

Text: Acts 2:37-41

Title: "Baptism Questions"

I had two of my grandkids with me two weeks ago when I went to vote early. As they watched me go through the voting process (pressing the buttons) my granddaughter Caroline said, "That's easy. How come I can't vote?" I explained to her that it was a little harder than just pushing the buttons; you need to know what the candidates believe on important values that we have. The events down in Houston with pastors' sermons being subpoenaed shows the importance of every election. Vote!

Let's open our Bibles to Acts 2:37. Last week we talked about the first sermon after the Holy Spirit first came to form the first church. At the end of Peter's powerful presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ we see the life-changing results. **Read Acts 2:37-41.**

BAPTISM PHOTO - I want to tell you right from the start that my message today is about baptism. Baptism is mentioned twice in the verses we've just read. You cannot read the New Testament without seeing that baptism is extremely important for believers and for the church. If you haven't been baptized, at the end of my message I am going to give you an opportunity to take a step of obedience in following Christ by indicating on a card that you want to be baptized soon. I know there are many questions people have about baptism and I hope to answer them as I explain the verses I've just read.

QUESTION #1 ~ WHAT IS BAPTISM?

ANSWER: Baptism is an outward symbol of an inward change that happens when we are saved.

Back to Acts 2:37, notice what happens after the Gospel was proclaimed so clearly and powerfully by Peter. There was **CONVICTION**.

Acts 2:37 - When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

The words "cut to the heart" literally mean to be pierced or stabbed. In this series from Acts we're talking about living in the power of the Holy Spirit. And it all starts here. When the Holy Spirit gets hold of a person who has heard the Gospel this is what happens. There was no time to even sing "Just As I Am." They wanted to immediately know what to do. They were convicted because of the Gospel and the truth that they had participated in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. They felt guilt for what they had done, and they realized they were in danger of judgment. They knew they needed to be rescued. That kind conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit has to be present before a person can be saved. We come to understand that even though we didn't drive the nails into Jesus' hands and feet, it was our sin that put Jesus on the Cross. After that comes **CONVERSION**.

Acts 2:38 - Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

“Repent” is a rich word in the New Testament. It's a word that means to change your mind and the direction of your life. We can't keep going the way we're going. We have to forsake sin and by faith turn to God in Christ in order to be saved and converted. Then Peter says...

Acts 2:39 - The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Earlier in his sermon Peter quoted from the Old Testament that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. So there is this calling of God drawing us to Himself and there is the faith that causes us to call on the name of the Lord in order to be saved. And according to these verses when you are saved you get two things: forgiveness for every sin you have or ever will commit, and the gift of the Holy Spirit coming to live in your. And the next thing that happens is **CONFESSION**. Go back to...

Acts 2:38 - Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So baptism is the outward symbol of what has happened to us on the inside when we are saved. And later it says that three thousand new believers were baptized that very day.

WEDDING RING PHOTO ILLUSTRATION – Think of it like wedding rings. The exchange of rings and vows between the bride and groom is the climax of the wedding ceremony. Ladies, what if you got to the altar on your wedding day and when it came time in the ceremony for your groom to put the ring on your finger he leaned over and whispered, “Uh honey, I decided that a wedding ring is not that important. You know I love you and my vow is enough to seal our marriage, so I don't have a ring for you.” You might turn into Bridezilla. Guys, what if in your wedding you got ready to put the ring on your bride's finger and she pulled her hand back and said, “Honey, I love you and I'm committed to you, but I don't want to wear the ring. I just don't think it's necessary. Let's just keep our relationship between us.”

When Nan and I got married I couldn't wait to wear this ring. And I have worn it for 37 years for what it says to *me* (“I'm committed to Nan.”), for what it says to *her* (“He's committed to me.”) and for what it says to *others* (“He belongs to another.”). Jesus said, “If you confess me before men I will confess you before my Father in heaven.” Let's not be ashamed of Jesus.

QUESTION #2 ~ WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

Many people don't understand why they need to be baptized. You may say, “I was sprinkled when I was an infant. I'm afraid of water. I'm embarrassed to get up and do this in front of other people. I'm afraid my family would be offended.” So why?

ANSWER: Baptism is the biblical way for believers to publicly confess their faith in Jesus Christ.

Let me first tell you why *not* to be baptized. We are not baptized in order to be saved. Now we need to carefully interpret Acts 2:38 or we may draw the wrong conclusion.

Acts 2:38 - Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It could seem by reading this verse that we have to be baptized in order to be saved and to have our sins forgiven. But that is not the message of the Gospel. There is a principle in interpreting Scripture that simply says that no scripture, when rightly interpreted will teach something contradictory to the rest of Scripture rightly interpreted. The rest of Scripture clearly teaches that we are saved by faith in Christ alone.

John 3:16 - “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (It doesn’t say anything about baptism.)

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

If baptism could save you, it would nullify this verse, because baptism is a work. We are baptized *because* we are saved, not *in order* to be saved. The proper interpretation of Acts 2:38 is that we repent for the forgiveness of our sins, and as a symbol of that we are baptized. Baptism doesn’t save you any more than wearing a wedding ring makes you married. It is a symbol.

Let me give you a few other reasons why you should follow the Lord in believer’s baptism:

First, Jesus modeled it for us. Remember He came to John the Baptist one day and said, “John, I want you to baptize me.” John was confused. Why would Jesus want or need to be baptized. But Jesus said...

Matthew 3:15 - “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

Jesus didn’t need to be baptized for the reason we do, but Jesus wanted to do it to demonstrate how important it was for us.

Second, Jesus commanded it.

Matthew 28:19 - 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,

Matthew 28:20 - and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

So baptism is a matter of obedience to Christ’s command. Some of you are struggling with whether or not you are saved because you’ve never gone public with your faith in Jesus. Jesus said, “If you love me you will obey My commands.” You’re struggling because you’ve never admitted openly in the way the NT tells us to do by being baptized. Jesus never called secret disciples.

Third, baptism is a public step of membership in a local church.

Acts 2:41 - Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

So we learn from this that the people who were saved were expected to be baptized. They counted and kept track of the people who were baptized because they were becoming part of the church. So believer's baptism is the door of membership into a local church where you should be involved as a believer.

QUESTION #3 ~ WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

ANSWER: A person should be baptized as soon as possible after they are saved.

Acts 2:41 - Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

They were saved and baptized *that day*. Later in Acts 8 there's an Ethiopian man who was saved when a deacon named Philip witnessed to him. They were travelling along the road and ...

Acts 8:38 - And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

The consistent pattern in the NT is that a new believer is baptized as soon as possible after they are saved.

Some of you need to get your baptism on the right side of your salvation. The order is this: you're saved, then as quickly as possible after that you are baptized. Maybe earlier in your life you went forward during a church service and thought you wanted to be baptized. But looking back on it now you know you were not truly saved. But since then you have truly been saved; so you need to get your baptism on the right side of your salvation.

By the way, when children are saved we take a little extra time making sure they understand, so we have a New Christians Class for children before they are baptized.

QUESTION #4 ~ HOW SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

ANSWER: New believers should be baptized by immersion in water.

Remember baptism is a symbol or a picture. It's about something that happened to Jesus – His death, burial and resurrection.

Romans 6:3 – Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Romans 6:4 – 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.

So it's a picture of what happened to Jesus, but it's also a picture of what that happened to us. Like Jesus died, our old lost person is gone and we have been raised to walk in a new life just like Jesus was raised. The reason the NT calls for baptism by immersion is that immersion symbolizes these two truths in a way that sprinkling or pouring doesn't. Now you ask, "Well what about the other religions or denominations that sprinkle babies?" That's not NT baptism. Every instance of baptism in the New Testament was by immersion in water, not by sprinkling. So baptism is intended to be a powerful witness of the Gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection, and the new life that you in Him.

ILLUSTRATION – I have a vantage point in baptisms that most of you don't have. It's very special to me when I lay the new believer down into the water and their face is covered with water. When I begin to bring them up out of the water I get to see their face emerging from the water ... the water washing over their eyes, their nose, their mouth. What a picture of the new life we have in Jesus Christ.

INVITATION: At the bottom of the guest card there are some options for you to check. Someone will contact you by phone this week (so please make sure we have your contact information) and confirm with you and give you. Drop the card in the offering basket or take to the Guest Reception.