

# Your Baptism: Is it Biblical or Denominational?



**Galatians 3:23-29**

Thank you for choosing to come and be with us this morning for our first in person service during the Corona pandemic. We've missed you and we hope you've missed each other and us. We are so excited to actually get to preach to faces this morning. Many of you have been following us online and you know we've been talking about the Church in our 20/20 vision in 2020. This Sunday and next Sunday, we're going to be talking about the two ordinances of the Church, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Because of this new format and time constraints in letting each group in, I only have about twenty-six or seven minutes this morning. Be mindful. Kory told me that last week I actually preached sixty-seven minutes, so we may only get through the first point, but we're going to try and give a summary of what we believe is the biblical ordinance of baptism. The title is very personal.

Your Baptism: Is It Biblical, or Denominational? I hope when this sermon is over, you understand the difference.

I did what I normally do on Sunday morning after everything was finished and the outline was made, I walked into the bedroom where Celisa was doing her devotion and I started to give her a preview of the sermon. As soon as I mentioned I was preaching on baptism, she said, "What do you need to know? I'm an expert. I've been baptized three times." Then, I saw her face. I saw the hurt, the disappointment. Celisa actually was reared at Kirksey Baptist Church, and after hearing the gospel at Vacation Bible School and the Holy Spirit convicting her, the next Sunday she and a group of her friends went down the aisle, and in a group prayer, she put her faith and trust in Jesus Christ. A week later, she was baptized. A few years later, her family would experience a divorce and she began attending at Seventh and Poplar Church of Christ in Murray, KY. She was told repeatedly that she was not saved, could not be saved, until she was baptized in a Church of Christ church. So to be saved, she got baptized. Several years later, she began to date me. We went to her church some and we went to my church some. I'll never forget after we got married, we came to terms with what we believed the Bible taught, and what the differences were between the Baptist Church and the Church of Christ church. She felt the leadership of God's Holy Spirit to join our church, Ledbetter Baptist Church, only to be told that she would have to be baptized again. The reason being, even though she was baptized at Kirksey Baptist Church after being saved, because she agreed to a Church of Christ baptism, that baptism (according to our pastor) nullified her real baptism. Thus, she had to be baptized again, to which she agreed.

That morning, this was not going to be the introduction I had planned. I just want to apologize on behalf of the Church for all of the false teaching about a precious ordinance called baptism. Please, as pastor of Hardin Baptist Church representing our Lord and Savior, if you have been hurt because of the Church's lack of ability and understanding to get this thing right and us stand in unity, I just want to say I'm sorry to you. After years and years of being your pastor, and as a Church, coming up with what we believe is biblical baptism, I would like for each one of us to listen, not in a

judgmental or condemning way, not to be right or to be wrong, but just to examine our baptism and ask that question. Is my baptism, is your baptism, biblical, or is it denominational? Let's read Galatians 3:23-29 with the key verses being 26 and 27.

## **Scripture**

***"Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. (That just sounds so simple.) For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."***

We're going to follow a very simple format. I'm going to ask four questions and give you four answers. I hope the questions and answers allow you to determine whether your baptism is biblical or denominational.

- 1. Who should be baptized?**
- 2. When should they be baptized?**
- 3. How should they be baptized?**
- 4. Why should they be baptized?**

I believe when this sermon is over and you can answer these four questions by taking your Bible, your experience, you will discover whether your baptism was biblical or denominational.

## **Who?**

Who should be baptized? I hope this doesn't surprise anyone who attends here, but my one word answer, and it's the only people who should be

baptized, is believers. I believe when we study the New Testament, from Matthew to Revelation, there is only one group of people in the Bible who should have been baptized, and those people were believers. Jesus, Himself, in Mark's Gospel, in Mark's version of the Great Commission, (we previously studied Mark and believe that a disciple of Mark added that ending, possibly) Jesus said, "He that believes and is baptized will be saved. Whoever does not believe is condemned already." So who would Jesus believe should be baptized? Jesus would believe that believers should be baptized. The first thing I want you to ask yourself is this question. When I was baptized, was I a true believer in Christ? If you were not a true believer in Christ, then Scripture, not man, is going to teach that your baptism may be denominational and not biblical. It may be personal, but not biblical. Biblically, the people who get baptized are believers in Jesus Christ. In the book of Acts, especially in chapter 18:8, Paul leaves Athens, goes to Corinth, and begins to preach the gospel. Many people believe the gospel and verse 8 clearly teaches that many of the Corinthians, having heard Paul's word, believed and were baptized. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas had been in prison, and they get released by God. The doors open, the Philippian jailer is going to take his own life, and Paul tells him not to. He falls down before them and asks this question, "What must we do, sirs, to be saved?" Paul instructs him that he can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and he will be saved and all of his household. Then he takes Paul and Silas home with him, and the next verse teaches that Paul and Silas preach the Word to everyone in the household. Everyone in the household gets baptized. Again, Luke's writing lets us know that Paul told the Philippian jailer the way he and his family can be saved is by believing in Jesus, and when they go to the household, they didn't just baptize everybody until they preached the Word to everyone in the household. It says, "Those who heard the Word." The implication was everybody there was old enough to hear, old enough to understand what you had to do before you could be baptized. That was you had to believe, and then the whole household was baptized. In Acts 10, Peter gets that vision to go to the household of Cornelius, a Gentile. He gets there and begins to preach. He told them that the Old Testament testifies that whosoever believes in Jesus as the Messiah will receive forgiveness of sins, and while he's preaching that

message, the Holy Spirit falls upon them. Peter recognizes the Holy Spirit didn't just anoint the place; they've all received the Holy Spirit. He stands before his Jewish brothers and says, "You that are with me. Can any of you forbid water that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just like we?" You could have heard a pin drop. There wasn't a word said. What did they do? They baptized them in the name of the Lord. When does a person receive the Holy Spirit of God? A person receives the Holy Spirit of God the moment of faith. At the moment of faith, a person is made right with God, and because they are made right with God, that makes us eligible to be baptized.

I want to share with you on the basis of the New Testament that there is no other person who should ever be baptized other than a true believer in Christ. So I want you to ask yourself this question. I want you to go back to the time you were baptized and ask yourself if at that time, were you a true believer. Had I, by faith, been brought into a right relationship with God? Many of us are going to discover that our profession of faith was false, even if we were raised in a grace church. Many of us made a profession later, but never identified that faith, and we will talk about that in just a minute, because we think we're baptized. If you were baptized and were not a true believer, you just got wet. You weren't biblically baptized.

### **When?**

When should a person be baptized who is a believer? Let me just say, ASAP, as soon as possible. I want to apologize to those who were like me and raised in a Baptist Church, especially a little country church, where we waited until enough people got saved for it to be worth it for us to drive down to the lake to get baptized. Do you know what I mean? I was almost like me getting saved by myself wasn't worth the effort for all of us to go down to the lake and baptize one person. We would wait until at least ten or so of us got baptized, which meant some of us had to wait five or six months in order to be baptized. That's just the way Baptists did it. You almost waited until the Spring Revival to get saved so you could be baptized in the summer.

I'll never forget March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1974, receiving Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Ledbetter didn't traditionally baptize until the summer because we didn't have a baptistry. We would call Jonathan Creek Baptist and make a reservation, so at 2:00 in the afternoon, we would go to the creek and baptize. The thought of being saved in March but having to wait until July just broke my heart. My sister got saved the same Sunday I got saved, along with a few others. We asked the church if it would be possible to call around and see if another church would let us borrow their baptistry and see if we could get somebody else to baptize us since we didn't have a pastor at that time. The church agreed, so we called Dexter Baptist Church. Bro. Glen Cope the pastor there to see if he would baptize us. They had several people who had gotten saved too, so we decided to call Flint Baptist Church where Hayward Roberts was the pastor, and he agreed to let both of our churches come to get baptized that night. About twenty or thirty of us got baptized that night by Bro. Cope. I'll never forget I just happened to be standing in the hallway when Bro. Cope and Bro. Roberts were talking; "I'm not sure all of these young people really understand what they are doing." When they said that, I looked at both of them and said, politely, "I do. I do." It was the very fact that I put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ that put a burning desire in my heart to not wait months, or years, but just as soon as I could go down into the waters of a baptistry because I wanted everyone to know that my faith was in Jesus Christ.

Please hear me. If you got saved and were raised in a church that didn't instruct you to get baptized until months or years later, it doesn't mean you're not biblically baptized. But please, as a parent, don't make the mistake your church or your parents made. When you child, neighbor, or coworker puts their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, and you believe it's real, instruct them that as soon as possible as a believer, go down into the water of biblical baptism.

## **How?**

How should I be baptized? I know this is controversial because in an English dictionary it will say baptism is a Church ordinance or sacrament, and you can be sprinkled, poured, or immersed, and basically, that's what the English word baptism means. When we come to mode, to how to be

baptized, according to the English dictionary, what is the proper way to do it? You can be sprinkled, poured, or immersed. But, according to the Greek dictionary, we wouldn't have that choice. If we look up the Greek word, *baptizo*, and the root of it, which is *bapto*, the definition is 'to immerse, to dip, to plunge, to submerge.' Does everybody agree that to immerse, dip, plunge, and submerge all speak of the same act? I have to ask this question. Were you immersed? Did you go completely down into the water and completely out of the water? Because, that is how we're baptized. Just as you have to be a true believer, you must also be baptized only by immersion.

Then, why does the English dictionary have these other definitions? Most of us in the English speaking world at one time had a King James Version of the Bible. As the Bible is being translated from Greek to Latin, from Latin to English and Greek to English, King James had a falling out with his church and wanted to start his own. He decided to authorize an English version of the Bible, so he got seventy translators to translate the Bible. As they translated the New Testament and came to this Greek word, *baptizo*, they knew what it meant by definition, but they knew the king had not been immersed, and he is paying for the project. It is literally his version of the Bible. To get around that difficulty of offending the king, they just transliterated the word instead of translating the word. You can see that *baptizo* and baptism look almost identical. They basically coined a new English word, baptism, by taking the Greek letters and giving its corresponding English equivalent. I get ticked at modern scholars because they say our newer translations are getting closer to the Greek New Testament, but I don't know of a Bible translation anywhere that translates the Greek word, *baptizo*, the way it should be into English. That is to repent and be immersed; repent and be dipped; repent and be plunged; believe and be submerged. Do you understand that if the Bible had been translated correctly, we wouldn't be Hardin Baptist Church we would be Hardin Dipping Church. Nobody would ask if you were a Baptist, they would ask if you were a dipper. You would gladly say yes, I'm one of those dippers. Have you been dipped? Have you been plunged? Have you been submerged? If baptism is an ordinance and symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, I submit to you that the only way you can

be baptized to fully convey that symbol is by fully going under the water and fully coming up out of the water. I ask you this question. Have you been biblically baptized?

## **Why?**

When I answer this question, you're going to understand more of why it is so important for you to be baptized as soon as possible after becoming a Christian. Before I answer, I want to say that for years as a young person, I think I studied the Bible more verse against verse method than the true method. Were any of you raised where you were taught something, had friends who believed something different, so you used your verses against them, and they used theirs against you? Somebody would give you a verse, and you really wouldn't think about your verse because you thought their verse contradicted your verse. I used to be that way. I won a lot of arguments and lost a lot of friends. I don't study that way anymore. I study verse with verse. I believe there are some key baptism passages that we all must study if we are going to answer this question of why we're baptized. That is Romans chapter 6, Acts 2, Acts 10, 1 Peter 3, Colossians 2, and Galatians 3.

Listen to what it has just said in Galatians 3 as to why you are being baptized. Verse 26 says I became a Son of God. The earlier verse said I was made right with God and justified by faith. The moment I put my faith in Jesus, I become justified. My sins are forgiven and I'm not in a right relationship with God. So why do I get baptized? Paul spent the whole first part of Galatians stressing that we're not saved based on what we do, but what God has done for us in Christ, and we have to believe the gospel. Now he throws in this little line, but it's big, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." When I take Galatians 3, Romans 6, Acts 2, Acts 10, 1 Peter 3, Colossians 2 and put them altogether, I think you get baptized to identify that your saving faith is in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. You get baptized to show, to identify, that your faith for salvation is not in you, but in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. At the moment of faith, God puts you in Christ, then you outwardly get baptized to let the world know that the person you were, a sinner, is

dead, and the person you now are, because of faith in Christ and His grace, is alive to God.

I struggle when I preach on baptism as an ordinance because many of us want to say baptism is a symbol, but I believe it's more than a symbol. You can almost have a symbol and it be devoid of meaning. Baptism has real meaning. It's important. It's not something you do that determines your justification, being saved, or being in a right relationship with God, but it is the first thing we do after we get saved to begin a life of sanctification because baptism is our identity marker. We don't walk an aisle to profess our faith. We get into the baptismal waters to profess our faith. It's not you standing before a group of people and saying you got saved that professes your faith; it's you going down into those waters. In going down into those waters, you're testifying that you, the sinner, died. When you come up out of that water, you're testifying there is a brand new person alive. This person is now alive to God, you're a child of God, and your salvation, your new identity depends solely on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. I want to say some of us were misled and this phrase 'baptized into Christ' was applied literally to the act of water so that we have people who believe when you go into the water, it puts you into Christ. I ask you to read 1 Corinthians 10. Paul uses the Old Testament story of the children of Israel as an example of us in the Church on the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and he reminds the Church at Corinth that he's writing these as an example to them. Then he said, "All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Now, let me ask you a question. It's the same phrase, baptized into Moses, as baptized into Christ, so how many of you believe when the children of Israel got to the bank of the sea that God literally put everybody there in Moses, and they all walked across the sea in Moses? Nobody believes that. That phrase, baptized into Moses, means when they all got under the cloud and went into the water, they were referencing by that act that they were following Moses. When you, by faith, get into the baptismal waters, you are referencing to the world that your salvation depends totally on the finished work of Jesus Christ!

Can I say this? I struggle with whether or not we really ought to baptize people inside church buildings. I think if you work in a plant and you get

saved, we ought to baptize you at the plant. I think the best place in our society to baptize people would be at Walmart. Can you imagine how word would spread? "Whoa! What happened to Brian? He got baptized! How do you know? I saw it; I was at Walmart!" In baptism, we put on Christ. In baptism, we declare the old man is dead and I'm now alive in Christ.

Now, can I answer a question? Is Celisa biblically baptized? Yes. She was saved at nine, baptized at Kirksey Baptist Church, and those two other things that the Church told her to do later were nothing but dunking in water. My question to you is this. Have you been biblically baptized? Or, are you hanging on to a denominational baptism?