

**Sunday, October 30, 2022 | Upon This Rock**

**Matthew 28:19 | "Church Ordinances: Baptism"**

*Upon This Rock* is a study designed to help the believer answer two questions: "what is the church" and "what is its purpose." How a person answers those questions will significantly impact their life. And we began to answer those questions by looking at the church's origins in Matthew 16. There we learned that Peter, like all true believers, is the substance of the church. The church is not a building but a people who confess that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. But we also discovered that even though when we are at our best, we can be the foundation of the church, we become a stumbling block when we're at our worst. This is precisely what happened to Peter. He misunderstood Jesus' mission and tried to stand in the Messiah's way. Therefore, to avoid making the same mistakes that Peter made, we must understand that to follow Jesus—i.e., to be the church—we must deny what we want and devote ourselves to Jesus' suffering.

Two weeks ago, we unpacked the church's objective from Matthew 28. Often called "the great commission," our prerogative is to be disciples making disciples of all nations. Our mission in life is global, not just local. And that purpose not only stands on the principle that Jesus has all authority; it also has a few methods which assist us in our endeavors. And those methods are baptizing in the name (singular) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teaching new disciples to obey all the commands of Jesus. And while all who profess the name of Jesus can rest assured that the Lord, at that moment of salvation, takes up residence in their heart, the great commission, nevertheless, ends with a promise that those who obey and make disciples will have the presence of Jesus all the days of their life. Only the believer actively trying to make disciples will genuinely understand what Jesus' never-ending presence actually means.

Last week, we started to unpack the ordinances of the church. And the first of the two ordinances we discussed was communion, also referred to as the Lord's Supper and the Eucharist. And communion is a beautiful way that we, as believers, remember what Jesus did for us on Calvary. While not the literal representation of Jesus' body, the bread is a symbolic object that recalls how Jesus was broken for us. Likewise, while not the literal representation of Jesus' blood, the wine is still symbolic of how Jesus' life force was poured out for us.

Furthermore, communion is not only designed to help us recall some past event, but it is also a way that we anticipate the Lord's return, where he'll gather all believers from every age to attend a feast where there'll be no chair left empty. However, it is essential that when we take communion, it is not some simple ritualistic exercise that has no real-world impact; far from it. The Lord's Supper helps us remember Jesus, for sure, but it ought to remind us to serve one another as well.

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Today, we'll be unpacking the other ordinance of the church, baptism. And, like communion, baptism can be a divisive topic depending on a person's religious upbringing. Answers to questions like, "Why do we perform baptism?" or "What does baptism represent?" can vary if an individual was raised catholic, protestant, or reformed. Even the "how" of baptism (i.e., immersion or sprinkling) can be a point of significant debate in our world today. Thus, rather than appeal to some tradition or academic, this message will stick closely to the Scriptures to discover precisely what the Bible says about the topic of baptism. In this way, we'll not divide ourselves into some theological camp, but we will base the practice of baptism on the unbiased foundation of God's word.

**READ:** Matthew 28:19 (ESV)

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

There are three questions we need to answer:

**i. What is baptism? An outward show of an inward change (cf. Lu. 3:7-14).**

**READ:** Luke 3:7-14 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> He [John the Baptist] said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" <sup>8</sup> Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. <sup>9</sup> Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

<sup>10</sup> And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" <sup>11</sup> And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." <sup>12</sup> Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" <sup>13</sup> And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." <sup>14</sup> Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

First, it's important to note that the English term "baptism" is a transliteration of the Greek word βαπτίζω (*bap-tid'-zo*), and it refers to immersing or submerging something. When used in the Scriptures, it almost always refers to the ceremonial practice of plunging someone beneath

some body of water.<sup>1</sup> When used outside a religious context, the term βαπτίζω, and its root βάπτω (*bap'-to*), actually referred to any number of practices from explaining how a ship had been sunk at sea to how a piece of cloth was dyed a new color to the pickling of vegetables to preserve them. The characteristic thread tying all these practices together is that the thing or person being baptized was submerged.

Secondly, it needs to be pointed out that baptism does not save you. Only faith in Jesus' finished work will save you. A baptism without a belief in Jesus is just a bath and a sad one at that. Baptism is a symbol of something that's occurred inside the heart. It represents a changed life. It illustrates how one's allegiance has shifted from one team to another. This is why it's important to distinguish between John's baptism and Jesus' baptism. Both baptisms are indeed similar in that they both refer to the practice of dunking someone and is an outward sign of an inward change; however, where they are distinct is that John's baptism was in anticipation of what Jesus would do and Jesus' baptism (the one we practice today) is in recognition of what Jesus has already done. This means that those who view baptism as a way to repent (i.e., works) would need to be baptized again "in the name of the Lord Jesus" as a show that they have placed their faith in the finished work of the Messiah and nothing else (cf. Ac. 19:1-7).

**EXAMPLE:** Orioles memorabilia.

**ii. Who can be baptized? Professing believers (cf. Ac. 16:25-34).**

**READ:** Acts 16:25-34 (ESV)

<sup>25</sup> About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, <sup>26</sup> and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. <sup>27</sup> When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup> But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." <sup>29</sup> And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup> Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" <sup>31</sup> And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." <sup>32</sup> And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. <sup>33</sup> And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. <sup>34</sup> Then he brought

<sup>1</sup>

Possible exceptions to this include Mark 7:4 and Luke 11:38.

them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

There is not a single recorded instance of infant baptism in the Scriptures. Even before baptism became a church ordinance, it always involved discerning, cognizant, aware, and professing followers of God. An infant cannot express whether or not they believe and/or commit themselves to follow God. They simply do not have the capacity to do so. This is why only when a person is old enough to understand and interpret baptism should they be allowed to be baptized and, even then, only after they've made a profession of faith. Admittance into God's family is not by the merits of one's birth but a gift that is given by faith at the moment of salvation. Essentially, a person has to be, in a manner of speaking, born a second time to be considered a part of the Kingdom of God (cf. Jn. 3:3).

To go back to my illustration of Orioles memorabilia, it is only when a child professes that "this is my team" on their own—i.e., of their own volition—can a parent know that they are genuinely a fan of that team. A dad may take a child to watch a particular team play, and he may even buy his kid a shirt that shows support for a specific team. Still, until that child takes it upon themselves to identify with that team, the child is, at best, paying lip service and has no genuine faith in that team.

### **iii. Why should a believer get baptized?**

#### **a. To obey Christ's command (cf. Matt. 28:19).**

Why should we do anything? Because Christ has commanded us to do it. Setting aside all the reasons why a person should get baptized, the most persuasive is that we ought to obey. Just as a child obeys without always understanding why, we, too, ought to obey the commands in Scripture even if we don't fully comprehend the reasoning behind its importance. In fact, the punishment promised to us if we refuse to proclaim our faith before others is that Jesus will refuse to claim us before his heavenly Father (cf. Mat. 10:32-33).

#### **b. To internalize Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (cf. Rom. 6:1-11).**

**READ:** Romans 6:1-11 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup>What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup>By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup>Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

In baptism, we own our new spiritual state in Christ. Just as Jesus died, we, too, have died and been buried. The power of sin has no sway, dominion, or rule in our life. And just as Jesus rose from the grave, we, too, are alive in Christ. We experience a new reality where we live a life free from the guilt of the past and free to be as God designed us to be. Admittedly, these are things we experience spiritually; we'll still fail from time to time. No one is perfect. But this does not detract from the fact that baptism is still a foretaste of what's to come. Some day we will indeed die, and we will genuinely be resurrected, never to die again. Then, we will own a new reality that baptism had promised and portrayed. Thus, baptism is an important step that helps us internalize the Gospel. I cannot guarantee that those who've been baptized will not stumble. But I can ensure that those who've not been baptized will grow stagnant in their Christian walk.

**c. To enroll in Christ's community (cf. Ac. 2:37-41).**

**READ:** Acts 2:37-41 (ESV)

<sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" <sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, "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. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." <sup>40</sup> And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." <sup>41</sup> So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

As one commentator said, "In baptism, you step out of the world into the church."<sup>2</sup> The habit passed down to us from the beginning was the profession of faith in Jesus Christ, baptism before the church, and then communion. Baptism is the door of the church, and communion is

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<sup>2</sup> Jamieson, Bobby, *Why Should I Be Baptized?* (Wheaton, ILL; Crossway, 2020), p. 21.

the family meal. And while it is true that all those who profess faith in Jesus Christ are a part of the global church, it is also true that only those who have been baptized are a part of the local church. Thus, it is possible to be part of the former, not the latter. But, if so, your faith is no doubt weak, malnourished, and underdeveloped because only in a local community of faith can the person of faith grow in their faith. This is how God designed it; anyone who does not follow his pattern will shortchange themselves while floundering on the fringes.

### **So, what's the takeaway?**

Baptism is the conclusion of the old life and the commencement of the new life.

**READ:** 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Baptism is the first step of the new disciple. All things they've done have been put behind them, and they've been put in the ground. Through expressing their faith via baptism, a believer is marching toward a new direction, leading to a new and better life.

## Video Description

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: