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Teaching Notes

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Baptism and Lord's Supper

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Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Matthew 28:19

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." Luke 22:19

I. Baptismal Regeneration

A. What Is "Baptismal regeneration"?

Baptismal regeneration is the doctrine that only those who are baptized in water can go to heaven; water baptism is required for eternal salvation

B. Texts that seem to teach this

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

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

Acts 2:37-38 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

C. Groups that teach this

1. Roman Catholic church

2. Campbellite groups... like the Church of Christ

D. The Great Danger

1. Works righteousness... making a human work of equal importance to the work of Christ on the cross... in some sense, making it greater
 - a. The whole book of Galatians is written to combat this works view of salvation
 - b. It inevitably leads to legalism, a destruction of justification by faith alone apart from works of the law
 - c. Amazing: you don't have to be circumcised (says Galatians), but you DO have to be baptized. How can it be??

E. The Opposite Danger

1. Making baptism of no account, as though it were a mere ritual
2. So... a REFUSAL to be baptized is significant, because it is a refusal to obey Jesus Christ

F. The Silver Bullet Texts

1. The Thief on the Cross; never water baptized, yet...

Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

2. Paul's "strange" assertion

1 Corinthians 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel

If baptism is not required as part of the gospel of our salvation, why would Paul make such a statement?

II. Child Baptism

A. Noble Motives: The Salvation of Children

1. The central purpose of parenting: the salvation of the children

ESV Matthew 16:26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

Most parents want to give their children the best things in life. This is commendable, of course. But what good would it be for a parent to give his child the "whole world" and for the child to lose his soul in the end?

Bringing children to a saving knowledge of Christ is central to all Christian parenting

Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

2. John's statement can be applied to parenting

3 John 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

3. Parents: apply Deuteronomy 6 to the souls of your children... only apply the Gospel of Jesus Christ even above the Laws of Moses

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Yes, but... what about baptism?

Charles Spurgeon, answering critics who cited:

Matthew 19:14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Preached this sermon: "Children brought to Christ, and not to the font" (i.e. baptism)

Spurgeon: "In handling this text in what I believe to be its true light, I shall commence, first of all, by observing that THIS TEXT HAS NOT THE SHADOW OF THE SHADE OF THE GHOST OF A CONNECTION WITH BAPTISM. There is no line of connection so substantial as a spider's web between this incident and baptism, or at least my imagination is not vivid enough to conceive one. This I will prove to you, if you will follow me for a moment.

It is very clear, Dear Friends, that *these young children were not brought to Jesus Christ by their friends to be baptized.* "They brought young children to him, that he should touch them," says Mark. Matthew describes the children as being brought "that he would put his hands on them and pray," but there is not a hint about their being baptized..."

Now, Spurgeon was arguing against infant baptism... what would he say about *child* baptism?? Is that a different matter?

B. Muddying the Waters with Questionable Motives

1. Parental short-cuts

- a. Pray the sinner's prayer
 - b. Get 'em baptized
 - c. Teach 'em "Once saved, always saved"
 - d. You're effectively "done" in this most vital matter
 - e. BUT what about a deep work of grace in the hearts? Genuine repentance over sin? Understanding of regeneration? Substitutionary atonement? Imputed righteousness of Christ?
2. Baptist statistics
- a. Baptist agencies strongly urge reporting of baptismal statistics
 - b. Churches tend to "feel good" about themselves in proportion to their baptismal stats
 - c. The churches that baptize the most people are seen to be the healthiest churches
 - d. The pastors of those churches are seen to be the "best" or "most effective" pastors, and frequently are hired up the food chain to bigger and "better" churches
 - e. Child baptism is a way that stats can be padded

Christianity Today ([June 8, 2000](#)) and other news sources have reported on what appears to be a new trend in some large evangelical churches. First Baptist Church in Springdale, Arkansas hired a well-known former Disney World designer of children's amusement rides to design two "high tech sets" for elementary age worship areas: Toon Town for first-through third-graders, and Planet 45 for fourth- and fifth-graders. The fully animated cartoon town has 26-foot-tall buildings. The rationale behind the \$270,000 project is summed up by the church's children's minister: "Putting a talking head in front of kids for an hour doesn't workThis is a visual generation. We need to use technology to the max." **That includes a special baptistry which is built around a fire engine. When a child is baptized, the sirens sound and confetti is fired out of cannons.**

When kids enter the rooms, a music video is playing on a giant screen in front, and they can amuse themselves at a row of nonviolent video game screens along walls. Once the service starts, "it's 90 minutes of mostly frenetic activity, akin to a live television variety show from the 1950s. In Toon Town, buzzers and bells sound, lights flash from the ceiling and from car headlights on the set, bubbles come out the top of a giant bucket and fill the room, confetti streamers squirt out

onto the first few rows, and mist is sprayed onto the crowd." According to the designer, Bruce Barry, "It's just like going on a ride at Disney World."

f. SBC Annual Report 2002

i) Actually reported a category of baptisms: "0-5 years"

ii) AND that year 4386 children were baptized in SBC churches between 0 and 5 years old!!

C. Inconsistent Practice

1. Almost every Baptist believes there is a lower limit of comfort in water baptism
2. If I baptized a three year old this Sunday, even if that child were remarkably articulate, most Baptists would desire that we wait till the child grows up more
3. In the stats cited about, 2002 Annual Report, SBC churches baptized 394,893 people that year, so the 4386 children from 0-5 years old represented only 1.1% of the baptisms... obviously an extremely low number...
4. Thus most Baptists have a level of discomfort with child baptisms that decreases as the children get older
5. BUT many are inconsistent with this in that they become indignant if some elders should want to wait longer than they (the parents) think is necessary

D. Special Problems with a Child's Profession of Faith

1. Parroting phrases or speaking truth?
 - a. From infancy, children can be trained in the outward aspects of the Christian faith... indeed they SHOULD be
 - b. But regeneration is an INWARD grace... evident to the outsiders only by actions
 - c. Children can be taught to parrot phrases essential to the gospel: "God loves me" "Jesus died for me" "Save me from my sins" etc.
 - d. But how truly do they understand these things?

1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

2. Counting the cost

- a. Essential to becoming a Christian: knowing that the Christian life is costly and difficult

b. By this knowledge we are told to “count the cost”

Luke 14:28-33 "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹ "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

c. Children growing up in a Christian home do not have to “count the cost”; indeed, there is usually more of a cost if they do not become Christians

d. Also, Jesus spoke of treasure hidden in a field... how does a child “sell everything” to buy the field?

Matthew 13:44-46 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. ⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

A child growing up in a Christian home is surrounded by a loving environment strongly encouraging him/her to become a Christian, with many earthly inducements to persuade faith. For example, they are very eager to please their parents, very eager to be included among their older siblings or peers that have already been baptized, very eager to please their Sunday School teachers or others. It's more of a cost for them NOT to believe and NOT to be baptized than it is to do the very thing their parents want them to do. This is especially true of a strong Christian home in which the father gives the children no choice in the matter of spiritual allegiance:

Joshua 24:15 "As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

There is no “religious freedom” practiced in that home; idolatry is forbidden, freedom of religious expression (in terms of other religions) is lovingly squashed; like the Kingdom of Heaven, a Christian home led by a father who will make such a statement is a benign dictatorship. So the child is at a great disadvantage in that family if he does not profess faith in Christ. This is exactly backwards for an adult facing the world's censure and opposition and ridicule, as Jesus said:

John 15:18-19 "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

In the “world” of the child, there is actually great pressure to follow Christ, and great penalties for non-Christian behavior. Therefore the testing of genuine faith is made somewhat more difficult.

3. Persecution?

- a. In like manner, the testing of an initial joyful profession of faith in Christ is by “trouble or persecution” coming by the word... see the Parable of the Soils, and the “Rocky Soil” in particular:

Matthew 13:20-21 The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

- b. How does a child’s profession face this? Children are (and should be) somewhat oblivious of the harsh realities of their future life in Christ; adults are more aware of them

E. How Should Elders Carry on the Conversation?

1. If a seven-year-old comes to be baptized, should they be given the same treatment as an adult? Asked the same questions? Or should allowance be made for their age and immaturity?
2. And if we make enough “allowances” like this, how can we be sure that the child is really regenerate? In effect, aren’t we setting up a separate system by which they can be accepted, when others (adults) would not be accepted on those same standards?
3. Imagine a small child, sitting nervous in the pastor’s office, his legs dangling over the edge of the chair, his mother sitting by him like a nervous parent at a child’s recital, ready to jump in and “help” at any moment... how is this helpful?

F. The “Age of Accountability”

1. This is always a key point in Baptist discussions of child baptism
2. In all honesty, there probably is one, but it’s not easy to support from Scripture
3. We may never know for sure when it is... but let’s remember, it’s not baptism that saves anyway
4. Parents should be vigorously active in evangelizing their children from the moment they come home from the hospital

5. Parents should also learn what are the “marks of regeneration” and pray for those to be seen in their children; this is far more important than leading them in the “sinner’s prayer” at age four

G. The Need for Balance and Charity

1. It is important to maintain a balanced view here on baptism
2. Water baptism is not required for salvation
3. Water baptism IS required for obedience, once a credible profession of faith in Christ can be made
4. “Credible profession” is the very issue with a child... patience is a virtue
5. It is also important not to wait too long either, lest teens (and older children!) think they have to be sinless or are justified by works

Summary Statements Related to Child Baptism

- Because child conversion is so important, child baptism is so important (to both parents and pastors alike)
- Thus there can frequently be too much emotion in discussing this issue
- False motives for baptizing children too early are very damaging: these include parents desire to “get their kids saved” but thus dealing too lightly with sin; and churches desire to maximize baptismal statistics
- The greatest danger of too early baptism is false assurance given to an unregenerate person
- The second greatest danger is the loss of a standard of regenerate church membership and the subsequent pollution of the local church
- “Rebaptism” is a very common issue among those who were baptized too early
- Baptism should be administered only to those who can make a creditable profession of faith in Christ
- A creditable profession of faith in Christ can be completely verbal, as in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch; by testing the words, a pastor can know whether or not an adult should be baptized

- However, credible profession of faith in children is much more difficult to discern, since they are not so skilled with words and can merely parrot back things they have been taught
- Nearly everyone in Baptist life is uncomfortable with some level of child baptism, especially in the very young
- Children are different than adults, as shown by Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 13, "When I was a child, I thought like a child," etc.
- Children do not have to "count the cost" as much as adults, especially in the case of Christian homes, in which Christian faith is strongly enjoined
- Baptismal regeneration is unscriptural; no one is saved by water baptism, and the failure to receive water baptism does not negate genuine faith
- Children MUST be evangelized and CAN come to genuine faith at an early age
- Churches ought not to have set age levels or policies concerning baptism, lest they begin a mindless machinery that is difficult to control; also because such an age limit is not taught in the Bible
- Rather, parents and pastors and churchmembers should study the marks of a genuine work of God in the soul and apply these to each case individually
- There is no long range harm in waiting on baptism for a child's profession to be proven out by more mature evidence
- Christians should act in charity toward each other on this issue, since it is a gray area, a "debatable issue" (Romans 14)

III. The Lord's Supper: The Repeated Sign of the Gospel's Achievement and Promise

A. Biblical Teaching

1. Names, biblical and otherwise

Lord's Supper
Eucharist
Communion

2. Biblical account

Matthew 26:26-29 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." 27 Then he

took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

1 Corinthians 11:23-32 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷ Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. ³² When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

B. Theological and Historical Issues

1. History of Division
2. History of Disinterest
3. Most controversial: "This is my Body..."—the Doctrine of the Real Presence
 - a. Christ is physically present [Catholic and Lutheran]
 - b. Christ is not (especially) present [Zwinglian]
 - c. Christ is spiritually present [Reformed]

Calvin's "Spiritual Presence" view:

Brian Nicholson: How then is the presence of Christ to be understood? ... Calvin avoided the language of "physicality" employed by the Lutherans. Christ's body and blood were to be "understood in terms of Christ's act of reconciliation, not in themselves. ... The body of Christ remains in heaven. There is no "descent" of Christ to earth. "Flesh must therefore be flesh; spirit, spirit -- each thing in the state and condition wherein God created it. But such is the condition of flesh that it must subsist in one definite place, with its own size and form." The human properties of Christ's body are not impaired. Moreover the elements of the Supper retain their full, substantial identity as bread and wine.

There is however a descent of the Holy Spirit who constitutes the connection between the risen Christ and the souls of believers. "No extent of space interferes with the boundless energy of the Spirit, which transfuses life into us from the flesh of Christ." ... "It is certainly a proof of truly divine and incomprehensible power that how remote so ever He may be from us, He infuses life from the substance of His flesh and blood into our souls so that no distance of place can impede the union of head and members." The manner in which Christ's flesh is eaten is spiritual. The Holy Spirit communicates the life-giving benefits of Christ's natural body to us. [www.reformed.org]

4. The Efficacy of the Lord's Supper

5. The Necessity of the Lord's Supper

C. Lord's Supper and Worship: Practical Considerations

1. Seriousness of the gospel message visibly displayed

2. Restricting communion, as the Lord and Paul did

3. Participating in a manner worthy of the Lord

D. What Do We "Look At" in the Lord's Supper?

1. We **look upward** to God in thanksgiving

1 Corinthians 10:16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ?

Luke 22:17-19 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you." ¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

2. We **look backward** to Christ's death and our own faith in Christ

1 Corinthians 11:23-25 The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

1 Corinthians 10:16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

3. We **look inward** to our sinfulness and need for confession

1 Corinthians 11:28-31 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.

4. We **look around** to our brothers and sisters in Christ, for we are one Body

1 Corinthians 10:17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

5. We **look outward** to a lost world not yet partaking in the Lord's death

*1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.***

6. We **look forward** to Christ's return and the eternal Kingdom of the Father

*1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death **until he comes.***

Matthew 26:27-29 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."