

THE DOCTOR'S REPORT

Declaring the Way

TEXT: Luke 3:21-22

INTRODUCTION: The story is told of the young son of a Baptist minister was in church one morning when he saw for the first time baptism by immersion. He was greatly interested in it, and the next morning proceeded to baptize... you guessed it... his three cats in the bathtub.

The youngest kitten bore it very well, and so did the younger cat, but the old family tom cat rebelled.

The old feline struggled with the boy, clawed and tore his skin, and finally got away. With considerable effort the boy caught the old tom again and proceeded with the "ceremony."

But the cat acted worse than ever, clawing and spitting, and scratching the boy's face.

Finally, after barely getting the cat splattered with water, he dropped him on the floor in disgust and said:

"Fine, be a Methodist if you want to!"

As a Baptist preacher, I could tell you a lot of funny stories about people being baptized, but that does not mean that baptism is a laughing matter. I suspect that John the Baptist had some humorous experiences as he baptized people in the Jordan River. But if you asked John to tell you the baptism story he best remembers, it would not be a funny one.

In fact, if you will use your imagination to put long hair on my bald head and a beard on my shaved chin, if you will recolor my coat to the shade of camel's hair and picture a broad leather belt around my waist, then I will for a few moments assume the identity of John the Baptist and tell that story to you.

Monolog:

I am the voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord!

Repent of your sins. Turn from them and bear fruits of repentance, and then come be baptized in the water as a demonstration of your repentance.

I tell you, there is One coming who is mightier than I am. I am not worthy to untie the sandals on His feet. I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Thus I was preaching one day at the river when Jesus stepped out of the crowd. Immediately the Spirit of God identified Him to me as the Christ.

I declared, Behold the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world!

Then Jesus came to me and asked me to baptize Him. And I said, No, Lord. It is I that needs to be baptized by You. But Jesus persisted and said, Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.

So at the commandment of the Son of God, I lowered the Master into the water and brought Him back up. He just stood there, hands lifted toward heaven as He prayed. And immediately the Spirit of God descended bodily as a dove upon Him. And suddenly a voice thundered from the heavens, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The gospel of Luke records this event quite simply in just two verses.

Lk. 3:21-22 ²¹ When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. ²² And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

I. JOHN THE BAPTIST BAPTIZED AS A PART OF PREPARING THE WAY OF THE LORD.

JESUS CHRIST WAS BAPTIZED AS A PART OF DECLARING THE WAY OF THE LORD.

A. By being baptized, Jesus was affirming John's baptism, which was a testimony of repentance.

B. Through His baptism, Jesus was foreshadowing the way that He would provide salvation to the world.

- **Death**
- **Burial**
- **Resurrection**

II. SOME BIBLE FACTS ABOUT BAPTISM

A. Baptism does not save.

Acts 16:31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Rom. 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

B. Baptism is a way we join Christ in declaring the way of the Lord.

Rom. 6:4 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.

Death

Burial

Resurrection

Cleansing

C. Baptism is commanded by Jesus.

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

D. Baptism is one of the first steps of walking with the Lord.

E. Biblical baptism is only for believers.

- **None of the references in the N.T. indicate that anyone other than believers were baptized with Christian baptism.**
- **There is not a single example of infant baptism in the New Testament, because an infant cannot be a believer.**
- **Therefore the Bible never speaks of "having someone baptized." Baptism is something a person who is of an age of understanding chooses for himself or herself.** In Acts 8 the Ethiopian chose for himself and asked to be baptized.
- **If a person is baptized before he came personally to faith in Christ, it was not believer's baptism as the Scripture teaches.**

F. Baptism is by immersion.

1. The meaning of the Greek verb "baptizo"
 - a. The definition - to immerse
 - b. The meaning is clearly shown in context: **Mark 1:9-10** It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized

by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.

2. The meaning of the verb is made very clear in secular Greek

The clearest example that shows the meaning of baptizo is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and it says that the vegetable is to be baptizo'd in vinegar, which clearly means immersed. The vinegar is not sprinkled on the vegetable, nor is poured over it. The vegetable is immersed in the vinegar.

Why does our text say "baptize" rather than immerse?

- a. When the translators working for King James of England were translating the NT for the King in order to produce what we call the King James Translation, they were in a quandary when they encountered the verb "baptizo".
 - b. **A straightforward translation would have been "immersed," because that was undoubtedly what the Greek word meant.**
 - c. **This was a problem, however, because King James was sprinkled.**
 - d. **They did not want to offend the king, and they did not want to mistranslate the word.**
 - e. **Therefore they chose to transliterate the word "baptizo" and create a new English word "baptize."**
3. **How did the practice of sprinkling or pouring of water replace immersion in some churches?**
- a. **The method of baptism for the early church was always immersion, even after the beginning of the Catholic church.**
 - b. **Even today if you visit Catholic churches built before 1250 A.D. you will often find an ancient baptistry where converts were immersed!**
 - c. **As the Catholic church gave a sacramental meaning to baptism, that baptism was the visible means through which God's invisible grace flowed, they felt a necessity to baptize infants so that they could be the recipients of God's grace.**
 - d. **Since infants could not be immersed, sprinkling and pouring arose as the methodology of baptism in contradiction to what Jesus demonstrated and commanded.**
 - e. **This gave baptism both a new method and a new meaning that was contrary to that given in the Scriptures.**

III. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

- A. Believers, as soon after they are saved as is practical.**
- B. Believers, when they realize that their method of baptism was not like Jesus' baptism.**
- C. Believers, when they realize that their baptism was before their salvation.**

CONCLUSION: Some of you need to be saved and baptized.

Some of you who are saved, need to be baptized, either because you have never been immersed or because your baptism came before you truly trusted Christ as your Lord and Master.

Next Sunday – big baptism of people saved during Team Impact. You are invited to come today and join this group next Sunday morning as we honor our Lord in baptism.

Prayer

INVITATION