

Baptism

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[0:00] What is baptism? That might be something which you've been thinking about this morning as you've come to a baptism service. That would be understandable if that was a question in your mind.

! Maybe it seems a bit weird to you that people are going to go in this pool fully clothed and be dunked underwater. Is it just this morning that the elders of the church thought Isabel and Richard smelt a bit and so needed a wash?

Is that what's going on this morning? Well, not really. But in some ways, they are going to be washed. But it's far more significant than that.

We meet here together as a Baptist church. A Baptist in the sense that we will baptize all those who come to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus.

Other churches may baptize infants and some churches baptize both. And that's okay. We welcome all here this morning.

[1:14] Whether you're a Christian baptized as a believer or as an infant, you're welcome to be here. You're welcome to come into membership if that's you. You're welcome around the Lord's Supper.

But convictionally, we are a Baptist church who baptize believers. The word baptism in the Bible is a wonderful word.

Baptize-o in the original language that the New Testament is written in. And it means to dip or to plunge or to immerse.

And so it seems that what was happening in the Bible when people were baptized, the Lord Jesus himself was one. They were plunged underwater.

And so it seems to me from the scriptures, that is how we should understand baptism. Believers plunged underwater. But it's far more than Isabel and Richard just being plunged underwater.

[2:22] We're going to think about its significance. I'm going to, in a moment, give us four words. But before I go to those, let's understand that baptism, what is happening, is a sign or a picture of something.

A significant sign. Some of us may have rings on our finger. I've got one here. And in many ways, it's just an ordinary ring.

But in many ways, it's also not just an ordinary ring. It's a sign of something which has happened on a day in history where Becky and I made promises to one another.

Promises that mean we are now joined together as husband and wife. And so it's a significant sign. It's a serious, significant and life-changing sign of something which has happened. And this morning, it's the same with baptism. It's a serious, significant sign of something that life-changing that has happened in Richard and Isabel's life.

[3:46] It's a sign.

It's a picture that they have new life in Christ. The old is gone and the new has come. And both Richard and Isabel have met with me a few times over recent weeks and months.

Both of them know this morning that what's happening here isn't going to make them any more of a Christian. But it is a sign that is done in obedience to Christ's commands.

That they know as they are followers of him and they know his forgiveness. They know the eternal life which he brings. So, four words for us this morning.

Firstly, a command. I'm going to start in Matthew 28. That first reading that we had. It's known.

[5:11] The passage is known as the Great Commission. As the risen Lord Jesus. Jesus, in all his authority as the Son of God, as the risen one from the dead, gave his disciples their mission.

Which really is, still today, the mission of the church. It's there in verse 19. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations.

Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.

Jesus commissions his disciples, go, make disciples. And that making disciples, that includes two things particularly. Baptizing and teaching them to obey.

So, when people come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, the usual next step should be that they are baptized.

[6:24] Just as Christ has commanded here. Baptized into the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We see this happening as the scriptures go on.

In the book of Acts, there's many examples of people who are baptized. Particularly, I'm going to read from Acts chapter 2, just a couple of verses, which come at the end of Peter's great sermon in that chapter.

And we'll see that this command of the Lord Jesus Christ continues to be obeyed by those who heard it.

So, Acts chapter 2, verse 37. When the people heard this, that's Peter's sermon, they were cut to the heart.

And they said to Peter and the other disciples, brothers, what should we do? And so Peter replied, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins.

[7:42] The response to the gospel, a good response is to repent, to turn around, to confess our sins.

And then be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the one who saves us. And so in being obedient to this command of the Lord Jesus Christ, Isabel and Richard and all those who are baptized, show to the world, show to people that they have come to believe in him, and that they're willing to follow him, follow his commands, follow the command of the Lord Jesus to be baptized.

So firstly, baptism is a command. Secondly, it's belonging, a sign of belonging. I think Jesus tells us here in Matthew 28 that the baptism is a naming ceremony.

He says to them, baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Baptize them into the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God who is three in one.

[9:07] The one who has worked to save them. And so Richard and his mother be baptized into the name of God the Father this morning. God the Father who has chosen them before the world began, chosen them to be his, to bring them salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What mercy! What a privilege! We'll be baptized into the name of him. Just a couple of verses I'd love to read to you from Ephesians chapter 1.

One of my favorite passages in the whole of Scripture. And in that passage, we could read all of it. We're not going to. Do go away and read it. You see the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit all at work in this chapter.

But I want to just read to you verse 4 and 5. The work of the Father. Actually, 3 to 5. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will.

[10:39] All Christians this morning, be humble as we read that, but also praise God as we read that, that God, the Father, has in love chosen you, predestined you to be his children according to his pleasure and will.

Maybe some of us are looking back with fond memories to the time that we were baptized. As we look back on that, that's a reminder of what God has done in our lives.

He has chosen us. Chosen us before time began. He thought of us.

Before we had been born. Before we could do anything to save ourselves. He said, They are going to be mine. We're baptized in the name of the Father.

We're baptized into the name of the Son. God, the Son, who has laid down his life for us. The Lord Jesus Christ, who has stepped down from heaven into this world to save us.

[12:03] What an amazing thing. That he would die to redeem us. That he would pay the penalty of sin for us.

The penalty that we could not pay ourselves. He shed his blood in our place. For all who would come to believe in him.

Richard and Isabel this morning, Jesus has shed his blood for you. And we're going to baptize you into the name of the Father and into the Son. And the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit who comes to dwell within those who come to believe in him. Who is a seal guaranteeing our inheritance.

We're baptized into his name. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three persons of the Trinity working together in our salvation.

[13:05] And in baptism, we're saying, This is who I belong to. I belong to him. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And this is who I'm living for.

And so with all of us who have been baptized in the past. There's been a time where we've stood up and said, This is who I belong to. And this is who I'm still living for.

But not only that, as we're baptized into the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We join with others.

With all those who have come to find salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. We thought of this a lot last week. When we were thinking about where do I belong in church.

Well, if we're in Christ, we're part of his body. We read last week, now you are the body of Christ. And each one of you is a part of it.

[14:11] So as we're baptized into the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit, we're also saying we belong to the body of Christ.

The church. God's people. All those who have already been saved, and all those who will be saved. And the Christian life is hard.

And so praise God that we're not alone. That we belong together. We need one another. We need one another to help one another keep going. Through those hard things in life.

To point one another to the Lord Jesus. We need one another on a Sunday. We need one another through the week. To encourage one another to keep going.

Keep going, following him. Keep reminding one another of the gospel. Of the Lord Jesus Christ who has saved us. So Richard and Isabel, as they're baptized this morning.

[15:14] They're baptized into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To the God that they belong to. And also to the people of God that they belong to.

Third word for us. Washing. Baptism is washing. It's clear this morning that baptism involves water. Physically Richard and Isabel will be washed with water. I can't argue with that. They will be. But it's a sign of inward washing.

Water in the Bible can often be a picture of judgment. I guess we'll all know the story in Genesis of Noah and the flood.

The world was flooded. Those flood waters came up. They were flood waters of judgment. God's judgment on the world. Or in the Exodus, as the Egyptian army was drowned by the waters of the Red Sea.

[16:24] They were drowned by the waters of judgment. Jesus himself said this to his disciples. Can you drink the cup I drink?

Or be baptized with the baptism I'm baptized with? In that he was referring them to his death. That he would drink the cup of God's wrath on sin.

And he would go through judgment like baptism. He would go through the waters of judgment for his people. We need to turn to our reading in Romans chapter 6.

Romans chapter 6 to help us to see a little bit more of this. Romans chapter 6 verse 3.

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

There's this significant picture going on in baptism.

[17:41] Baptized into his death. Baptized into his death, which was Jesus going through the waters of judgment for his people. Verse 4. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death.

In order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

That's what's going on as we see Richard and Isabel baptized today. That it's a picture that they have been joined with Christ in his death.

Joined with Christ who has for them gone under the waters of judgment at the cross. And then they'll rise out of those waters. To the new life that they have in Christ Jesus.

Just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. And Paul helps us to see what this new life is in Christ.

[18:55] Verse 5. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with. That we should no longer be slaves to sin.

Because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. This washing with water is a picture of how in Christ our old sinful lives are dead.

Paul says our sins are crucified with Jesus on the cross. Our sins nailed to the cross. Crucifixion was a terrible, torturous way to die.

Dramatic. Our sins were there with Jesus on the cross. See, it's like, baptism is like a wash because our sins mean we're dirty.

[19:59] In fact, our sins deserve death. The wages of sin is death, Romans tells us.

But, baptism is a wash. A little while ago, I was out running. It was raining a little bit. It had been a wet few days.

And I ran into Preston Park. Not from this side of Preston Park, but the other side. And as I was running in, there was a muddy patch.

And I was like, oh, be careful, Daniel. Be careful. And before I knew it, I was on the floor. And my clothes were muddy.

Dirty. So not only were my clothes sweaty, like they often are after a run. They were also muddy. They were dirty. They were horrible. And so I put them straight in the wash.

[21:05] Amazingly, thankfully for washing machines, they came out and they were clean again. No longer do I have to wear muddy, sweaty, dirty clothes.

And that's like with a Christian. We were dirty. We were messy in our sins. Stained by them.

But praise be to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has shed his sins for us, so that our sins are washed away. Washed by his blood.

Blood usually stains. But the confidence that the Christian has is that Christ's blood makes us clean. He's died in our place.

We deserve that death. We deserve that judgment that Jesus went through. But Jesus has gone through it for us. So no longer are we left in messy, dirty life.

[22:09] We're made clean by the Lord Jesus Christ. And so sin is not the master over us anymore. Baptism, if you want another picture, is like a funeral.

We're watching a picture of someone being buried under the water with Christ in his death. But none of us are here to mourn today because we're here to celebrate life.

Baptism is a sign of life. Verse 8. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Praise God that in Jesus we can die to sin and find new life in him. And he won't die again. Jesus won't die again.

Verse 9. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again. Death no longer has mastery over him.

[23:19] The death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. Physically, death faces all of us.

But because Christ has been raised, all Christian people can know life in him. Life forever.

with God. With the Lord Jesus Christ, who has defeated the power of death. And so Paul says to believers, live out this new life that you have found in him.

Live it out. Verse 11. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.

[24:27] And offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master. Because you're not under law, but under grace.

Live out your new life in him. Do not let sin reign in your body. I guess you may understandably ask, are Christians perfect then?

We're not. We're still in sinful bodies. Paul actually, in Romans 7, talks about the struggle to obey God.

But we do know new life in him. We do know that he is working in us by his spirit, helping us to fight against sin and temptation.

We're confident in him and his power at work in us who believe. And we know too that one day, because of the new life we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, we will one day be free from these sinful bodies.

[25:41] And free from living in this broken, sinful world. We'll live in new, perfect bodies for eternity. And that's because of the work of Jesus.

So baptism is a sign of our new lives in Christ. And maybe you're here this morning and you're not a Christian.

You don't know forgiveness for your sins. You don't know new life beyond the grave. You cannot stand up with Richard and Isabel and say, I belong to God.

Well, this new life, this forgiveness of sins, this washing of sins, this belonging to God and his people. This is something you can know even today.

If you say, Father, I'm sorry I've sinned against you. I ask that you would forgive me. Wash away my sin because of what Jesus has done on the cross.

[26:52] Help me to live for you. Pray, something like that. You can know this new life that Richard and Isabel know to you.

Jesus stands ready to forgive you even today. Maybe you want to explore more about the Lord Jesus.

There are copies of Luke's gospel on the table as you head out through there. Do take them away. But for now, I'm going to pray.

We're going to sing. The children are going to come back in. And then we'll move to the baptisms. So let's pray. Father God, thank you so much for this picture that you have given us of the new life that we can have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Father God, we pray that you would help us now as we hear and celebrate with Richard and Isabel what you have done in their lives.

[27:59] Help us, we pray, to give glory to you. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. And this song, in every verse, it reminds us that it is not I, it is not us that has done the work to save it, save it's through Christ in me.

So we're going to stand and sing.