

How baptism relates to Christmas

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[0 : 00] you sung this evening are more important than you can possibly imagine. And here's why. Here's what one man said, his name was Simeon, when he looked at the Lord Jesus Christ. He said this, Lord, you're now letting your servant depart in peace according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation.

So when Simeon looked at Jesus, he saw what it was and what it was going to mean for a person to be saved, that it was going to be this person, this one child would grow up to be a man. Now, it's a bit odd this evening because you're probably thinking, what does a carol service or the birth of Jesus have to do with baptism? And so I'm going to try, if I can, to sort of marry the two things together. And it should be fairly easy to do, given the fact that Jesus is the center of both. And so I want to begin with sort of a question. And the question is this, coming up to Christmas, or any Christmas, have you ever wanted something and then not got it?

It might be this year. This year, you might be wanting something and you wake up Christmas morning and you just don't get it. It's just not there. So here's a question, I think, that'll marry what you've witnessed with Bethany being baptized to why Jesus came. Here's the question. Would you be jealous if your friend won the lottery in their dream? Let me put it a slightly different way. Would you be jealous if your friend came into a big inheritance or won the lottery in their dream? Would you congratulate them?

[1 : 58] Would you say, look, you realize that we've been friends for a very, very long time and I'm kind of hoping you're going to share some of your winnings with me. I mean, would you, would it cross your mind to say that? And the answer is, no, I don't think it'd cross any of your minds. And here's why, because you all recognize that the moment that person woke up, they now live in a reality where they don't have what they had in the dream.

What's that got to do with Jesus? And what has that got to do with baptism? Well, salvation is God waking us up. And when a Christian looks at what people have in the world, and, you know, all these people with riches and with fame, perhaps with a good life, perhaps with a good home, perhaps with a whole number of good things, those things are good. Those things are even great. The trouble is, however, we don't become jealous of them because it's a bit like asking us if we'd be jealous of someone winning the lottery in their dream. What Jesus came to do is simply to wake us all up.

And here's why, because the moment you become a believer, you know in reality for certain exactly what you knew before you were a believer, and it's this, that on the day you die, you're going to wake up after death and meet God and realize that everything you had in life, you can't take with you.

It's not going to be there. And so Christians don't get jealous of people who have everything in the world because it's a bit like getting jealous of someone who won the lottery in their dream. They know that there's coming a day where they're going to wake up and not have it, where they're going to wake up and be faced with the reality, and it's not going to be there. What Jesus Christ came to do and what baptism kind of represents is Jesus Christ coming, waking us up before we get to meet God after death.

[4 : 22] Then, in that reality, we begin to see what is of true value, what is of true worth. In other words, it takes a relationship with Christ. It takes to be one with Jesus, to understand that while this world has 101 good things, even more than that for you to enjoy, in fact, the Bible even tells you to go ahead and enjoy them, you never really become too attached to them because they'll perish, they'll fade, and most importantly, and this is really important, when you die, they won't be there.

But when you die and meet God, you will be. And that's the issue. The issue that baptism points to is that after death, there is coming face to face with God. And what Jesus Christ does by coming is to wake us up to that reality before it happens. Because unless he does, we're just enjoying the dream.

We're enjoying all these things. They're great. The trouble is, what happens when the day comes and you are woken up and you're standing before God and you realize that everything that you had, everything that you trusted in, everything that you thought was good, beautiful, and wonderful, it's just not there. In other words, you've got nothing but yourself, and that's more important to God. You are incredibly more important than any of these other things. And so God has come to wake you up and to give you his son. And by giving you his son, he's basically saying, I want to give you life. I want to give you new life. And so salvation is very similar to going from a dream state to being woken up and facing reality. That suddenly you begin to enjoy real life, not just an imagined life. Now that may be hard for you to imagine at the minute, that that's exactly what your life is like if you're not following Christ. But that's the same for everyone. In the dream, when you're dreaming, you believe it's real. It feels real, it tastes real, it looks real, it even smells real. And then you get woken up, and sometimes you don't want to be, because the dream was good. Life was good there. [6 : 56] And what Jesus has come to do, and I'll say this again and again, is simply to wake you up before you have to wake up before God finally. So that you can really get to see what true life is all about. And so to be a follower of Jesus, to do what Bethany did, to say, I'm going to follow Jesus, I'm not going to follow anyone else, is basically to see life, to see the end of life and the future beyond death in a new way. A way that you can't see before you trust in Christ, before you come to Him. In other words, Christians have a different way of putting it, and that is, you have to believe it to see it. The world says, you have to see it to believe it. No, no, no. No, that's not the way it happens. For God, it's you have to believe it to see it. And the moment you exercise that faith in what God is saying, it's like having blinds lifted from your eyes. The scales are gone. And suddenly you begin to see things as they really are. You have been, in fact, woken up. So you've got something to think about. And that is, what is life? And is it really worth everything that I think it is? Or has Jesus Christ come to offer something that is more eternal, that is actually a real kind of life? Not just a dream state where everything appears to be real, but actually reality itself. Let me put it a slightly different way.

By listening to God's Word, by learning about Jesus, by listening to what Jesus says when He grows up from that manger. And He wanders the roads of Galilee and Nazareth. And He starts speaking to people. And here's the thing. Jesus had to come at some point. It may be hard to believe that He chose to come when He did, but He had to come at some point. He had to live and die at some point in human history. That happened to be the point when He did it. The thing is, we can still get to hear what He said simply by reading His Word. And God says that the moment you listen to His Word, and the moment you start believing what He says to be true, it is then you begin to see the very things that He is saying. And so a new relationship with Jesus Christ is a little bit disruptive. And if you've ever had that moment where you have been woken up from a dream, and you're a little grumpy with your friend, because you'd rather be left sleeping because the dream was so good, but now you're awake and you have to face reality, what Christ is saying is the reality is better than the dream.

The reality is far better than the dream. And that's what He's come to do. He's come to wake you up to the life that you're meant to have. He's come to wake you up to the way that life is really meant to be.

And so salvation is disruptive. Any of you who are in a relationship, whether you're married or any type of relationship, you know when it's a personal relationship, because the person that you're relating to can interrupt your life. They can even intervene in your life. They can even challenge you. And the moment you begin to feel that Jesus is an interruption, that Jesus is actually a bit of a challenge to me, now you're feeling Him get personal.

It's now you're beginning to realize that Jesus has taken a deep interest in you. And what you're doing is you're rolling over. Leave me alone. I'm sleeping. No. You need to wake up.

[11 : 19] And that's what Jesus came to do. He's come to wake us up. He's come to bring salvation. He has come to give us new life. Disruptive at first. But when you're truly awake, when you're truly alive by belonging to Jesus, it is then that you begin to see and enjoy and almost wish you had it sooner, the life that God has actually come to give you in Christ Jesus. And so the

message is very, very simple.

That God gave His Son for you. To believe in Him. To believe that He has lived the life that you could never live. He's lived the perfect one. To also believe that He has died the death that you can never die. And that's the death that means that you're judged for your sins. He's done it for you. But more importantly, or as importantly, He's also risen from the dead. Because life is eternal. And so you can either have the life with God as it's meant to be, or you can wake up and face God and have a life separated Him from ever. And here's the thing, and I'll finish with this, just one simple point. If you don't want to belong to God now, if you don't want to belong to God now, that's your decision. But remember this, if you don't want to be into a relationship with God now, I can guarantee He will not force you into one when you die. He will not do it. There's a time frame to salvation, salvation. And it's the days that you have on this earth to respond to His Son in faith, in trust, to turn to Him even this very evening. Well, thank you for listening.

After we sing this next carol, please stay behind. There's plenty of drinks, and get to know one another. So do that after we sing. Let's stand.

Let's stand. 1 Thank you.

[14 : 20] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Amen. Thank you.