

# AM Acts 2:1-4 & 36-41 Baptism, what is it about?

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[ 0 : 00 ] This morning is from two readings of Acts of the Apostles, first at the beginning of chapter 2, and reading verses 1 to 4, and then verses 36 to 41.

So Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, and reading at the beginning. When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place, and suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

And divided tongues, as of fire, appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And then picking up the reading in the same chapter, verse 36, where Peter was preaching, And he said, Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus, whom you crucified.

Now when they heard this, they and the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do? And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins.

[ 1 : 16 ] And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the promise is for you, and for your children, and for all who are far off. Everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.

And with many other words he bore witness, and continued to exhort them, saying, Save yourself from this crooked generation. So those who received his word were baptized, and there were about that day about three thousand souls.

Amen. May God bless to us the reading of his own holy words. Well, we have here in Acts and chapter 2, and obviously a massive, a huge event that took place at the beginning, you can say, of the Spirit coming, as Jesus promised, upon the church.

So I entitled the sermon, So What Does Baptism Mean to Us? Now this baptism obviously can be controversial for some, because we've got different views on baptism.

We're going to look at that. There are different views, even in a congregation like this. Some believers who believe in it, when they themselves have been baptized as children, they will have their children baptized too.

[ 2 : 39 ] Where there are others, they believe in a believer's baptism, where when the adult comes and confesses their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is then that they get baptized.

Now, I am not here today to convince anyone of one way or the other. It's just that we are Presbyterians, and I'm going to look at what this means for us in regards to what it means for a Presbyterian to believe in baptism.

But that doesn't mean, and I'm not here to convince anyone otherwise, because we know, as our own congregation, we have those with both views, and we are thankful to God for that, because the ones who are Baptists as well in our congregation, we thank God for them, and they are very active. They chose to be with us in our family, so they are a church family, just as we are ourselves. So, I want us, just for our own understanding, in regards to the things that we do believe, and sometimes it's important for us to know that, because I remember my own father said to me when we had our first child, the child was about six months old, and Maggie and myself were both Christians, and we hadn't baptized the child.

And my father, who was, strangely enough, he was a Christian man, but he said to me, why aren't you baptizing your child? And I said, well, we haven't really thought, we've been looking into it, and we haven't decided which way we're going to go, whether the Baptist view or the Presbyterian view.

[ 4 : 22 ] And I said to him, why are you asking? And he said, oh, just in case anything happens.

Now, this is my dad, who is an elder, and see how wrong we can get things when the actual event

seems to suggest that something happens at baptism.

Anyway, we did, after a time, decide that this was for us to decide to do this. But obviously, we looked into it, and with that, we came to the belief that the Bible teaches what is called covenant theology.

Covenant theology, to understand this, is you don't start reading it in the New Testament. You take the whole Bible as a whole, from beginning to end, and you find that within it, that God is a covenant keeping God.

Now, when you read the Old Testament, you have to read the Old so that the New made sense for us. So, we see that it was God, first of all, who created all things, as we read there in the beginning, that in the beginning, God created everything as we have it in Genesis 1.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Later on in that chapter, we find out when God came to create man, it is there we understand the beginnings of the understanding of God being triune.

[ 5 : 53 ] Because he said, let us make man. He didn't say, let me make man. He said, let us make man. So, that gives us a wee picture into what we believe in God being triune.

And from creation, we see that God made a covenant. Who did he make the covenant with? He made the covenant with Adam, which is theologically known as the covenant of life.

We grew up with a catechism, and this is what we read and was taught, taught in the Westminster Confession and the Catechism. And it was called by theologians the covenant of life, just simply because this was the way God stipulated for Adam to live his life, and he had given him all that he gave him to live this life within the garden.

Now, we also see in all God's covenants that God makes with his people, there are blessings if we are obedient to the covenant, but there are also curses if we are disobedience to God's covenant. With each covenant, also we notice this, that there are privileges and there are responsibilities. To each covenant, we get privileges and responsibilities.

[ 7 : 15 ] So, it's important for us to note that, that this was given to all, for all the covenants that we have in the Bible. Now, the covenant of life that was made with Adam was under the stipulation that God gave them a garden, gave them a world to live in, to multiply, to be fruitful and to multiply, and to enjoy all that God had given them to do, to be busy in the world that God gave them.

What happened? Well, Adam sinned. It is with Adam that God made the covenant, and that is why the term is said that it was Adam who sinned.

It wasn't made with Eve, although Eve was part of the covenant. You see, the covenant head, we know here, was Adam. But when Adam fell, we all fell in him in sin.

Now, we could say today, well, that's a bit of a hard neck to think, that I've got to cover what he's done, because I didn't do it. Adam did it.

But we all know that this was a covenant made to mankind, so whatever happened to Adam happens to all of us. Original sin is in every single one of us.

[ 8 : 34 ] And it's interesting the way you see that in children. Sometimes as the children grow older, you notice that they start to take on things, especially when they learn the word no, you notice that this is something you didn't teach them that, but yet it's in them.

And that is, sometimes we think of the innocence of children. Well, you see wee traits of the way sin is in our lives, even at a very young age.

Now, we know what happened in regards to the first covenant, is that God, remember, cast out Adam and Eve, out the garden. He put a sign and a seal on the gate to Eden.

He put an angel with a flaming sword, and barring the way into Eden, so that they could not get in. That was a sign and a seal.

No entry to the tree of life. Now, this is certainly a sign and a seal to show us that God always gives a sign and a seal within a covenant.

[ 9 : 45 ] Now, there are other covenants. God made a covenant with Noah and his seed. Noah and his family, remember, they were saved in the ark. He gave a covenant sign, where we read a sign and a seal, where God said the sign was the rainbow, and God said, when I see the rainbow, it will remind me not to destroy the world again.

It's pointed, if you were to pull an arrow on that bow, it is pointing towards God, and that is showing us that God said, this reminds me, the covenant that I'm making with you, I will not destroy this.

It is to Noah and his children. For his seed, I will not destroy the world by flood again. Then we see the covenant that God made with Abraham, and his seed, a sign and a seal of circumcision. Then there's the covenant with Moses, and his seed, remember, Moses was sent to take his children of Israel out of bondage, out of Egypt, in a Christ-like way, in the salvation of the people. This is what Moses said, when he went up, when Moses went up before God in Mount Sinai, we read in Exodus 19, 3 and 4, God saying, thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel, you yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle's wings, and brought you to myself.

[ 11 : 21 ] Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice, and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession, among all peoples, for all the earth is mine.

If they remained obedient to the covenant, there would be blessings. If not, there would be curses. What were the covenant's sign? Well, we have the Ten Commandments, and the Sabbath. The Sabbath signifying that we have rest, or the children of Israel had rest in God. That's what the Sabbath meant. And this was the sign and the seal of the covenant of the law that God had given to Moses and to the children of Israel.

What about the covenant that God has given to David and his seed? Well, this is known as the royal line, and it promises a dynasty that is established forever, the line of David.

Now, with the acknowledgement of this royal covenant, the promises of it was given to Abraham in the past, that in your seed, all the nations shall be blessed.

[ 12 : 35 ] So really, his ancestor, David's great ancestor, Abraham, was very much the king of the whole, of Israel, and the whole seed, which is we are.

We're the seed of Abraham, being Christians. So when God spoke of himself in relations to the patriarchs, remember what he said, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

I'm not just the God of one part of the family, Abraham, and that's it. No, no. Every generation that came after, like Isaac and Jacob, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

There is a continuance of covenant keeping in relationship with his people. God has a covenant relationship with his church today, with his people.

My relationship is with you and your seed. So what do we understand, then, about the word covenant? Well, it speaks of a love and of an intimacy that is in the relationship between God himself.

[ 13 : 49 ] There is the personal pronoun which God uses in Jeremiah chapter 30, 22, and he said this, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Do you see how personal this is? This is what the covenant is about in Jeremiah 30, 22. And when I think about the marriage vows that I took with my wife, because I've done so because of love and the intimacy that we have within our marriage, surely I am allowed to call her my Maggie, just as God is able to call us my people, because he's made a covenant with his people.

I've made a covenant with my wife, and I can call her my Maggie, and she can call me my Kenny.

There's an intimacy in regards to this. But there's also this in the word covenant, covenant.

And that is that the covenant is, there is a language of law in the word covenant. This is sealed with an oath to confirm.

It is sealed with an oath. This is more binding, really, in the eyes of the law than a personal relationship, because it becomes legal.

[ 15 : 12 ] It has legal implications. I remember, well, all the weddings I've done, where the paperwork that you get from the registers belonged to our Queen, who now has passed, and they will belong now to Prince Charles.

But do you know that one thing that a photographer can't do is to go over that bit of paper and take a photo of it, because he's got no legal right to do it, because it belongs to the King now.

It belonged to the Queen in the past. It is a legal bit of paper that belongs and no one else is allowed to copy or take a photo of it.

It has legal implications. Now, what is interesting during the marriage vows of a couple, after they have taken their vows, the minister will say something like this, for as much as Norman and Sheila have covenanted to live together in marriage, I declare them to be husband and wife, and then you go and you sign the legal document, the marriage register.

There is a law, a language of law within a covenant. So there's the loving relationship, and there is the legal aspect to the covenant.

[16:37] Now, what about our children? What about our children? When they come along, well, you lovingly, intimately care for them, and then, I think it's possibly changed now, but you've got 21 days to choose a name, but you have to legally register them as being your child.

And what is recorded as well within that bit of paper, the parent's name, and that is the mother and father, and then they become legally yours.

There's already been the covenant relationship that you have with your children where you love them intimately, but now what you have is the legal aspect of that, where they are legally yours. Now, the important point is that all covenants in scripture are God's covenants. They're all given by God. He laid down the arrangements, with obedience comes blessings, with disobedience comes curses, and all covenants are like that.

So God's covenant, as we have seen, are made to the individual and his seed, to Adam and his children, to Noah and his children, to Abraham and his children, to Moses and his children, and David and his royal line and his children.

[18:09] Now, when we come to the New Testament, some people think that God doesn't work in covenants anymore, although we know that Jesus works in a covenant called the New Covenant that he's given.

They do that, they believe, some believe that God doesn't believe covenantally anymore, he doesn't deal with you as a family anymore. no, what he claims is that it is an individual claim that is on your life between you and your Lord.

Now, this might seem, for me it seems strange anyway for God to move away from what seems to be a set pattern of what we have throughout the history of Scripture in the Old Testament.

And now, when it's come to the New Covenant we have in Christ, isn't it strange that our seed are not to be included in this? They claim that all changed at Pentecost when the Spirit came down.

So, when you think about that, up till that day of Pentecost, Peter, his wife, and family were under one arrangement which was the Old Covenant, what we have in the Old Testament.

[19:34] But now, at Pentecost, all of a sudden, that covenant is defunct, and what you have is a new covenant which deals with the individual and does not deal with the children anymore.

The covenant arrangement of the past has ceased. That is the end of it. It doesn't happen. But that doesn't seem to be the case.

Because Peter, in his sermon, as we read, and you'll see in your Bibles, in Acts 2, the 39, the passage we read, where we see Peter saying, for the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord, the God, calls to himself.

So, are the children included? Well, Peter seems to suggest that here, the children are included in this covenant, in this covenant blessing, because Peter said that, for the promise is for you and for your children.

So, this is what covenant means, and if it does not include our seed, then, it's not God's covenant, as we understand God's covenant in the Old Testament.

[21:02] He doesn't change the order of the covenant, and he comes into the New Testament, the thought of covenant is always for you and for your seed.

Now, to be a covenant child, remember the two things we said in regards to the covenant, there are privileges and there are responsibilities.

There are privileges and responsibilities. You, the believing parent, parent or parents, are bringing up your child in the fear and omission of the Lord.

That is the child's privilege, to be able to have that. I remember for most of my time when the boys were young, I worked in an oil yard, and day shift, night shift, we had to do it all.

And I think back, and for most of our boys being brought up, it's my wife who did it. And she would sit them down in the evening and in the morning, having family worship, before going to bed, and before going to school.

[22:13] A lot of that, that was such a privilege for our boys. I even remember in my own life, when I used to come home from school, my mother would take me up to the end of her bed in her own bedroom, and before I was allowed to go out to play, she had to pray.

And you can imagine a young boy, desperate to get out, I would pray with her, with one knee down, and the other one ready for a sharp exit. But you know this, I'll never forget the fact that she did it.

That is the privilege of a covenant family. And even when it came to my time where the Lord brought me to my senses, do you know I thought that I missed my opportunity. I thought I messed it up. I was 24 and I messed my life up. And do you know the only thing I believe that gave me hope was the fact that I knew my mum and dad were praying for me. And that was the means of a warming coming into my heart. God used their prayers to convince me of his salvation.

[ 23 : 32 ] The importance of parents who pray. There are many today and their children are not prayed for. What a blessing it is when you think of schools where you have Christian teachers because they lovingly teach these children and they bring them to the throne of grace.

Maybe not at home but it is happening somewhere. Who knows what God might do with these prayers and it is for us to remember that.

The privilege of parenthood. What has Jesus done for the believing parents? Jesus has fulfilled the law and its requirement which we have failed in miserably.

You see as in any covenant there are blessings and cursings. Jesus fulfilled the law spotlessly for us. So what does that mean?

Blessings for believing Christian parents. Blessings for all believers. We can read that in Jeremiah if you want to look it up with me.

[ 24 : 46 ] Jeremiah chapter 33 and it's worth noting Jeremiah 33 and there in verse 15 where I'll read to you.

In those days and at that time I will cause a righteousness a righteous branch to spring up for David and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

You see it was a branch of David. It was David and his seed and that is the blessing that we have here in regards to parents and children where here obviously it is spoken of of the Lord Jesus Christ and again Matthew 6 where Jesus himself spoke on the mount as we know it Matthew 6 and in verse 33 it says but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all things will be added unto you.

Now I know for a fact that this is what parents are praying for for their children. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

We can all think of people that have prayed all their lives and have never seen never seen maybe in this life the fruit of their labour.

[ 26 : 17 ] There was one night a lady and she was married to her husband she was a believer all their married life for 30 years and this night she said Lord I am tired now because you're not listening to my prayer I've prayed for my husband for 30 years and you haven't answered me.

The next morning her husband came to her and he said he said you know he said during last night I gave my life to Jesus I gave my life to Jesus don't ever give up praying don't give up praying for your loved ones for all that you know because God is a hearing and an answerer of prayer and we keep on persevering for them isn't it what we wish them the best it is to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour Jesus we know also bore the curse of the covenant didn't he because it is in him that we have our relationship now with God and isn't it interesting we are known as children we've been brought into his family and it is all through our elder brother who went and died for us how often you think of him on the cross as we looked at before when here looking at the Lord's supper when he said father forgive them for they do not know what they're doing how often we can relate these words that Jesus spoke to the soldiers to ourselves they don't know what they're doing in their ignorance they are putting away the most precious precious gift that we could ever get in this world this is what Paul said in 2nd

Corinthians chapter 5 and 21 for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God and there's another verse in Galatians 3 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law that is he brought us back by becoming a curse for us for it is written cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree so do you see the two stipulations in regards to the blessing of the covenant and the curse of the covenant it is covered both covered by Jesus and all now we have as we live hopefully as obedient children to the Lord all we have are the blessings of Jesus to us and the amazing thing is this when we do sin he sees the child like the prodigal coming at a distance and his heart jumps it leaps for joy as we know the father in that picture went running towards the prodigal so as to welcome and he smothered him with his love how often that gives us so much encouragement when we think of it so because of Jesus the blessing of the covenant is the imputed righteousness of Christ you are clothed with his

righteousness and he bore the punishment of the covenant for us now that we are united then to Christ in this way surely the blessings of the covenant is for ourselves and for our children that's the privilege that we our family here the Kenyan family today David and Juliana coming with their children this is what they believe but we also know for the children that there are responsibilities as the children grow up just as we think the privileges of the covenant child in Israel the Jewish people their responsibilities as Jewish people remember they had the sign of circumcision on every male after eight days the sign of the covenant on their bodies the circumcised Jew because of that cannot he can sorry the circumcised Jew can reject his Jewishness and a baptized child can reject Christ now there was a case there was a case once in the church of England and it came before them and they came to the conclusion in regards to this and they said you cannot unbaptize anyone you cannot unbaptize anyone well we have seen that each covenant has a sign and a seal and obviously the signs of the covenant the new covenant of Jesus is we have water baptism and we have secondly what we have in the Lord's Supper we have the bread and the wine so we're going to sing and then we will come to the ordination of baptism we're going to sing