

## **Baptism In Biblical Perspective: The Bible Mode of Baptized**

**Matthew 28:16-20**

By [Dr. Harry Reeder III](#)

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Evening Sermon*

This is the third study on what does the Bible teach on baptism. I want to take a few moments to review. We have covered what is baptism and who is to be baptized. In this study we will look at how we are to engage in and implement baptism. Perhaps we will be taking a fresh look in the Scriptures concerning this matter and spending some time looking at it here.

Before we get there, I want to review some of what I have already mentioned. I want to remind you that baptism is a doctrine in a PCA church in general, and Briarwood in particular and in most evangelical churches I think I can safely say, is treated as a secondary doctrine. What do we mean by that? Do we mean that's an unimportant doctrine? Absolutely not. All Scriptures is inspired by God and profitable for teaching (2 Timothy 3:16). So everything from the Bible is important and everything from the Bible that's important is important in its teaching. But the Apostle Paul says, "I delivered to you those things of first importance (1 Corinthians 15:3)." If some things are of first importance then that stands to reason that some things are of second importance and I would suggest even in this study that we will handle something of tertiary or thirdly important and that's the mode of baptism. That doesn't mean it is unimportant, it just means its of secondary importance.

If I can put it this way, it means you can get this one wrong (the secondary one) and still be saved. Now, unless you have elevated baptism to the point of necessity of salvation then you have a primary error and a heresy in which you have denied the Gospel of grace by attaching a work to grace. Therefore the Bible is clear where we are saved by grace and our obedience to the Lord, even in baptism, is never a reason for our salvation or essential for our salvation. It is the fruit and the evidence of our salvation, our walk with the Lord. It is the righteousness of Christ that saves us and the blood of Jesus that cleanses us. Now, having said that, of course, we are looking at baptism as a secondary doctrine.

What is the first thing we learned about baptism? The first thing we learned about baptism is that it is the sign and seal of the New Covenant. It is a sacrament which is a divinely ordained instrument whereby God is encouraging and edifying His people. So, that's the first thing. What is baptism? It is a sacrament that has been designed by the Lord and instituted by the Lord. How do we know the sacraments that the Lord has instituted? First, He commanded them.

So let's look at the text for this study found in Matthew 28:16-20; **16** *Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.* **17** *And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.* **18** *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* **19** *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,* **20** *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

So not only does Jesus say to teach all that He has commanded but He gives a very specific commandment that the initiatory sign of the covenant is as believers and their households are brought into the covenant community what is the sign? The sign is baptism that He commands. The second part of a sacrament is not only did He command it but He modeled it. We studied the baptism of Jesus where He modeled as an identification point with His people. Thirdly, the Apostles command it in the early church and we find the Apostles commanding and practicing baptism. Fourthly, we find it instituted in the life of the church as it unfolds in the book of Acts. It is not only baptism but it's also the Lord's Supper as the Lord's Supper is instituted as a New Covenant sign also. It is the meal of fellowship and renewal of God's covenant people and therefore its also instituted.

Baptism replaces the Old Covenant sign of circumcision that identified the believer and the household as the believer and the male children ceremonial distinction between male and female as the believer and his male children received the sign of circumcision. Abraham engaged in what we might call believer's circumcision. He became a believer as an adult and was circumcised. The Gibeonites would be another example. They were circumcised as believers and of course, their children, why? It is because it is a sign from God declaring that He will fulfill what He has promised. It is very much like what takes place in a wedding ceremony. When a man makes covenant promises to a woman, what sign do you give to acknowledge the sincerity of your vows? The man says, "This ring" and she says, "I believe you." The ring doesn't make a marriage or profess a marriage. The ring is the covenant maker's sign that I will do what I promise. Then the other one by faith receives it.

I have tried to diagram this for you so let me work through this right quick. In your Bible you have the progressive unfolding of the covenant of grace. As Adam falls into sin God makes a covenant promise that I will send a seed through the woman that will win the victory over the serpent and will deliver My people from

their sins. That covenant with Adam is then built upon with a covenant with Noah in which the rainbow is the sign. It's not a believer's rainbow. It's not Noah's bow. It's God's bow. He says, "When you see My bow." It's God's sign. He says, "When you see it you'll remember what I promised" (Genesis 9:13-17). Don't you love that song that says, "I trace the rainbow through the rain." What a great hymn. What a great line – "In the clouds of life that come with the rain, I see the rainbow and know that God will be faithful to His promises until the end."

Then that covenant with Noah that went from horizon to horizon showing that God's grace is going to extend not only in common grace to all of humanity but redeeming grace will reach out to the nations and that is then built upon with Abraham. That is when the sign of circumcision is given for the believer and the household. God says, "I'll be a God to you and not only to you but to you and your children and your children after you." So here is this marvelous sign that's given in the Abrahamic covenant and that is followed by the Mosaic covenant. Now there's no need to command again to circumcise because everything in a previous covenant moves to the next covenant unless the subsequent covenant abrogates it, or alters it or removes it.

Now the covenant with Moses does abrogate and alter things from the Noahic covenant. In the Noahic covenant there was no distinction between clean and unclean animals. All animals had been given and now in the Mosaic covenant there's clean and unclean as God uses that as a teaching point.

But circumcision just continues on as it was instituted and now another sign and seal of the Old Covenant is given and that is circumcision as the covenant sign of renewal practiced on a yearly basis to renew the covenant relationship. That of course is then built upon by the Davidic covenant and then as the people are scattered and brought back the covenant is reestablished. Then after 400 years of silence, finally all of these covenants, like stair steps, have built to the promise that God had given throughout His covenants. "Abraham in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel 2, prophesy after prophesy says, "I'm going to have a new Israel.

That new Israel is going to be drawn from all the nations and I'm going to have a new Israel and I'm going to bring them into a new land and I will give them a new kingdom. That new covenant is coming and in that covenant you'll have a Mediator who does not need a mediator. That Mediator can be your Intercessor, Messiah, the Prophet, Priest and King." That One of course comes in the final step of the covenant of grace from Adam to Noah, to Abraham to Moses, to David and then finally the new covenant with Jesus Christ. Now it is all 'yes' and 'amen' in Him, all of the promises of God.

Circumcision and Passover have now pointed us to this Savior and this Savior has become our circumcision as He cuts away our sin record and nails it to the cross, as He cuts away our old heart and gives us a new heart which is

justification and regeneration. This Savior is also our Passover Lamb. He is our Passover, our sanctification, our daily walk with the Lord as He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He is the Lamb of God who covers us with His blood.

Now He gives two new signs which are baptism and the Lord's Supper. So now let's just fast forward. As we fast forward we have circumcision which is a bloody sign and the Passover which is a bloody sign in which both are engaging where one is a symbolic sacrifice (circumcision) and the other is the actual sacrifice of a lamb (Passover) pointing to Christ and they are said to be eternal signs and seals because they are everlastingly fulfilled in Christ. Now the Lord replaces them with bloodless sacrifices that point back to Him just as circumcision and the Passover pointed to Christ and Him crucified, now baptism and the Lord's Supper point back to Christ and Him crucified that the sacrifice has been given. No blood needs to be shed for the blood has been shed and we are forgiven in Jesus Christ.

What is baptism? It is the sign and seal of the New Covenant. It is not a converting act. You will never hear me call any baptism, believers or their seed, a christening. That comes from a branch of the church that gives power to baptism as if it Christianizes someone. That's where the phrase christening comes from. Baptism doesn't make anyone a Christian but neither is baptism simply the sign of our faith.

More than that it is not our sign, it is God's sign. Just like you can go out of here and come to a city limit sign in Birmingham and say, "I'm in Birmingham" because the sign indicates Birmingham. But if you dig up the Birmingham sign and take it home you didn't take Birmingham home with you. You can have the substance. You can be saved without the sign and you can have the sign and not be saved. So the sign is not a converting act. It is a confirming act of what God has done. Baptism is God's sign to us of His promises that we receive.

Who is to be baptized? That depends on what you believe the promises of God are. We believe that for 2000 years, well actually 1800 years, God gave us promise, "I'll be a God to you, to those of you who come and put your trust in Me." Abraham believed in the Lord and it was credited to him as righteousness. "I will be a God to you and to your children after you." God, how do we tell You we believe Your promise to us and our covenant children? You take the sign. Now I have come to the New Covenant, the sign has changed but has the promise changed? We don't believe the promise has changed. Dare I say because of the unity of the Scriptures, I really am not under obligation, I say this gently and I would love to discuss it with you, and yes there are believers and their household but that's not the reason we baptize believers and their children. The reason we baptize believers and their children is because the promise that was given in the Old Testament moves to the New Testament and not only is it not altered or abrogated but it's reaffirmed. The very first time when you have Jews present if

there's anytime to alter the promise the children of Abraham were there and he says, "The promise of this New Covenant and the out pouring of the Spirit of God in this covenant is for you and your children and not only you and your children but for all who are a far off even as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself as He gather this new Israel from all the nations."

This is why the Apostle Paul when he is arguing with a woman and saying, "Don't leave your unbelieving husband, don't do that. Stay with him. Remain in the state in which you were called. Do you not know that your presence sanctifies? (1 Corinthians 7:12-14)." It doesn't save them but it sanctifies them. It puts them within the orbit of God's covenant blessings as they taste and see God's covenant goodness and what is Paul's reason or a point of reasoning? Your presence believer, sanctifies your unbeliever, you bring a witness right there and there's the presence of the Holy Spirit and the good things to come right within your household because you're there and its affecting your spouse, are not your children holy? See, he automatically assumes that you know that your children are holy. It doesn't mean that they are born saved. It doesn't mean that they are pure. It doesn't mean that they are innocent. The word holy means set apart. They are born lost but they have been set apart. They are within the orbit of God's covenant blessings and they are able to taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

That's why as soon as the covenant goes to the Gentiles and gets to a Philippian jailer who hears "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, you and your household" and we went through the text in the last study, who is the believer there? It says that he believed yet he led his household into rejoicing in the believer and his household was baptized. So there are 20 plus baptisms. They are demonstrably believers in the household except for the Ethiopian eunuch who, I won't explain the details behind that, would not have a household. Then there were the rebaptisms of John's disciples who had not heard of the doctrine of the Trinity much less understood the Gospel of grace. So it is for believers and their household as the examples from the Old Testament show us and the application of circumcision. Then there are the examples in the New Testament where the sign has changed but not the promise but the one thing that has changed is the ceremonial distinction between male and female has been removed along with the distinction between Jew and Gentile and bond and free.

Now, the question is how are we to be baptized? This is of tertiary importance. Harry, why would you say this is of tertiary importance? Well, what is baptism? That is of secondary importance because people can miss that and still be saved. Who is to be baptized? This deals with the subjects of baptism. Is it just believers or is it believers and their seed? This also would be of secondary importance unless you are telling people that baptism saves them. But this is even of tertiary importance because while we counsel and teach toward pouring and sprinkling we of course accept immersion because we don't believe it is of

that A) great of importance and B) there is room enough for discussion among believers in terms of how baptism was applied in the New Testament.

Having said that and having actually left the ministry for six months to settle this issue I came trying to come at it fresh because I came from a background where I would have said this to a Presbyterian, "Now do you baptize or sprinkle?" Obviously I had already settled the argument by the way I asked the question. Instead of asking the question "Do you baptize by immersion, pouring or sprinkling?" I would say, "Do you baptize or do you sprinkle?" So this was an issue that I had to work my way through in terms of where I was going to be as a minister. I don't think its of final importance in terms of my church membership unless a church is teaching me, again, that baptism is essential for salvation and that means they are not preaching the Gospel. Also, our confession makes clear that we received those that have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit by Gospel believing churches in the Trinitarian formula with water and we don't measure out how much water or how much of the body was covered with it.

So, why would we pour? Why would we sprinkle? Let me walk you through the Scripture and ask you a little bit of freshness in your own mind as you work through it. You don't have to be like me and leave your job for six months and work your way through it but perhaps you might take some time to do it as well. Let me give you seven reasons why I believe the Bible calls upon us for pouring and sprinkling. The first reason is because of the breadth, use and meaning of the word baptizo and its accompanying sister word bapto. Its breadth, its usage in the Bible, its various forms basically means to immerse yet you can find both in the Scripture and outside of the Scripture where it's used in various ways that would not be capable of immersion.

I'll just show you one in just a moment in which a discussion of baptizo and bapto is there. By the way sometimes its used to speak of a ship that has sunk. That's not immersion that's submersion. I don't think you want me to do that to you. I have thought about that when someone says, "I just want to be immersed" and I think "Okay I'll just hold you under until you bubble and we'll get the whole thing for you there." So it has multiple usages but basically what it means in the context of Scripture is a ritual cleansing or a ritual washing. That's why discussions on ritual cleansings came up between disciples of Jesus and disciples of John and some of the Jewish people there.

In John 3 John is out baptizing. He baptized at the River Jordan and he also baptized at a place called the Springs of Aenon. I took a group of people one time to the Springs of Aenon and the next thing I knew we were besieged by tanks, jeeps, and Special Forces from the Israeli army. I had found out where the Springs of Aenon were but I didn't realize we were in no mans land. They had been watching us from a tower where this bus is going up into no mans land and they descended on us like vultures but I was able to see the Springs of Aenon

where they were bubbling up with many and much water that is there. John 3:22-24 says, **22** *After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. 23 John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized 24* (for John had not yet been put in prison).

Here's Jesus doing baptism. Here's John doing baptism and what happens? John 3:25 goes on to say, **25** *Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification.* Why? It is because baptism is a ritual of purification. It's a washing. It's a ceremonial cleansing. It has its roots in the Old Testament of washing or ceremonial cleansing. So they began to discuss this whole issue of purification.

Let me show you an example where baptism would have been practiced as a ritual of purification. It is in John 2 where the wedding of Cana takes place. To come to the wedding one of the things you would have to do is baptize your hands. You would have to be baptized. You would have to be ceremonial cleansed. John 2:6 says, *"Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons."* I've been there to that very Cana and I have seen the clay pots from that era with their narrow opening and holding 20 to 30 gallons. Many of us have not lost enough weight to be able to fit through the opening hole to fit to the top and enough water to immerse us. So what would happen? You would walk in and you would hold your hands out and rub them while they would pour water over them. Harry, why would they have to be near rivers and springs?

Why is it that the Ethiopian eunuch is out in the middle of the desert? There is this little stream that is still there today. I'm not trying to be humorous with this but you couldn't roll over and enough times to get immersed in this little stream. That's how small it is out in the desert. You could damn it up and wait a while I guess but the Ethiopian eunuch looks at it after he comes to Jesus and says, "Look water, running water." They weren't using stagnant water. You needed rivers and springs because these were rites of cleansing and for rites of cleansing you needed water that was running for it to be appropriately used for cleansing. It didn't have to do with the depth of the water. It had to do with the fact that it was running water that was needed in terms of cleansing itself.

Here's a second thing to consider and that is some of the geographical issues around some of the acts of baptism. In about a month or so I'm going to have the privilege to take about 80+ people to Israel. People ask me all the time, "Harry are you safe there?" I am safe where ever I am following Jesus and I am following Jesus there and I will be following some of His footsteps when I'm there. So what if something happens? That's a great place to go to heaven from and I'm ready to go but one of the things I love to do is to go to certain places. I've been to the place of the traditional site of the wedding feast in Cana and I've also been in Jerusalem where in one day there may have been 3000 which may

have included households are baptized. Jerusalem is on a hill and being on a hill there is no river on that hill. They wouldn't have used a pool and even the two pools that are there, the pool of Siloam is entirely too small. The pool of Bethesda is one you couldn't have used because it is 40 feet down on each side and you can't walk off into it. The spring that runs through Hezekiah's tunnel is entirely incapable of it. You don't have geographically the ability to do 3000 immersion baptisms on that hill in Jerusalem. There are other issues like the Ethiopian eunuch and the Philippian jailer that seems to have been baptized within the house on a night. All of those issues are there but again that's not the ultimate reason those are just some things to consider.

The third thing to consider has to do with Old Testament baptisms. Hebrews 6 and Hebrews 9 tell us that we are to move beyond the baptisms. Now remember, baptism is not a right imported from Greek thought. Baptism is an Old Testament act. There were multiple kinds of baptisms in the Old Testament. Hebrews 6 and Hebrews 9 tells the Hebrew Christians, "Now that you have come to Christ move on from the washings, move on from the rites of purification, move on from the elementary things of the baptisms of the Old Testament." Hebrews 9 begins to outline three of those baptisms. There were baptisms with blood. There were baptisms with water and there were baptisms with oil. Those kinds of baptisms were done in the Old Testament. As you go through the Old Testament ritual cleansings, whether blood, water or oil, all of the predecessors of New Testament baptism are done by pouring with sprinkling being the effect.

The only time that immersion is ordered by the Lord in terms of Divine Fiat and decree, what happens? Salvation doesn't happen. Judgment happens. Whenever God wanted to judge people He either covered them with fire like Jericho or He would cover it with water like in the flood of Noah. Immersion doesn't become the sign of salvation it becomes the act of God of judgment of covering over a people.

The fourth reason is the two New Testament acts that are selected from the Old Testament are as types of baptism. In the New Testament there are two acts in the Old Testament that are used as types of baptism in the New Testament. In other words, the writers of the New Testament inspired by the Spirit of God look into the Old Testament account and they pick two events and bring it to the New Testament and declare them as types of baptism. I want to show you those two. The first one is in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4; **1** *For I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink.*

Here, Paul, in writing to the Christians at Corinth goes back to an event in redemptive history of the people of Israel being delivered out of bondage and then coming through the Red Sea. He identifies that as a baptism, now not baptized in the name of Christ, in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit



but they are baptized into Moses and he says that's a baptism. Now the question is was Israel immersed? The answer is obviously no because they went through on dry land. Who was immersed? Pharaoh and his army were immersed in judgment. One commentator said, "They walked through on dry land, Pharaoh was immersed and the people walk through on dry land under the cloud where it might have been sprinkling rain from the cloud at that moment." I'm not willing to go that far but clearly the people of Israel were not immersed in this Old Testament act that is identified as a type of baptism. On the contrary, they go through on the dry land and it is the judgment of immersing Pharaoh and his army that takes place.

The second one is found in 1 Peter where we have this wonderfully interesting text and I won't explain it all in its ramifications because there are some interesting dynamics to it but we will look at 1 Peter 3:18-22;

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, 19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. 21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Here is an interesting passage of scripture that says Noah and his household, so here we have a household baptism, in the ark going safely through the water is declared as corresponding to baptism. Now again, when it says baptism saves you it is very clear that it is not the application of water that washes you, it's not the act of baptism that saves you but the substance which is an appeal by faith to God for a clear conscience through the redeeming work of Christ.

Having understood that it's not the act of baptism that saves but the substance of that which it represents which is the redeeming work of the Mediator of the new covenant, Jesus Christ and the declaration of His victory and His resurrection, we come back to see here is a household baptism. Here is a household baptism of a believer, Noah with his household, and as they go through the waters that corresponds to baptism. Was Noah and his family immersed? I am not a shipbuilder but the more I study the ark I can't find any evidence that it's a submarine. I just can't see it working as a submarine. I don't think it went under the water. It rode on top of the water with the rain sprinkling down upon it. Who was immersed? Everyone else was immersed that didn't enter the ark which was in judgment but Noah and his family were brought through it and then deposited.

Those two types of baptism are articulated in the New Testament. The fifth thing to consider is the Old Testament use of immersion and its symbolism as judgment which we have already covered. The sixth thing to consider is the Old Testament prophecies of the new covenant and its sign. In Ezekiel 36 the Lord gives this promise of this marvelous new covenant that is coming. You will find these new covenant promises that are quoted in the Old Testament in Joel 2, Ezekiel 36, Jeremiah 31, throughout three different places in the book of Isaiah and here in Ezekiel 36 is this declaration concerning the new Israel that God is about to bring forth. Ezekiel 36:22-27 says,

22 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. 23 And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. 24 I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

So here is this promise of a new heart, a new record, a new family, a new land, a new home and what is the sign that has been placed upon those who have been called out? He says, “I will sprinkle clean water upon them” for He is the one who is cleansing them from their sin. The seventh and final reason to consider would be the baptism of Jesus. So let me go back over it again. You have the breadth and the meaning and the use of the word baptizo and its sister word bapto. You also have the geographical issues that seem to mitigate against a consistent or necessary interpretation of immersion. You have the Old Testament baptisms of blood, water and oil that were all by pouring and sprinkling. You have the Old Testament types of baptisms in the New Testament that we looked at in 1 Corinthians 10 and 1 Peter 3 which point us toward pouring and sprinkling and that immersion’s usage and symbolism actually is one of judgment and not salvation in the Old Testament. You have the Old Testament prophecies of the new covenant that are used in the New Testament and the Ezekiel 36 that gives the new covenant sign which is the sprinkling of clean water upon them.

Then finally what about following Jesus in baptism? Let’s look at Matthew 3 and the baptism of Jesus as we conclude our study. If you would like greater treatment of the baptism of Jesus let me encourage you to check out my sermon on Matthew 3 online at our Briarwood website. We will briefly look at it here. Matthew 3:13-17 says,

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. 16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

I want to point out a couple of thoughts from this text in Matthew 3. After I spoke on this a couple of Sundays ago some people came up to me and said, "Look pastor this is teaching immersion because verse 16 says, *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water...*" Honestly I don't think that is a fair rendering of the text because the text isn't making coming up out of the water a part of the act of baptism, it was the act of Jesus after He had been baptized. In other words to be baptized He went down into the water and the water was applied. How do I think the water was applied? I think it was picked up and poured over His head and it sprinkled down. Having knelt in the water He came up and Luke tells us He ascended up and prayed and then Jesus was baptized by the Father with the Holy Spirit was poured out upon Him. The Holy Spirit is then poured out upon Him. So this coming up out of the water is not the act of baptism, it is the act of Jesus, notice after He was baptized He immediately came up out of the water. Baptism is done so now what does He do? He can't stay in the water forever. He comes up out of the water on the bank.

Do we have any clues in the text as to how Jesus might have been baptized? The clue of course is found in the interchange between John and Jesus. John says to Jesus, "I shouldn't baptize you use should baptize me" but Jesus says this to him, "Permit it at this time for in this way, baptism, is fitting for us, me and you John, to fulfill righteousness." Now, what is righteousness? Righteousness is the opposite of sin. What is sin? Sin is the transgression of God's law. What is righteousness? Righteousness is obedience to God's law. So what in the law is Jesus talking about? Whatever it is as soon as Jesus says it John knows exactly what Jesus was talking about. I believe John knows what Jesus is talking about because he is six months older than Jesus and he too is a priest. I believe that's why he knows exactly what Jesus is talking about. John would have gone through this same process to be obedient to the law himself because his baptism would have authority as a baptism with the authority of heaven because he was also a priest who could apply the cleansing act of baptism. John was not only a prophet but he was also a priest.

Here is Jesus, the Anointed One, who is the Prophet, the Priest and the King. A prophet could begin his ministry whenever God called him. A king could begin his ministry whenever He called him but in the institution of the Levitical priesthood

which Jesus subsumes by being according to the order of Melchizedek, they begin according to Numbers 4:1 at age 30, those who enter the tent of meeting. So why does Jesus began his ministry at age 30? Why does John begin his ministry as it seems to indicate at age 30? It is because historically age 30 was when the priest began their ministry. I think Jesus could have pulled it off when he was 14, 16, 18 and I don't mean this irreverently but remember Jesus is under the law so that we might be under grace. Therefore Jesus is being obedient to the law at every point. So He needs now to be ordained into the priesthood and you had to be ordained by another priest.

What is John? He is a priest. How do we know he is a priest? John's father is Zachariah who was in the holy of holies. Zachariah is a priest and that makes John a priest. Now here comes a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, Jesus, the Prophet, the Priest, the King, and He is now at this time ready to be inaugurated into His ministry, ordained into it. How would that be done? First look at Numbers 4:1-3; *1 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 2 "Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their clans and their fathers' houses, 3 from thirty years old up to fifty years old, all who can come on duty, to do the work in the tent of meeting.* This passage tells us that priests began their ministry at age 30.

How did they begin? The institution of their ministry is given in Numbers 8. This passage is another one of those ritual cleansings but this one is not with blood or oil, it is with water. Numbers 8:5-7 says, *5 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 6 "Take the Levites from among the people of Israel and cleanse them. 7 Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of purification upon them...* Then he goes on to say various other things that were to be done for obedience to the law but what was this one that Jesus was coming to John for? He was coming to be cleansed and how were you to be cleansed? The way he was cleansed is the water had to be sprinkled. How do I think it happened? I think they went into the running water, whether it was the springs of Aenon that was bubbling up or the River Jordan or wherever there was running water, for the ritual act of cleansing they would go down into the water, they would kneel, the water would be poured over them and it would sprinkled down upon them. Thus the act of cleansing would be so declared. I believe it is exactly in the study of how Jesus was baptized that I came to my final conviction of how the Bible would teach and counsel toward baptism.

Where does immersion come from? Basically there are two texts that are appealed to and I won't go to both of them but I would like to conclude by looking at Romans 6. Again, this is an intramural discussion among our fellow believers in terms of mode of baptism and needs to be treated in such a manner. I want you to understand that this isn't something that is done out of a mere tradition but out of literally 2100 years of conviction in the majority report of the church, in terms of how baptism is to be applied with pouring and sprinkling as the effect.

So why is that? Here are some of the biblical reasons that I have tried to share with you in this study. So what about this matter of baptism? Romans 6:1-5 says,

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Harry, there it is. There is buried, see we go down and then raised up with a resurrection. I can certainly see that but let me just quickly tell you that there are a number of Baptist theologians who will not take this is water baptism but as Spirit baptism because it says do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into his death and resurrection which would be true of all who have received the baptism with the Holy Spirit but not true of all who have water baptism.

But be that as it may, I would suggest to you that this text is not giving you the mode of baptism but the declaration of baptism, just as the Lord's supper point you back to the death and resurrection of Jesus so the baptism in its declaration of where our hope is points us back to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is not giving us a manner of baptism but the declaration of the foundation of baptism. Besides that, in actuality, don't read European and North American burial practices back into the ancient near East, in the ancient near East it is hard to go down because that's just solid rock. Most of the time, just like Jesus, it's not down and up because when Jesus died what did they do? They put Him in a cave and then He walked out. I think you can still insist on the laying down and getting up but in actuality His burial was putting him under the earth. His burial was putting Him in a cave and He came out. In terms of the way they buried then it would have been into a cave and come out of a cave.

Let me encourage you to work your way through the Scriptures in this matter but let me tell you what not to do. Don't come and say to me, "Harry, I just want to do immersion because I just feel like its better." Folks, we are Christians and that means our practice is what is rooted in what the Bible teaches. That's all I ask you to do. Go to what you think the Bible teaches not what you think feels good or what looks. We don't invent baptism either its meaning or its mode and it's not a matter of what we want it to be. It's a matter of what is the consistent interpretation of the Scripture. That's all I challenge you and ask you to do. Harry, are all baptisms valid? No, there are some alien baptisms. What is it that is crucial about baptism to be acceptable? There are three things - water, Gospel believing church, and in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit,

believing in the true doctrine of the Trinity. Those are the absolute essential things.

Harry, what if they immerse? Praise the Lord. Harry, what if they pour? Praise the Lord. Harry, what if I believe in immersion? I think you ought to give the liberty to say while you don't believe in pouring, it's an irregular baptism and not a non-baptism, just as an aspersionist, I believe that an immersion may be an irregular baptism but it is not a non-Christian-baptism. I believe that is what the Bible would call us to be in terms of charity to one another in this tertiary doctrine.

Finally, what about re-baptisms? I don't believe in re-baptisms. In other words, when someone comes to me about baptism we have to go back and say was it a Gospel believing church, was it with water, and was it in the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit? If it's a biblical baptism then it's a biblical baptism and it rests upon God's authority in a Gospel church. It doesn't rest upon us.

Sometimes I wish in the new covenant we still circumcise. I just can't imagine anybody coming up to me and saying, "You know Harry that first circumcision just wasn't very meaningful to me, could we do another one please?" I just don't think they would do that but anyway its baptism, that's what it is and what you must become convinced of is that the baptism was an alien baptism and not faithful to God's Word. Then you are not being re-baptized you were being baptized. It wasn't a Gospel believing church. It wasn't faithful to the word of God or I don't believe it conforms to what the Bible teaches about baptism. Then you are not being re-baptized you are the clearing it wasn't a baptism and then you are baptized. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together. Thank You for the privilege to be in Your Word and to work our way through these challenging situations. Thank You for these men and women and their love for You. Would You send us forth with the ability to major on the majors and minor on the minors and yet realize all doctrines are important and root what we believe in what the Scripture faithfully teaches and help us to be faithful to it, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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