



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V23 N38 September 19, 2021

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Salvation by Grace

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

"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."

Ephesians 2:8-9



What's so important about baptism?

THE MESSAGE OF BAPTISM

Matthew 3:13-17

"I want to be baptized!" I almost dropped the phone when my international student friend blurted out this demand. I had been meeting him weekly for a semester. Each week we read a Bible passage and discussed the Gospel. We had read some in the OT, the Gospels, the Epistles and even in the book of Revelation. We had never, ever discussed baptism.

"How do you even know about baptism?" I asked him in shock. He told me he had seen some people in his own country baptized. He said that before he went back home he wanted to be baptized. He said if he did not get baptized now, he might never do so. I scheduled a time to talk face to face and began praying for my friend to fully understand the Gospel and the biblical purpose of baptism.

We met at a coffee shop the next day. My friend told me he was ready to become a follower of Jesus. We discussed what sin looked like in his life and his need for a Savior (Romans 3 and 6). We also discussed how Jesus died to pay the price for his sin (2 Cor. 5 and Mark 10:45). We also discussed how he needed to place his faith in Jesus for salvation and eternal life. I was more concerned that my friend understood the Gospel than the act of baptism.

"If I accept Jesus as my savior by faith, then I can get baptized?" he asked, visibly excited. "Why is it so important to you to get baptized?" I asked. I had never experienced a person so excited about baptism.

"I want to do something that says to my parents, my friends and all I know, that I, as an adult, am choosing to believe in Jesus and follow a way of life that is entirely of my own choosing. My family has told me what to believe and how to behave. I am grateful for my family. But I feel trapped by their ways and find no joy in their traditions. Jesus has brought light, joy and peace into my life. I want to do something that shows to all that I have decided to follow Jesus with my life and heart."

I smiled. My friend understood the Gospel of Jesus and the purpose of baptism. We did discuss the symbolic nature of baptism and

affirmed that it in no way washed away sins or conferred any form of grace. Baptism is a public display of private and personal faith in Jesus Christ. My friend agreed. He prayed a prayer asking for forgiveness from God. He asked Jesus to be his Lord and Savior. After he prayed he then opened his calendar. "When?"

We found a nearby pool and invited a few friends. Around 7:00 pm on a weeknight, about a dozen people gathered and celebrated the faith and baptism of our new brother in Christ.

In western culture, we often think of faith as hard and baptism as easy. Helping someone see the light of the Gospel is often our focus, and baptism is considered an afterthought. Theologically, prayers of faith are necessary for salvation and water baptism serves as a confirming witness to the primacy of faith. But missionally, we may need to give more emphasis to water baptism to verify the fullness of the faith in the hearts of those we evangelize.

Many faiths are attracted to the message of Jesus. Many read Jesus' words with reverence. I know many who place an image of Jesus in their shrines and make offerings to him as they do to their ancestors and gods. While many have a fondness for Jesus, few will go on record to declare that they are choosing to follow Jesus totally. Most intuitively know that the public display of baptism removes all doubt of allegiance to Jesus. To be baptized in many countries is a statement of denouncement of the past and embrace of something new.

In baptism we proclaim our God-given identity as his children (John 1:12). Just as Jesus was proclaimed to be God's Son (Matthew 3:16-17), we similarly rise out of baptismal waters declaring to all that we have experienced in salvation the washing away of our sins through God's forgiveness and now walk in the power of his resurrection. We are choosing to live totally immersed in the grace of God and under the power of the Holy Spirit. Inviting someone to faith is Christ is evangelism. Inviting someone to celebrate that faith in baptism is the beginning of true worship and discipleship.

Matthew 3:13-17

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline the name of Jesus used throughout Matthew 3:13-17.
- Circle each use of John's name in Matthew 3:13-17.
- Draw a line between the two same action words used in Matthew 3:13, 14 and 3:16.
- Place brackets around John's statement in Matthew 3:14.
- Place double brackets around the statement of Jesus in Matthew 3:15.
- Place triple brackets around the statement of the voice from heaven in Matthew 3:17.
- Draw a line from the word "this" in Matthew 3:15 to what it refers to in Matthew 3:13.
- Draw a box around each member of the Trinity identified in Matthew 3:16-17.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What does the journey of Jesus to John say about Jesus' stature and attitude?
2. Why would John object to baptizing Jesus?
3. How is baptism a "proper" thing to do?
4. What did Jesus' baptism fulfill?
5. John consented to baptize Jesus. Why is this important?
6. What does the description of the action in Matthew 3:16 suggest about baptism?
7. What does the "dove" symbolize in Matthew 3:16?
8. How do you know who is speaking in Matthew 3:17?
9. What is the significance of the love and pleasure of the Father for the Son?
10. People were confessing their sins when John was baptizing them (Matthew 3:6). Jesus had no sin (2 Cor. 5:21). So why was Jesus baptized?

John's baptism plays a prominent role in the beginning of each of the four Gospels. John "the Baptist" is presented by each Gospel writer as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of one preparing the way for the coming of the Lord (Isaiah 40:3). John announced the coming King and kingdom with a call to repentance for the people of Israel. He commanded that the children of Abraham repent of their sins and humble themselves in the act of baptism. Jewish law and tradition prescribed washings of purification before participation in temple rituals. John's baptism was different. John was baptizing in the Jordan, far from the temple, and was calling people to be cleansed of their sins, not just skin or clothing contagions that would make one ceremonially unclean. A "skin-cleansed" people would be ready to enter the temple, but a "sin-cleansed" people would be ready for the entrance of the LORD in their midst.

Apart from cleansing practices related to temple worship, baptism/washing was administered to Gentile proselytes converting to Judaism. "There is general agreement that the tradition that the male proselyte was required to undergo circumcision and baptism, and to offer a sacrifice is trustworthy. This tradition clearly refers to the time prior to the destruction of the Temple" (H. H. Rowley, "Jewish Proselyte Baptism and the Baptism of John," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 1940, 321). John was challenging people with Jewish pedigrees to submit to the humbling practice of proselyte baptism, all in confessional preparation for the arrival of the Lord's Messiah. You can understand why Pharisees and Sadducees came out to John to investigate the controversial practice of using proselyte baptism on ethnically advantaged Jews.

In summary, John's baptism accomplished three things: 1) It called people (particularly Jewish people) to repent of their sins to prepare for the coming of the LORD (Matthew 3:1-6). 2) It moved people away from temple and traditional practices with expectation of national judgment (Matthew 3:7-12). 3) It announced the arrival of the Messiah himself (Matthew 3:13-17).

Jesus' demand of John to be baptized (Matthew 3:13-15) highlighted the authority of Jesus. Jesus traveled many miles, leaving Galilee, with a determination to begin his ministry with the prophesied forerunner's commendation and proclamation. Jesus humbled himself to be baptized by John, even though he was greater than John (Matthew 3:14).

As Lord and Messiah, Jesus transitioned John's baptism from an experience of anticipation into a celebration of accomplishment. Jesus was not baptized because he was sinful. John tried to deter Jesus from being baptized (Matthew 3:14) because he saw Jesus as superior to him-

self in all categories – moral, spiritual, etc.. Yet Jesus pressed John for baptism to fulfill the righteous culmination of the arrival of the Lord's Messiah. The right and proper culmination of John's baptism was the heralding of the arrival of the Messiah. It would be "unright" and "improper" for a forerunner to not reveal the one whose coming he was predicting. For Jesus, baptism (Matthew 3:16-17) was a triumphal display of who Christ is and always has been rather than a pleading for the diffusion of past transgressions. Jesus' change of the meaning of baptism was an expression of divine authority on the same level as Jesus' command over Sabbath (Matthew 12:8) and Passover (Matthew 26:26-30) traditions.

Jesus had done nothing publically in ministry, according to the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 3:13). His baptism trumpeted the love and pleasure of God the Father for the Son. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit, completing the triune expression of divine fulfillment. The Father is eternally pleased with the Son, even though the Son was just beginning his earthly ministry. With the baptism of Jesus, John the Baptist's work was completed. John is mentioned as only a prisoner and martyr after Jesus' baptism in the Gospels.

In a manner similar to Christ's readjustment of John's baptism, Christian baptism (Matthew 28:19; Romans 6:3-5) celebrates what has already been accomplished for the believer through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Believers in Jesus, both Jew and Gentile, are to obey Jesus' command to be baptized and live out that baptism as fully immersed in the grace of God and the power of his Spirit. Our Central Bible Church Statement of Faith describes baptism with the following words: "The ordinance of baptism is for those who have personally accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Baptism is an outward manifestation and testimony of the spiritual change which occurred in the believer's life when he accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. Our mode of baptism is immersion because it more closely typifies the believer's relationship with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection; and, it is the mode of baptism modeled in the New Testament (Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:36-38)."

The baptism of John anticipated the Savior. The baptism of the church celebrates the finished work of the Savior. The baptism of John longed for the coming of the King. Christian baptism declares that Jesus is our King, who has conquered sin and death and empowers us to live a lives of righteousness and love in the power of his resurrection. If you are a believer in Christ, arrange to be baptized now. If you have been baptized, live like it, showing the world what a life immersed in grace and truth really looks like. God will be greatly pleased!

Word Studies/Notes

v. 13 *Jesus came* “Many suggestions have been given as to why the historical Jesus took the step of coming to Jesus for baptism. ... Perhaps minimally one can say that (a) he felt impelled by God to do so; (b) he was convinced of the rightness of the thrust of John’s ministry; and (c) he wanted to be publicly identified with the radical orientation towards God to which people were committing themselves in coming for baptism” (John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC, 152).

v. 14 *deter* “Given the embarrassment of some early Christian traditions that Jesus accepted baptism from one of lower status than himself, it is now inconceivable that early Christians made up the story of John baptizing Jesus. Although Jesus alone did not need John’s baptism—he was the giver of the true baptism (3:11) — he submitted to it to fulfill God’s plan (3:14–15). In a traditional Mediterranean culture where society stressed honor and shame, Jesus relinquishes his rightful honor to embrace others’ shame. After Jesus’ public act of humility, God publicly honors Jesus as his own son (3:16–17; compare 2:15) — that is, as the mightier one whose coming to bestow the spirit John had prophesied (3:11–12)” (Craig S. Keener, *Matthew, Vol.1*, IVPNTC, Section 3:13–17).

v. 15 *Let it be so* “Without a careful reading of the text, one might conclude that Jesus thought that he also needed conversion and purification, as did the crowd (3:2, 6). But John quickly dispels that possibility, because he knows Jesus’ identity as the One bringing the messianic baptism: ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ This is the more powerful One who inaugurates the kingdom that John has been proclaiming. Only at Jesus’ insistence (‘Let it be so now’) does John consent to baptize Jesus, because ‘it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness’ (3:15). Jesus’ baptism has far more significance than we might think.” (Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, NIV Application Commentary, 139).

v. 15 *fulfill* “In Jesus’ baptism he and John fulfill the Scriptures by introducing the Messiah to Israel. This baptism, as the inauguration of Jesus’ ministry to Israel, leads immediately to biblical fulfillment in that the Spirit as a dove comes upon the Messiah (Isa. 11:1–2; 42:1; cf. Matt. 12:18, 28) and the Father endorses his Son in the voice from heaven (Ps. 2:7; Isa. 42:1; cf. Matt. 17:5). In baptism Jesus, as the Suffering Servant, proclaims and exemplifies the righteousness envisioned by the prophets. Fulfilling all righteousness implies that Jesus’ baptism is a key event in unfolding everything that will eventually be entailed in rightly relating the world to God” (David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT, 119).

v. 15 *righteousness* “Indicates a basic meaning of the conduct which God expects of his people. This might be taken to mean only that John’s baptism is a divinely instituted ordinance which therefore it is ‘right’ for everyone to submit to. But the statement that it is ‘fitting for us’ to fulfill this *dikaïosynē* indicates that Jesus is thinking of something specific to his own and John’s role rather than of a general principle. ... By first identifying with John’s proclamation Jesus lays the foundation for his own mission to take on where John has left off. Further, as Jesus is baptized along with others at the Jordan, he is identified with all those who by accepting John’s baptism have declared their desire for a new beginning with God. He thus prepares for his own role in ‘bearing their weaknesses’ (8:17)” (RT France, *Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, 119).

v. 16 *heaven* “The opening of heaven is familiar elsewhere in the NT as an expression for a visionary experience (John 1:51; Acts 7:56; 10:11; Rev 4:1; 19:11). There is a significant OT parallel in Ezek 1:1 where Ezekiel, standing beside a river, also sees heaven opened and receives a theophanic vision and hears God’s voice commissioning him for his prophetic role and giving him the Spirit (Ezek 2:2). Isa 63:19 asks God to tear the heavens and come down to redeem his people. The opening of heaven is the prelude to the divine communication which follows and especially to the visible descent of the Spirit” (France, 121).

v. 16 *Spirit* “The descent of the Spirit of God recalls well-known messianic prophecies in Isaiah which say that God will place his Spirit upon his chosen servant (Isa 11:2; 42:1; 61:1). This is not to say that Jesus has hitherto been without the Spirit, since Matthew has attributed his birth to the Spirit (1:18, 20). But now as the Spirit ‘comes upon him’ Jesus is visibly equipped and commissioned to undertake his messianic mission. The one who is to ‘baptize in the Holy Spirit’ (v. 11) must first himself be endowed with the Spirit. If the coming of the Spirit is to be visible, however, some visual form is needed” (France, 122).

v. 17 *Son* “The significance of a tie to Ps. 2:7 would be to identify a messianic element in the language of sonship. ... Since ... Matthew obviously has no difficulty juxtaposing the Sonship of Jesus in reference to a quite exalted christology with reference to his identity as one who recapitulates the history of his people, there should be no difficulty in principle with including a messianic element as well. ‘Son of God’ will refer to the messiah on the lips of the high priest in Mt. 26:63, and probably no more is intended on the lips of those who mock in 27:40, 43. But even in these references Matthew is likely to be interested in an ironic fuller sense. ... Sonship refers to a special status and relationship with God which the messiah may experience” (Nolland, 158).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Father God of Heaven is pleased when a faithful servant acts humbly and publicly fulfills all that is in God's plan. In faith and obedience to Jesus, be baptized and live totally immersed in your God-given identity as his child.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

As Children’s Minister, I get asked all kinds of questions. Usually, the kids ask things such as, “Is God brighter than the sun?” (Yes!) or “Can I take an ad out on Central Kids News?” (No!) One of the most frequent questions I get from parents is, “How do I know my child has trusted Christ and is ready for baptism?” So, here’s my answer, “Only the Lord knows.” I realize this isn’t much help, but only the Lord can truly know a person’s heart. When we meet with a child to talk about baptism, there are a few points we hope your kids understand and are able to articulate. Do they understand what sin is and how sin affects them personally? Do they understand what God did about the world’s sin problem? Do they understand that Jesus is the only way to have a relationship with God the Father and have they taken steps to trust Jesus as their Savior? If your child can express an understanding of how God saves and they can communicate their personal experience of salvation by trusting in Jesus, they are ready to be baptized! It’s that simple. Your kids don’t have to understand the difference between justification, sanctification and glorification. That’s meat, not milk, and will come to them at the appropriate time. Was the Ethiopian from Acts 8 knowledgeable about all the things before he was baptized? Something to consider... Baptism is an act of obedience to the Lord, let’s help guide your kids toward obedience.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MOMENT

Using green and red colored paper, play several rounds Red Light/Green Light without the caller using words. Explain that we knew if it was time to go or stop based on the color being shown. The color was a symbol. How is baptism a symbol? What does it mean to be baptized? Share your baptism story; be sure to include your age, why you decided to be baptized, what it felt like. Ask if anyone who has not yet been baptized would like to take that step and talk to their parents.

What Does The Bible Say?	What Do You Think?	What Do You Do?
<p>Read Matthew 3:13-17.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why did John try to convince Jesus that he was the one that needed to be baptized? 2. Why did Jesus choose to be baptized? 3. What happened after Jesus was baptized? 	<p>Why was it important the Jesus be baptized?</p>	<p>This week make a list of all the ways water is used in your life (even flushing the toilet). How is water used in baptism?</p>

CORE COMPETENCY: Salvation by Grace

I believe that I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do.

MEMORY VERSE: 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...”

KidPIX COUPON

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week’s verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

CHILD’S NAME

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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