

THE CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE

Baptism

John 1:29-34, Matthew 3:13-17

INTRODUCTION: WELCOME - THANK YOU FOR VBS! THANK THE LORD!

Purpose of our study through the Gospels – The Christ-Centered Life

This morning we look at the first thing Jesus did when it was time to begin the work the Father sent Him to earth to do. Do you know what that was?

Jesus was baptized, and all four gospels record it. We will read from two of them.

John 1:19–28 NKJV 19 Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” ... 26 John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. 27 It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.” 28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

John 1:29-31 NKJV 29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ 31 I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.”

Matthew 3:13-17 NKJV 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. 14 And John *tried* to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?”

15 But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit *it to be* so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him.

16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

John 1:32-34 NKJV 32 And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

The text says, John was baptizing.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

- **Baptism means being immersed, being dunked.** The word is used of vegetables being pickled. The ancient Greek recipe said you immerse them in the vinegar.
- That is the meaning of the Greek word baptidzo. It does not mean sprinkling or anointing, or pouring water on someone.
- So why is it not translated, “John was immersing?” Because King James, who authorized the translation from the Greek, was not immersed but sprinkled. The translators did not want to offend the king, so rather than translate baptidzo as to immerse, they transliterated the word and made a new English word, “to baptize.”
- Bottom line, the text of Scripture says, “John was immersing the people in the water.”

WHY WAS JOHN BAPTIZING PEOPLE?

- **John’s baptism was a sign of repentance.**
- John’s message was repent. Messiah is on His way!
- Those who repented, consented to let John immerse them in water as a sign of their repentance and desire to be cleansed of their sin.

Remember Matthew said,

Matthew 3:13-14 NKJV 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. 14 And **John tried to prevent Him**, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"

- That is why John did not initially want to baptize Jesus. John knew Jesus had no sin. He was the Son of God. So John said, “No, I need You to baptize me!”
- However, there was another reason God had sent John to baptize.

John 1:31 NKJV I did not know Him; but **that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.**"

- **At Jesus’ baptism, God revealed that Jesus was the Messiah, the promised Savior.** The Holy Spirit, like a dove, descended on Jesus, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED?

- **To identify Him as the Son of God, the promised Messiah and Savior.**
- **As a prophetic picture of how Jesus would accomplish salvation.**
 - **death**
 - **burial**
 - **resurrection**
- **As an example - to fulfill all righteousness.**

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15 But Jesus answered and said to him, "**Permit *it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.***" Then he allowed Him.

Think about that for a moment. Jesus did not get baptized to make Himself the Son of God. He was and always would be God's Son, with or without baptism. He was baptized so we could see that He was God's one and only Son.

He was not baptized in order to accomplish His mission on earth, to die for our sins and rise from the dead. He was baptized to show people an advance picture, a prophetic picture of what He would do to offer us salvation.

And, He was not baptized to make Himself righteous. He was righteous already. He was baptized as an example to us so that we could walk and live in His righteousness.

Do you see the point here? Jesus was not baptized for Himself. He was baptized for us. To help us know He is God's Son, to tell us the way of salvation through His death and resurrection, to be an example to us that we might put on His righteousness.

And the fact that He was baptized for me, makes me all the more want to be baptized for Him.

WHY SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

Romans 6:3-4 NKJV 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 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.

- **To identify with the Son of God.**

Romans 6:3-4 NKJV 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ** Jesus were **baptized into His death**? 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**.

- **As a testimony**
 - **of what Christ did**
 - **death**
 - **burial**
 - **resurrection**
 - **of what Christ did in us when we were saved**
 - **died to old life of sin**
 - **buried with Jesus in baptism**
 - **raised to walk in a new cleansed life**
- **As an act of obedience**
 - Not in order to get saved (thief on cross)
 - As a saved person who wants to obey the Lord

WHEN SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

- **Not as an infant**
 - Infant baptism can be viewed as an act of dedication by your parents.
 - Infant baptism cannot be viewed as biblical baptism because it is not
 - identification with Christ for the infant does not yet know Christ
 - testimony for salvation has not yet occurred
 - obedience for the infant makes no choice
- **When you trust Christ personally as your Lord and Savior.**
 - As soon as practical. Example: Ethiopian Eunuch – “There is water! Why can’t I be baptized?”

- If you have already been saved but not scripturally baptized, be baptized as soon as practical from now.

I would imagine that some of you are struggling with whether or not you should be baptized, because you have been sprinkled or you have been immersed in water, but not exactly as the Scripture says it should be done. Maybe before you were truly saved, maybe as an act of salvation, or some other meaning foreign to Scripture.

I understand your struggle. When I was in college, I struggled with a time of doubting my own salvation. At a weekend retreat, I prayed a prayer like this, “Lord I do not remember a lot of the details about when I prayed to receive Christ when I was 8 years old. I do not fully know my level of understanding then, but I know I understand now. And I want to make clear that I believe You died on the cross for my sin. I believe You rose from the dead. I repent of my sins and want You to be the Lord and Master of my life.”

After I prayed that prayer, I asked myself the question: “Do I need to be baptized now that I made certain my salvation?” I searched the Scriptures. And I found exactly what I have shared with you today. Biblical baptism always comes after genuine salvation. So the question for me was, “Was I saved when I was 8, all of the details of which I did not recall? Or was I saved when I was 19 and prayed that prayer at a college retreat?” I took my dilemma to the Lord, telling Him that if my salvation came at that retreat, then even though I was already a licensed preacher of the gospel, I would be baptized, because I wanted to be obedient to Him.

Over the course of the next several weeks, God gave me a peace and assurance that I was genuinely saved when I was 8 years old, and therefore I was scripturally baptized. I have been at peace with that answer ever since.

So, if you are struggling, take your commitment first to the Lord. Tell Him, “Lord, I will do whatever Your Word instructs me to do.” Then if there is a clarification needed by way of prayer, ask the Lord to speak to your heart to make that clarification, so that you may walk in obedience to Him. And if there is something about it that you just cannot figure out, come see me, or call me, or email me, and I will be glad to try to help you, or go over to the Next Steps desk and one of the other pastors will help you at the end of the service.

CONCLUSION: I have talked to you about baptism, and that is important; but it is not the most important. Remember ...

- Baptism will not save you.
- You are saved through trusting Jesus who died for your sins and rose from the dead.

John 3:16–18 NKJV 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Romans 10:9 NKJV ... 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.

You can trust Jesus today. THEN, you can honor your new Lord by being baptized.