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Sermon Notes

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## **What Is Christian Baptism?**

### I. A Long Voyage in the Scriptures

- Adoniram and Ann Judson
- Consistent pattern in church history

Anabaptists

English Baptists

Great Awakening

George Mueller

- Baptists in the minority
- A drink of milk

***Hebrews 5:11-6:2 [calls] “instruction about baptisms” “milk for infants”***

### II. Context in Romans

- A. Justification by Faith Alone
- B. Key Question: Romans 6:1
- C. New Focus: Sanctification... Life After Justification
- D. Key First step: Water Baptism
- E. Real Issue: Union with Christ [Spirit Baptism]

### III. New Testament History

- A. John the Baptizer

***Mark 1:4-5 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.***

1. Sent by God

- a. “and so, John came”... tied to prophecy in Isaiah & Malachi

***Mark 1:2-3 It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" --<sup>3</sup> "a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.' And so, John came..."***

- b. John declares that God sent Him

***John 1:29-34 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." <sup>32</sup> Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. <sup>33</sup> I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."***

2. “Preached” baptism

John preached day after day... a message of fiery words to Israel, a message of repentance, a baptism of repentance

Up to that time, baptism had been for Gentile converts to Judaism, to wash away the filth of their previous lives in sin

John shocked the religious establishment by ordering that Jews repent and enter Israel like Gentiles, proving their repentance by their deeds... the first deed was water baptism

3. Repentance

***Mark 1:4-5 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.***

The word means "change of mind"... a new way of thinking; rejecting sin and walking in righteousness

True repentance always results in a changed life

***Luke 3:7-9 John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? <sup>8</sup> Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. <sup>9</sup> The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."***

The people listened to the preached word, repented and desired to prove their repentance by their new lifestyle. The start was water baptism, a simple act of obedience

Confessing their sins, they received water baptism... the symbol of a cleansed life, a new life

4. Purpose: to reveal Christ to Israel

***John 1:31 I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."***

- a. John's whole purpose was to prepare the people for Jesus Christ
- b. his preaching, his baptism, his declaration of Christ all did this

***"Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!!"***

- 5. Considered water baptism inferior to Christ's Spirit baptism
  - a. consistently compared himself with Christ
  - b. clearly stated that his ministry was inferior to Jesus'

***"I am not worthy to stoop down and untie his sandals!"***

- c. the essence of the inferiority came in the baptisms

***Luke 3:15-17 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. <sup>16</sup> John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. <sup>17</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."***

John baptized with water

Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit

Each of the four Gospels underscores this difference BOLDLY!

## B. Jesus Christ

### 1. Submitted to water baptism

***Matthew 3:13-17*** ***Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. <sup>14</sup> But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" <sup>15</sup> Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. <sup>16</sup> As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."***

- a. though Jesus had no sins to repent from, he submitted to water baptism
- b. total identification with the purposes of God
- c. water baptism an important symbol for God's new people
- d. "We must fulfill all righteousness"

### 2. Considered His crucifixion a "baptism"

***Luke 12:49-50*** ***"I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! <sup>50</sup> But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!"***

***Mark 10:35-38*** ***Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." <sup>36</sup> "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. <sup>37</sup> They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." <sup>38</sup> "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" <sup>39</sup> "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."***

- a. "baptism" = total immersion in the wrath of God
  - "cup" = cup of God's wrath
- b. gave His life as a ransom for many

Key question: How would James and John be baptized with His baptism and drink the cup He drinks?

Perhaps through persecution in this world

Better, by total union with Christ through faith!! Christ's death became their death, Christ's suffering was theirs in reality... through union with Christ, His death is their death

- 3. Commanded His disciples to baptize disciples
  - a. during His ministry

***John 3:22 After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized.***

***John 3:26 They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan--the one you testified about--well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."***

BUT key clarification in next chapter:

***John 4:1-2 The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, <sup>2</sup> although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples.***

During His earthly ministry, Jesus was already training His disciples to baptize new disciples in water... BUT HE HIMSELF NEVER BAPTIZED ANYONE!!!

Why? Jesus' baptism, the true baptism, was the baptism of the Holy Spirit... that would come later

- b. in the Great Commission

***Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."***

Jesus wanted water baptism to be part of the practical daily world-wide spread of His Kingdom

#### 4. Baptized His disciples with the Holy Spirit

***Acts 1:4-5 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. <sup>5</sup> For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."***

On the day of Pentecost, Jesus Christ poured out the Holy Spirit on His church, the baptism which makes believers truly one with Him and with each other

***Acts 2:32-33 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. <sup>33</sup> Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.***

#### C. The Apostles

##### 1. Followed preaching of the Gospel with water baptism

###### a. Peter on Pentecost

***Acts 2:37-40 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" <sup>38</sup> Peter replied, "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> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." <sup>40</sup> With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." <sup>41</sup> Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.***

###### b. Philip with Ethiopian eunuch

###### c. Paul and Silas with Philippian jailer

##### 2. Considered baptism of the Spirit more significant

###### a. Peter and John in Samaria (Acts 8:12-17)

Samaritans heard the gospel and believed it through Philip... they were baptized with water, but they did not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit until Peter and John came from Jerusalem

Water baptism clearly seen to be important, but inferior to Spirit baptism!

###### b. Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:34-48)

Opposite order with first Gentile convert, Cornelius

***Acts 10:44-48*** *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. <sup>45</sup> The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. <sup>46</sup> For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup> "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." <sup>48</sup> So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.*

Water baptism was important, but not as important as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Once they were baptized with the Spirit, they were already truly Christian... Peter had no choice but to add the symbol of water baptism

c. Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7)

Summary:

- 1) Water baptism significant
- 2) Spirit baptism superior and essential

#### IV. What Baptism Is

A. Symbol of Union with Christ

NOTE: symbol, not reality!! Roman Catholic church calls it a sacrament... says it works on you whether you believe it or not!

Outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual reality!!

And what is that reality? **Union with Christ**

***"baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."***

Greek = "into the name of"... total unity with the Triune God; one name, three persons, we are totally united to God through faith

Water baptism is a symbol of that union!

***Galatians 2:20*** *"I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."*

***Romans 6:3-4 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.***

1. Union in His death

Spurgeon sermon title: "Baptism is Burial"

2. Union in His resurrection
3. Union by the Holy Spirit

***Colossians 2:11-12 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, <sup>12</sup> having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.***

The moment you believed, you were immediately sealed with the indwelling Holy Spirit; I take this to be the same as Baptism by the Holy Spirit

Yet, Baptism also destroys any sense of "Lone Ranger" Christianity... baptism always performed by someone else... another person who stands and represents the Church of Jesus Christ

B. Symbol of Union with Christ's Body, the Church

***1 Corinthians 12:12-13 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.***

1. Union with all believers, through all time, all over the world
2. Visible fellowship of the regenerate

Spirit Baptism is invisible to the world

Water baptism is not

Water baptism is thus a visible sign to the world of entry to the church of Jesus Christ

C. Pledge of a Good Conscience



As it was under the preaching of John the Baptist, water baptism is a symbol of repentance from sin... a desire to live in newness of life; to turn forever from sin into daily obedience and righteousness

Water baptism is thus the pledge of a good conscience toward God

***1 Peter 3:21-22 water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.***

Christ sits at the right hand of God... death no longer reigns over Him; in like manner, the baptized Christian pledges a life of holy obedience to His commands; a life in which the sins of the previous life in the pagan world are washed away forever

***NOT the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God***

A conscience made clean through faith in Jesus Christ

1. Purified by faith
2. Obedient to the Lord

## V. What Baptism Is Not

### A. Not for Unregenerate

1. Baptists in the minority on this one
2. Almost all other Christian denominations practice infant baptism

Romans Catholic, Eastern & Russian Orthodox, Anglicans & Episcopalians, Methodists and Presbyterians, Congregationalists, etc. etc. etc.!!

3. These groups see link between circumcision of Old Covenant and Baptism of New
4. BUT Baptists have always seen water baptism as an outward and visible symbol of an inward and spiritual transformation that has already taken place
5. IDEAL: regenerate church membership

No one should have a voice and a vote in a Christian church who is not a Christian

Believer baptism and church discipline are the twin safeguards to the purity of the church

Thus, we always seek to be sure that the person being baptized is truly born-again

6. Modern baptist problem: younger and younger children “baptized”

Illus. Fire engine baptistry

Spurgeon sermon: “Children brought to Christ, not to the font.”

B. Not a Guarantee of Salvation

Too many Baptists rely on their water baptism as final proof of salvation

“I remember the day I was baptize in a muddy creek near my grandpappys church; I wore a white robe and me and the whole Sunday school class got dunked the same day!”

Fine, but how has it gone since then? Any fruit? Any growth in holiness? Any yearning after Christ? Any good deeds done in the humility that comes from righteousness?

Water baptism does NOT guarantee salvation!

C. Not Required for Salvation

1. Contrary to extreme Church of Christ folks
2. Their key text: Mark 16:15

***Mark 16:15-16 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. <sup>16</sup> Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.***

3. However: one key text ends this one

***1 Corinthians 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel--not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.***

D. Not to be Disregarded

1. Great Commission: “Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”
2. Love = Obedience

***John 14:15 “If you love me, you will obey what I command.”***

Spurgeon: “If our congregations were what they ought to be, it would be a very simple matter to preach, for a sermon would then only need to be like the orders given by a commanding officer to his troops: short, sharp, plain, clear, distinct. Our hearers would not want illustrations and

metaphors; they would simply ask to be told what they must do to be saved; and the more plainly they could be told, the better pleased they would be.”

There is a wonderful simplicity to the first command from the Lord to a new convert: water baptism! It's easy to do, and a simple test of repentance. Is He truly your Lord, or will you fight His authority every step of the way?