

3 Truths About Baptism— 1 Pet 3:18-22 (6/8/25)

1 Peter 3:18-22. 18 people are getting baptized this weekend. 13 adults and 5 students. Which allows me to spend a little more time explaining it. But even then, it might leave you with some questions. If so, there's a full-length sermon on baptism that we've highlighted on our website. Baptism: Questions & Answers. For now, let's take a look at this passage in 1 Peter 3.

Intro

After just saying if you're going to suffer make sure you suffer for doing good, Peter says in v18 – [18] *For Christ also suffered once[.] for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous* [the epitome of suffering for doing good], *that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh* [on the cross] *but made alive in the spirit* [apart from his body; even before he rose again], [19] *in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison* [most likely fallen angels; declaring his victory over them], [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.* (ESV)

Let's stop there and see if we can't trace the flow of thought so far. Christ suffered and died for our sins, as our substitute, to bring us to God; reconcile us to him. V18. And when he did that, he was *made alive in the spirit*. (18b) Separate from his body.

And *in the spirit*, v19, he proclaimed victory over the fallen angels of Noah's day. Angels who are now demons *in prison* he says. (19) As in, confined to a limited number of activities, outcomes, and people; as all demons are; *committed to chains of gloomy darkness until the judgment* as he says later on. (2 Pet 2:4) They thought they *won* when Jesus died; they thought their release was imminent when he breathed his last. But he told them otherwise. Adding to their punishment.

And the reason for it, v20, is because they disobeyed; *when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared*. They continued to rebel. Inciting people to do the same. All while Noah was by building the ark. The same ark in which he and his family *were brought safely through water*. Which is the key, and the link, to the next verse.

That's the flow of thought so far. And if you want more on that, check out the sermon I preached back in 2018. A portion of which focuses on this passage. It too is highlighted on our website. (*Biblical Principles of Parenting, Part 3 – 1 Peter 3:18-22*)

For now, I want to focus on v21-22. Where speaking of water and the ark, the water through which Noah was safely brought, Peter says – [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.* Jesus rose and Jesus reigns. That much is clear.

What's not so clear is the baptism part. And because of that, there are three main truths here that are often overlooked. Three truths about baptism, that are overlooked because of the difficulty and strangeness of this passage.

Here's the first:

1. It's an expression of our faith in God

Baptism is an expression of our faith in God. Just like Noah and the ark was an expression of *his*; his faith in God. That's the analogy Peter draws. Baptism, according to v21, *corresponds* to the ark. Or resembles, the ark.

It goes like this: Just like the ark was Noah's tangible and visible expression of *his* faith in God, baptism is the tangible and visible expression of ours. Building and getting into the ark was Noah's outward expression of his faith in God's spoken word, to save him and his family.

God said, "build the ark and get in because I'm going to flood the earth. The likes of which you've never seen." So Noah, by faith, did it. He built it and entered it as a tangible and visible expression of his faith in God's spoken word.

And that, Peter says, is just like baptism. It too is a visible and tangible expression of our faith in God's word. His spoken *and* living Word; Jesus. An expression of our faith in God to save us and keep us in *Christ*, just like he saved Noah in the ark.

That's the first truth about baptism that we find here. It's an expression of our faith in God. Just by the very act. An expression of our faith in things unseen, as *promised* by God.

2. It's a picture of our salvation from judgment

This is one of the aspects of baptism that's almost never talked about. That it's a picture of our deliverance; our deliverance from the judgment of death and hell. It pictures it. Just like Noah was delivered from the judgment of death and the flood. Death *in* the flood. Baptism *corresponds* to that as well.

Just like *Noah* was brought safely through water, 20b, so we are brought safely through water. In our baptism. We enter and pass safely through. Picturing in a few minutes, what Noah endured for a year. Not that there's any *risk* to those getting baptized, but that it *pictures* the risk; the risk of God's judgment. The *reality* of it.

What's more, just like Noah escaped the judgment of death in the *ark*, so we escape the judgment of death in *Christ*. United with him. *Buoyed* by him, if you will. And it's pictured in the very act of baptism; when we come up out of the water. We picture our salvation from death.

So the whole thing, start to finish – from passing through to going down and coming up – the whole thing is a picture of our salvation from judgment. Just like Noah in the ark.

3. It's an appeal to God for forgiveness

V21 again – *Baptism, which corresponds to this* [to the flood and the ark], *now saves you* [I'll come back to that], *not as a removal of dirt from the body* [not as a physical, outward work; that just because you do it you're saved] *but* [baptism now saves you] *as an appeal to God for a good conscience* [an appeal to God for a clean slate, a forgiven soul; making baptism a *spiritual* exercise, an appeal of the *heart*; the physical part only represents it], *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ* [through faith in the work of Christ to die and rise again on our behalf].

So baptism isn't just a *physical* act, to get physically clean; but a *spiritual* appeal to get spiritually clean. An appeal to God for forgiveness. The forgiveness of our sin.

Now, does that mean we're not really *saved* until we're baptized? Is that what the very first phrase of v21 *means*? *Baptism . . . now saves you*? No. Because that would make it a *work*, and contradict a handful of *other* verses. Like 2 Tim 1:9; Eph 2:9; Titus 3:4-7; Gal 2:16; Rom 3:28. All of which clearly say that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone. Not works. Not tangible, physical things *we* do.

So most of the time, we're saved *well* before we're baptized. By the confession of our heart and mouth. Just like Romans 10:9 says – *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved*. No mention of baptism whatsoever. Just confess and believe.

But sometimes, those two things coincide. Sometimes, when the Gospel is given and baptism is offered on the spot, a person's baptism becomes their actual confession; their confession of faith. Their expression of belief, and appeal to God for forgiveness.

I've even thought that with some of *our* baptisms. As much as we try to avoid it. That the person's testimony and immersion right here in our service, is the real moment of their salvation.

But most of the time, it's a reenactment. A reenactment of their *prior* appeal for forgiveness. Their *prior* repentance. As well as their prior salvation and expression of faith.

Summary

Three truths, to help you understand what's going on this morning, and appreciate the significance and symbolism of what we're going to witness.

And if your heart burns within you, if you've never been *baptized* as a believer, make a commitment for next time. But if you've never been saved, start there. Listen carefully and make today the day.

Prayer – Father, do a work. Use these baptisms to magnify your Son, sanctify your saints, and save more sinners. Use them to fill our minds with great understanding, and our hearts with great joy, and our worship with great praise.

You Are Loved