43. But the only church the NT knows is a local church—a place where we can love one another and bear each others burdens...
44. Baptism is into the church—it is the door into the local church—which is the only expression of the universal church on earth...
45. This is implied in Matt.28:19-20—“go and make disciples...baptizing them...[and] teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...”
46. Notice the order—[a] we are to be converted [made a disciple], [b] baptized, and then [c] taught all things [which necessarily implies the context of a local church]...
47. Nobody is ever made a disciple, baptized, and then left to themselves to be taught—but Christ has instituted one place as the context within which discipling takes place—the local church...
48. Thus it is nothing less then unnatural for a man to profess his allegiance to Christ through baptism and not be attached to His body...
49. Can a man take Christ and refuse His body—can we sever the Head from the body—no—baptism is into Christ and this necessarily includes being baptized into His body...
50. My friend—let me put it as plain as I can—what you think of the church is what you think of Christ and no more...

II. The Recipients of Baptism

1. Here I want to answer the question—who should be baptized—who are the proper recipients or subjects of baptism...
2. And in a sense, this was already answered in explaining the meaning of baptism—if baptism depicts our union with Christ then only those who are in union with Christ should be baptized...
3. If baptism signifies the forgiveness of sin, the newness of life, and membership into the church—then only those who have forgiveness, newness of life, and are members of the church should be baptized...
4. Thus our Savior says—“he who believes and is baptized will be saved...”—that is—only those who believe should be baptized...
5. 1689—“Those who do actually profess repentance towards God, faith in and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ, are the only proper subjects of this ordinance...”
6. But to be specific I want to suggest three things about this faith that is necessary for a person to be baptized...
7. Notice [1] it is a penitent faith—this is to say—it is a faith accompanied by repentance—a penitent or repentant faith...
8. Repentance can best be defined as—“agreement with God”—we agree with God concerning His assessment of us as a sinner...
9. Acts 2:38—“then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ...”
10. Here Peter says nothing of believing only repenting—the reason being—wherever the one exists the other is implied...
11. The faith that saves is never divorced from repentance—while we are saved by or through faith—it is a faith accompanied with repentance...
12. Notice [2] it is faith in the gospel, v15—“and He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized with be saved...”
13. Notice it is belief in the gospel—not belief in general—but belief in the gospel—in the person and work of Christ...
14. The word “gospel” literally means “good tidings”—it refers to the message or news of God about His Son...
15. The faith that our Savior refers to is a faith in the gospel—a faith that has Christ as its primary center or focal point...
16. Thus we read throughout the NT such phrases as Gal.2:16—“being justified by faith in Christ and not by works...”

17. It's not merely faith about Christ—but faith in Christ—that is—it entails a personal trust in Christ as our only hope...
18. It necessarily implies an understanding of God, sin, and salvation—for no person can ever put their trust in what they don't know or understand...
19. Shorter Catechism—Q. What faith in Jesus Christ? A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel..."
20. Nobody ever savingly trusted Christ without having some understanding of how He is offered to us in the gospel...
21. My friends—this necessarily implies knowledge of the gospel—the truth about God, sin, Christ, and salvation...
22. Notice [3] it is a faith that works, v16—"he who believes and is baptized will be saved..."—we are saved by faith as expressed in baptism...
23. Jas.2:17—"faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead..."—that is—true faith gives rise to works here represented by baptism...
24. True and saving faith sets the soul a moving—it energizes us to take a public stand for Christ—to shine as lights in the midst of darkness...
25. Throughout the NT baptism is spoken of as a confession, thus Timothy—"confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses (1Tim.6:12)..."
26. For we have to keep in mind the historical setting of NT Scripture—baptism was often accompanied by the rejection of our family and friends...
27. To align yourself with Christ through baptism was to invite the mistreatment and persecution of an antagonistic world...
28. Baptism is a radical act—you are publicly aligning yourself to Christ and His people—you are turning your back on the world...
29. True and saving faith energizes the soul to take sides with Christ—to be openly identified with Christ and His people regardless of the consequences...
30. Mk.8:38—"for whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels..."
31. Barns—"Faith and baptism are the beginnings of a Christian life: the one the beginning of piety in the soul, the other of its manifestation before men or of a profession, of religion. Every man endangers his eternal interest by being ashamed of Christ before men..."
32. Thus true faith enables a man to do or perform radical and daring deeds—it enables a man to stand before the world and own Christ as His own...
33. Come what may—Christ is mine and I am His—regardless if my mother, father, wife, or husband should leave me—I am His...
34. CHS—"...I felt as if Heaven, and earth, and hell, might all gaze upon me, for I was not ashamed, there and then, to own myself a follower of the Lamb..."
35. Let me put it this way—Christ has no cowards in His army—read through the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, where again we read—by faith, by faith, by faith...
36. Heb.11:33—"by faith [they] subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword...became valiant in battle, turned foreign armies to flight..."
37. What can bring a natively timid and cowardly sinner to the waters of baptism, but faith—faith in a powerful and gracious God...

III. The Importance of Baptism

1. Here I want to briefly address the importance of baptism—"he who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned..."
2. There have been two very dangerous errors with regards to baptism—[1] that it saves us, and [2] that it is useless or meaningless...
3. Notice [1] that it saves us—you can image why someone would attempt to teach this from this text—"he who believes and is baptized will be saved..."

4. Here our Savior seems to teach that a person can only be saved if he believes in the gospel and is baptized in water...
5. But I want you to notice carefully that our Savior continues—"but he who does not believe will be condemned..."
6. Notice the one thing that will condemn or damn a person is failure to believe—it is not failure to be baptized—but failure to believe...
7. Thus we read throughout Scripture that we are saved by faith and not works, Eph.2:8—"for by grace you have been saved, through faith..."
8. Furthermore—if you remember the thief on the cross was saved by believing and went to paradise without baptism...
9. But if baptism doesn't save you then why does Christ say—"he who believes and is baptized will be saved..."
10. Well—let me answer it like this—baptism is the outer confession of an inward reality—it publicly professes what we inwardly possess...
11. Let me illustrate—I met a young lady in 1996—by 1997 I loved her and wanted to publicize my love in marriage...
12. Thus on May 15 1998 I married my wife—I publicly and openly confessed that I loved her and was committed to her...
13. Now my love for her didn't begin on my wedding day—it was publicly and openly declared—it was tangibly affirmed through the marriage ceremony and covenant...
14. This is similar to water baptism—my love for Christ didn't begin with my baptism—but it was openly and publicly made known...
15. Now listen carefully—what if I told my wife that I loved her but was unwilling to marry her—did I really love her...
16. Thus our Savior simply assumes that a person who truly believes will be baptized—a person who really loves him will declare it publicly in baptism...
17. Notice [2] that it's meaningless—this is obviously the greater error of our day—a day that in many ways despises baptism...
18. My dear friends listen to me carefully—if you have never been baptized you have no reason to assume you believe—and our Savior says very plainly—"he who does not believe will be condemned..."
19. Who are we to pick and choose the commandments of Christ—baptism is a command along side every other command of Christ...
20. Do we have the right to determine baptism is any less important than Christ Himself says—does our text treat baptism as an option?...
21. Sam Waldron—"While baptism does not save, it does formalize salvation in a covenantal ceremony or transaction between God and the party baptized. It is the body of which faith is the soul. We dare not adopt, therefore, the idea that it is unimportant..."
22. But I would be amiss if I merely pointed you to the waters of baptism and not to Him whose salvation is merely portrayed in baptism...
23. We are all attempted to deal with our sins in some way—some of us are ignoring them, others have redefined them...
24. But the bottom line is the same in every case—we need to be saved from them—and we have heard this morning of the only possible means given to man whereby he can be saved...
25. Mk.16:15-16—"and He said to them, God into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned..."