

What is Baptism All About?

Buried and Risen

By Barry Minsky

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Matthew 28:16-20; Romans 6:3-8

Preached on: Sunday, February 15, 2009

Quacco Baptist Church

215 Quacco Road
Savannah, GA 31419

Website: www.quaccobaptist.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/minsky

Let me start out by asking a question. Do you folks ever change your mind?

That's a silly question, isn't it? Sometimes, you know, we have plans and something comes up or some thought enters into our min and we change our mind as to what we are going to do. Well, I changed my mind as to what I was going to preach on today and I was going to continue in our studies in the book of Romans. But since we had just had a message on Communion, I thought it would be appropriate to look at Baptism. Those are the two ordinances of the Church.

And for our Scripture reading today I am going to read Mathew chapter 28 beginning with verse 16.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."¹

The disciples were given a command. That command was not just to those in that day, but it is a command that extends throughout the ages. It is a command that is our responsibility today that we make disciples of all nations. And in doing so we are to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Well, we need to understand what baptism is all about.

If we were to look at the history of baptism and I am not going to give an extensive picture, but if we go back to the early Church we find out that there was some confusion, but baptism was normally conducted in the very early church by immersing a person into water. Eventually there developed a doctrine that taught that it was not only believers

¹ Matthew 28:16-20.

who should be baptized, but it was the children of believers also who ought to be baptized.

And this is how that came about. The thought, concept developed that baptism actually did something. In other words, when a person was baptized, the belief was that that took away original sin. It took away the sin of Adam that had been given to that individual. And so the individual would then be able to start out with a clean slate.

Now naturally if this were true and if we believed this, then we would certainly want to give that benefit to our children as well as to ourselves. And so the concept that developed that just as circumcision in the Old Testament was given to the children of believers, so baptism in the New Testament would be given to the children of believers.

There are a couple of little problems with this view, however. First of all, when Abraham was given the responsibility of circumcising all those in his household, there was something very interesting that was said to him and it wasn't that he was not only to baptize the children that were born from him, but he was to baptize also the children of all those who were laborers who worked for him, for all those who were foreigners who had come under his household.

And it says, for instance, in the book of Genesis chapter 17 we read beginning in verse 23, "Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all the servants who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's household, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the very same day, as God had said to him."²

Now, if we were to follow that concept, we would not only be baptizing our own children, but if we had people who worked for us, if we had people who somehow were part of our household in one way or another, they would be baptized also. And, of course, that is not the concept that we have.

Well, the belief then became very strong in the church of that day—mainly in the Roman Catholic Church—that baptism actually did something in terms of providing a relief from sin in the direction of the salvation of the individual.

The Reformation was a wonderful time. And during the Reformation there were many dramatic changes that took place in Christian doctrine among those churches, the Reformed churches. And one of the big changes was that after they had studied the Scriptures they realized that baptism didn't save at all. Baptism was only a picture of God's salvation.

And so there was a Reformation, a belief that baptism did not save, but was simply a picture of salvation. Well, there was one problem, though. They didn't reform it quite enough. Although they no longer believed in this doctrine that we call baptismal

² Genesis 17:23.

regeneration, that baptism actually takes away sin, they didn't go far enough and so there continued to be the baptism of the children of believers.

Now we know from the Word of God that all of the children of Abraham, all of the sons of Abraham were circumcised in the Old Testament. Well, in the New Testament we find that it is exactly the same, that those who are the true descendants of Abraham are the ones who are to be baptized.

Now, who are they, though? Well, we look into the book of Galatians, the book of Romans. We find out that he is not a Jew who is one outwardly and circumcision is not that of the flesh.³ The true circumcision is of the heart and he who is a true child of Abraham, the true child of Abraham will be those who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And what does that mean? It means basically that the children of believers are not necessarily the true children of Abraham. And, therefore, they are not to be baptized. Only those who have expressed a faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are to be baptized.

I'll give you an example of what the Word has to say. In Galatians chapter three we read this.

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.⁴

It is those who have trusted in Christ, those who belong to Christ, those are the ones who are the true children of Abraham and the ones who could be baptized.

It sounds a little confusing, doesn't it? But think of this. Think of it this way. God does not have any grandchildren. I am blessed. I have 11 of them. God doesn't have any grandchildren.

In other words, just because I have believed does not necessarily mean that my children will believe in Christ. Now, praise God, they have. And we are thankful for that. But that is not guaranteed. It is not guaranteed. And so the sign that indicates that a person is saved, the sign of baptism, should not be given to the child until that child comes to true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, let's take a look at the word of for baptism and how it is used in the New Testament. The word for baptism is a Greek word. Baptism is just a transliteration. It is a Greek word βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo). The word βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo) literally means to

³ See Romans 2:28.

⁴ Galatians 3:26-29.

immerse or to submerge, to make overwhelmed and it came to be used in the New Testament to talk about the ordinance of Christian baptism. But the word had the idea of dipping into a liquid. It may very well have come from another word, βαπτω (bap'-to) which means to dip. And that word eventually came to have the idea of dying something.

Have you ever dyed a piece of clothing or a piece of cloth? What do you do with it? Well, you take the cloth and you want to change its color, so you dip it into a dye and it is saturated by that dye. Eventually you take it out and unless you are like me I would make all kinds of mistakes with that. It will wind up with the new color that you were attempting to put into it.

But the idea is the word means to dip. It is very simple. And for us to take that word and to give it another meaning is unfair in our attempt to translate the word.

Well, if it means dip, then we ought to have some evidence in the Word of God, some very clear evidence in the Word of God that this word indicates something that should be done only by immersion in water and should only be done to those who have believed and truly trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, in Matthew 28 we already read that we are to make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them. And I could just translate that, dipping them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Now I want you to notice something. It says you are to go and make disciples of all nations, comma, baptizing them. So in other words, part of making a disciple is baptism. It says nothing about taking a child, a little baby and baptizing that baby. There is nothing other than the thought that when a person becomes a disciple, when a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, then that person is to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

And then it goes on to say, "teaching them to observe." I don't know how you would teach a baby to observe something. This has to be someone who at least has reached the age of awareness of what is going on in the world, a person who has gotten to the point where he or she has trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, not a little child who cannot comprehend.

We see basically the same thing when we look at innumerable passages in the Word of God. I would like to look at just one of them with you.

On the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two we read that Peter had a rousing sermon. I will tell you. This man could preach. That was a great sermon. You have to read it. I am not going to read the sermon for you. But the sermon in Acts chapter two is just thrilling and exciting and it takes the whole expanse of the history of God's Work and focuses in on the work of the Lord Jesus.

Beginning at verse 37. “Now when they heard this,”⁵ that was the sermon, “they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’”⁶ Good question.

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"⁷

Now listen to this verse. “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”⁸

Wow. Three thousand people trusted Christ at the conclusion of Peter’s great sermon on the day of Pentecost. And we are told that those who had received the Word were baptized.

Now, you know, it is very possible that some of those that were gathered there on that day may have had their little children with them. I would doubt that there were not some little children wandering around and running and playing games. There were no doubt some babies who were being carried by mothers. But they are not mentioned. It says nothing here about baptizing anyone other than those people who had received the Word of God. And that is the basis for baptism.

Before I would baptize anybody I would sit down with that individual and say, “I want to hear how you have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ and I want to hear your testimony.” And when a clear testimony of faith in the Lord Jesus is spoken, at that point I can feel confident that I am able to baptize that individual.

Ok. So here is the first picture. The picture is that of the individuals who should be baptized and they are those who believe and only those who believe.

Well, the next thing we need to consider is what we would call the mode of baptism for in some churches you will find that they will baptize by pouring water on someone. They will baptize by sprinkling water on someone.

Well, there are many passages in the Word of God that give us evidence as to how we are supposed to baptize. I have picked just one, just for convenience today. And it is a very exciting passage in Acts chapter eight.

⁵ Acts 2:37.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Acts 2:38-40.

⁸ Acts 2:41.

We have Philip the Evangelist who is out and in the midst of a desert area and we read beginning with verse 26.

But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship.⁹

Wow. Here was someone who was from a Gentile country here and somebody who had no connection with the Jewish people and yet here it says he went to Jerusalem to worship. And do you know what he was doing while he was sitting there in his chariot?

Let's read about it. Boy, this is a man who loved the Lord.

"And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah."¹⁰

Now how many of you sit in your chariot or your car or whatever it is you ride in and read the prophet Isaiah. I mean, think about that. Here was a man who was really dedicated to the Lord and he wanted to get into the Word of God.

Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."

Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"¹¹

That is a logical thing because sometimes we read the prophets and we are not sure of exactly what we are reading. Well, here was this man who was reading Isaiah and Philip says, "Do you understand it?"

And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH."¹²

One of the great prophecies of the Lord Jesus Christ in the book of Isaiah.

⁹ Acts 8:26-27.

¹⁰ Acts 8:28.

¹¹ Acts 8:29-30.

¹² Acts 8:31-33.

The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?"

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.¹³

What a wonderful thing he was doing. He could take the Old Testament Scriptures, the marvellous prophecies that point forward to the coming of our Savior and he was able to say, "Let's look at this and I am going to tell you what it is all about. I am going to preach to you the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ."

Well, "As they went along the road they came to some water."¹⁴ I want you to notice this. They are riding in a chariot. They are going along the road and hey see some water. I don't know what it was. It could have been a lake or a creek or a river. I have no idea what it was, but there was some water there. And it was obviously relatively deep water we find out later on.

And the eunuch says, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"¹⁵

Now think about this for a moment. If baptism were pouring water on somebody or sprinkling water on somebody, don't you think that there would be enough water in that chariot, drinking water, that they could simply have taken some water and poured it on him? Certainly they could have. Why was it necessary for him to see a body of water and say, "There is water. What hinders me from being baptized"?

Obviously he understood that baptism could only take place in a body of water where a person could be immersed in the water.

Well Philip said—and you will notice that we get back to who the correct candidates for baptism are—"Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.'¹⁶

What is the criterion for baptism? To believe with all your heart. You must have faith before you are baptized.

He answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.¹⁷

They walk into a body of water which is obviously deep enough for them to wade in and he baptizes him, he immerses him in the water.

¹³ Acts 8:34-35.

¹⁴ Acts 8:36.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Acts 8:37.

¹⁷ Acts 8:37-38.

Well, how do we know that? It says in the next verse, “When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away.”¹⁸

What a picture. Who was entitled to baptism? The person who believed. How was it done? By immersion in water.

As we read through the New Testament we find that there are many passages that refer to baptism. One of the most important, I think, is in Romans chapter six. Now we studied this just several weeks ago in our studies through the book of Romans you will probably remember. But Romans chapter six beginning with verse three.

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;¹⁹

What is he saying? He is saying that baptism is a picture of something. It is a picture of what Jesus Christ did to provide for us a salvation.

Now, picture it. It is a very beautiful picture. What did Jesus Christ do to provide us salvation? Well, he died on the cross of Calvary. He was buried in a tomb and then a period of time later he rose from the dead and he was seen by a multitude of people, eventually to be taken up into heaven.

Well, here we have the concept that baptism pictures then. Just as Jesus Christ died so the person being baptized is put under the water.

It is a funny story, but there was a lady that I baptized one time and she said to me, she said, “You know, I am not really good at getting up. My legs aren’t that strong. I am trusting that you will take care of me and I won’t drown.”

That was her concern.

I think it was a legitimate concern. This was not a joke. She was really concerned about this, had very, very weak legs.

When we think about it when Jesus died, he died that we might receive salvation. When this woman and all others are put under the water they are a picture of the death of Jesus Christ, that he died under the water. He was then buried and then it says, “Therefore we

¹⁸ Acts 8:39.

¹⁹ Romans 6:3-6.

have been buried with Him through baptism into death,”²⁰ going on now, “so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”²¹

As the person is lifted out of the water, we then have the picture of a new life. This person is raised from the dead, so to speak. It pictures all that Jesus Christ did. He died. He was buried. He rose again. What a beautiful picture.

I often think that when we see a baptism we are seeing a glorious picture of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that when that person goes under the water, it is a picture of Jesus dying and being buried for us. What a glorious, glorious thing he did that we might have life forever.

And then when the person is lifted out of the water, we have, again, a very beautiful picture of what Jesus did. He rose again we are told, for our justification.²²

And so here is a picture of what Jesus did. But it is a picture that says to us a little bit more than just this is what baptism looks like, this is what the salvation that Jesus provided looks like. It says that because we have been united together with Christ—and baptism pictures this—we have been united with Christ so that I in my baptism picture his death and resurrection. We have become united with him in the likeness of his death. Certainly we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection.²³

What does that mean? What does the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead have to do with my life today? Where is the connection?

Well, he explains it. He says here, “Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him.”²⁴

What is the old self? Well, that is the old nature, the sin nature. That was crucified with cross on the cross of Calvary, “In order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.”²⁵

What a wonderful picture. There is the old nature that has died with Christ and yet, I will tell you. It keeps on trying to come back to life again, trying to lead us into wrong paths. But then there is the new nature, that wonderful nature of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us that leads us into service for Jesus Christ.

²⁰ Romans 6:4.

²¹ Ibid.

²² See Romans 4:25.

²³ See Romans 6:5.

²⁴ Romans 6:6.

²⁵ Ibid.

Before we were saved we were in bondage to sin, that everything we did was actually sinful. I want you to think about that. That doesn't sound logical, but think about that for a moment. Unless our actions are motivated by the glory of God they are sinful.

And so those of us or all of us, I should say, before our salvation, were in bondage to sin exactly as it says here. We are no longer the slaves of sin.

But, instead, we have been raised to a new life, a life in Jesus Christ, a life that is magnificent and beautiful in that we have the ability with the power, the Spirit of God, to serve him day by day.

God has given to us two ordinances. The ordinance of baptism is actually a picture of our entrance into salvation. Then we have the ordinance of communion or the Lord's Supper which is a picture of our relationship with God. But it is a picture that is portrayed over and over and over again. We take the elements and we think of what Christ has done for us. And as we ponder these things we pray that God will take away from us sinful behaviors and lead us into lives that glorify him.

Two ordinances, neither one of them do anything in terms of taking away sin. They are pictures. They are used of God that we might have the wonderful opportunity of showing forth the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am going to ask you today: If you are a believer, have you been baptized by the scriptural pattern of immersion in water? If you haven't, you should see me and we can look forward to exploring the possibility of your being baptized right here.

Do you know the Savior? Baptism pictures our knowledge of him as he died and rose again. If you don't know him, I challenge you to turn from sin and to turn by faith to him that you might have everlasting life.

For those of us who are his children, those of us who have been baptized, those of us who come consistently to be involved in the communion service, are we sharing the gospel with the people around us?

There are many who need to hear and we are the ones who have been sent out.

Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...and lo, I am with you...²⁶

What a blessing that as we preach, he is there with us.

Let us pray.

²⁶ See Matthew 28:19.

Our Father, we thank you for the abundant love that you have showered upon us in Jesus Christ. We thank you for these pictures that you have given to us that picture for us the work of Jesus as he died and rose again that we might have salvation. What a blessing it is to know that we have a God who loves us with an everlasting love, a God who desires nothing more for us than that we might honor him and that our lives might be blessed in every way.

If there is anyone here who knows you not, may this one come to know the Savior even today. And for those of us who are your children, send us out as those disciples were in that day that we might be involved in that ministry of making disciples of all nations. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.