

Following Jesus in Baptism Mark 1:4-10

Slide 1

Last week I talked about the Son and Man and Son of God.

This first term, “Son of Man,” was used by the Gospel writers to remind us that the Messiah would be a man, a human.

The second term, “Son of God,” pointed to the deity of this man named Jesus. God implanted the seed of Jesus into the womb of Mary, and at that point, God the Son became man.

Jesus was born on this earth as a human, so He was a son; but He was fully God as well, therefore He was the “Son of God.”

This segued into the doctrine of the incarnation: The fusion of God with man. I explained what the incarnation meant to the world and to those of us who are saved.

Today we’re going to look at this same passage of scripture, but I want to focus on the baptism of Jesus, not so much on the approval of God at his baptism.

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In this passage we find four things about baptism, the first being that baptism doesn’t save.

Mark 1:4, “*And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*” This verse is a little confusing until you dig a little deeper.

At first reading, “*baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*” sure sounds like baptism was doing the saving.

But you have to be careful when translating prepositions like “of, for, by, etc.” from one language to another.

Many foreign nationals have tried to understand the American language by trying to translate, word-for-word, prepositions that are used in entirely different ways in their language than in English.

Often, I’ll hear a an individual, whose primary language isn’t English, say something that baffles me, until I realize that where we might use the word “by,” they might use another preposition in that context.

And, if they don’t know how “by” is used in English as opposed to how it’s used in their own language, it can cause confusion. This is no less true when translating from Greek to English.

The Greek word translated “for” used here is “*eis*,” which my Greek dictionaries and lexicons say can mean “to, unto, for, in, on, toward, or against.”

So how do we know which one is right? One way is to compare how the word is used matched to the overall tone of Scripture.

The New Testament teaches that a person is saved by faith in Jesus Christ, plus nothing and minus nothing. In none of these scriptures is baptism ever mentioned.

Therefore, one must look more closely at the only two passages of Scripture that can conceivably be interpreted to be saying that baptism is necessary for salvation, one of which is Mark 1:4.

To keep from being too tedious and technical, the short version is that “*eis*” here modifies the word “repentance,” not “baptism.

This means that John preached a baptism of repentance. The remission of sins being the consequence of the repentance, not the baptism.

Another proof that baptism is not required for salvation is found in Jesus Himself. Of all people who ever lived, Jesus was the only one who wasn't a sinner.

Therefore, He never needed to repent, and hence, if baptism was for salvation, there was no reason for Him to be baptized.

So why was He baptized? To understand this we need to go to Matthew 3:14-15.

Matthew 3:14-15, "But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented."

Jesus was baptized to *"fulfill all righteousness."* In other words, it's a righteous act for a righteous person to be baptized, and He did it as an example for us.

Jesus was teaching that baptism is important for believers! Jesus was perfect, and to set an example for those who would become perfect IN Jesus Christ through His death, burial, and resurrection, He was baptized.

When we turn from sin and put our faith in Jesus for salvation, our sins are washed away by the blood He shed for us on Calvary.

And just as perfect Jesus set the example for us to be baptized, so we, who are made perfect in Christ, should publicly declare our faith in Jesus through baptism.

Slide 3 -

The second thing we find about baptism is that it occurs after salvation.

Everywhere you see baptism in the New Testament, there's a correct sequence:

- First one repents, preparing the heart to be saved,
- Secondly, they believe, actualizing salvation,
- Finally, and only then, are they baptized testifying outwardly of the inward salvation experience.

Baptism is only for believers, after salvation. An individual who was baptized as an infant, hasn't experienced biblical baptism. It's not their fault. They didn't have a choice in the matter.

But nowhere is infant baptism taught in the Bible. You'll not find a single verse in the Bible which even suggests it.

Baptism is a declaration of faith in Jesus Christ and the Gospel for salvation. How can a baby declare his or her faith in Jesus Christ? Babies have no understanding of sin or the need for a Savior

They don't know about Jesus's substitutionary death on the cross for them or their need to turn from sin.

They don't understand the necessity of faith in Jesus' death on Calvary, and the command to symbolically identify with His death, burial and resurrection.

The only thing they understand is warm milk, a clean diaper, and lots of cuddling.

To be biblically baptized, you must be old enough to be able to understand the Gospel message and to respond to it in faith and to profess one's faith publicly.

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The third thing we find about Biblical baptism is that it symbolizes the gospel and therefore involves full immersion.

Baptism is a way to publicly declare your faith in the central tenets of the Gospel. Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 15 that the Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

You see this symbolism clearly during baptism by immersion. Standing in the water represents the death of Jesus Christ; going under the water represents Christ's burial; and coming up out of the water represents His resurrection.

When someone is baptized, he's identifying himself with these truths and understands that he's trusting in Christ's death, burial and resurrection as his hope of salvation.

Therefore, the symbolism is broken if the baptism is by sprinkling or pouring for neither of those modes of baptism can possibly symbolize death, burial, and resurrection.

The evidence is overwhelming that the early church baptized exclusively by immersion.

The word "*baptize*" or "*baptizo*" in the Greek, was not a religious word in that day. It became a religious term with the ministry of John the Baptizer.

The word itself simply means to "*dip, dunk, sink, plunge, immerse or submerge.*" It was used by those who dyed cloth.

Cloth merchants would completely dip cloth into dye so that the entire cloth took on the color of the dye.

When women submerged their clothes in the river to clean them, they were said to be “baptizing” them.

When a ship sank in the sea, they would say it had been “baptized,” that is, it had sunk by being totally submerged in the water.

In Greek law records, there’s even a case of a man who was arrested for “baptizing” a man in a river—that is, he DROWNED him!

Besides the meaning of the word, we have other proof that John baptized by immersion.

John 3:23, “Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized.”

Aenon was a place on the Jordan that was deeper than most places along the river. Many places on the Jordan are so shallow that you wouldn’t even be at waist level.

If John baptized by pouring or sprinkling, he could have baptized anywhere on the Jordan.

He wouldn’t even have had to go to a river for that matter; a basin of water would be sufficient. But he chose this particular place where the Jordan was deep enough to submerge people under water.

Finally, there are several instances in the book of Acts where it says that when people were baptized they “*went DOWN INTO the water*” and “*came UP OUT OF the water.*” Baptism has always been by complete immersion.

The symbol of baptism representing the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus was explained to a farmer’s teenage son who had put his faith in Christ.

His family had had him baptized as a baby by sprinkling, and when the family changed to their present church, his father was happy in his son's conversion and desire to follow Jesus.

But the father didn't believe his son needed to be baptized by immersion, and since the son was still a minor, the pastor wouldn't baptize him without his father's permission.

The son pleaded with his father, explaining that baptism was symbolic of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, but his father told him it didn't matter whether you had been sprinkled, poured, or immersed. "It's all the same," he said.

That afternoon one of their dogs was found dead. After grieving a few moments, his father told his son to bury the dog.

His father found him an hour later doing chores and said, *"I told you to bury Rover. He's still back in the back."*

The boy said, *"I already buried him. I sprinkled some sand on him."* His father said, *"What in the world are you talking about? Bury him before he begins to stink."*

A little later, his father led him to the dog, which still was not in the ground, and said, *"Son, what's gotten into you? Rover's still not buried."*

"Father," he said, *"I poured some dirt on him this time. That's good enough. It doesn't really matter whether he's been sprinkled, poured or put under the ground. It's all the same."*

Suddenly, it dawned on his father what his son was getting at. He looked at him sheepishly and said, *“Son, if you’ll completely bury old Rover good and proper, I’ll take you over to Preacher Tom’s and we’ll talk about getting you baptized good and proper.”*

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Finally, we find that Biblical baptism is a bold declaration of faith.

Baptism is meant to be public. It’s a declaration of your desire to follow Jesus, the One Who saved you by the Gospel through His death, burial, and resurrection.

Historically, baptism has been the outward witness of inward faith in the Gospel. It’s simple to believe on Jesus to be saved.

It’s a bold, sometimes dangerous, move to openly confess your faith, because it marks you as a follower of Christ.

One commentator put it this way: *“In the early days of the church, baptism was a declaration that the believer was definitely identifying himself with that group of people who were called Christians who were despised and hated.*

To be a Christian meant something. To identify yourself with those who were called Christians meant persecution, maybe death; it meant being ostracized from your family, shunned by friends. And the one act which was the final declaration of this identification was BAPTISM.

As long as a man gathered with Christians, he was tolerated, but when once he submitted to baptism, he declared to all the world, I BELONG TO THIS DESPISED GROUP, and immediately he was persecuted, hated, and despised.

In baptism, therefore, the believer entered into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. A person might be a believer and keep it strictly a secret and thus avoid unpleasantness and suffering, but once he submitted to public baptism, he had burned his bridges behind him.”

Chuck Colson points out in his book, *The Body: Being Light In Darkness*: *“Most Westerners take baptism for granted, but for many in the world the act requires immense courage. In countries like Nepal it once meant imprisonment. For Soviet or Chinese or Eastern bloc believers, it was like signing their own death warrant.”*

When you’re baptized, you’re publicly confessing your inward heart allegiance to Christ, despite the consequences. Jesus said in Matthew 10:32, *“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.”*

By identifying with Christ and the message of His death, burial, and resurrection, you’re publicly taking your stand for Christ.

You’re saying, *“I belong to Christ and I’m signifying so with the symbol of baptism.”* You’re officially announcing that you’re a follower of Jesus.

A second-grade student accepted Christ during Vacation Bible School. His parents were happy, and they arranged a time for his baptism.

They brought the little boy to the pastor, and it was obvious they had told him what to say. But he was still a little confused about the word “baptized.”

Asked what he came for, the boy said, *“Pastor, I believed in Jesus and now I’m going to be advertised.”* His parents corrected him, but the pastor said, *“He’s closer to the truth than you think. Whenever a person is baptized, he is advertising that he is a follower of Jesus.”*

Slide 6

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude this message with two questions: First, have you been saved? Have you turned from sin realizing that Jesus died on the cross to pay for your sins?

You can be baptized a hundred times by sprinkling, pouring or immersion—it doesn't matter, it won't get you one inch closer to heaven or God.

Baptism won't save you, and it won't make you more accepted by God. Outside of being born into God's family by faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, baptism by any mode is useless.

Second, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, have you followed the Lord's example by being baptized by immersion after your salvation to publicly declare your faith in His death, burial and resurrection and to identify with Christ and His Church?

Matthew 28:19-20 says, *“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, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”*

Baptism is important! It was important enough for Jesus to travel 60 miles by foot in the desert to get to John and be baptized as an example for us.

It's important because God has commanded in the Great Commission that believers be baptized.

The Great Commission has not been fulfilled in your life personally until you have followed the Lord's example by being baptized.

Every moment you've not been baptized is a moment of disobedience to Christ's command to be baptized after salvation and a failure to fulfill the Great Commission in your life.