

Kirkwall Presbyterian Church
'Believer's Baptism'
Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:36-41
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By Keith Marcy

If you were here last week, I hope you remember that we focused on John the Baptizer, and particularly his ministry of baptizing people in the Jordan River. His baptism is known as a *'baptism of repentance.'* His teaching convinced many in the crowds that came to him in the rugged desert, that God's expectation of humanity was not to keep 613 man-made laws, but to keep His Ten Commandments from their hearts.

For example, when choosing a lamb to bring as a substitutionary sacrifice to God, do not shortchange God. Pick the best. And do not cheat your neighbor. If you entertain thoughts of cheating him, you have sinned. Many people repented – that is, they confessed they had missed God's mark, and they vowed to walk away from sin, instead of into it. Their hearts were changed and as a sign of that internal change, John baptized them in water as a symbol that just as water washes filth from your body, so true repentance will lead to a cleansed heart. That is why John's baptism is called a *'baptism of repentance.'*

Enter Jesus into the arena of history. Born to a woman – God became human. He grew up in a godly home with two devoted parents – one an appointed guardian, the other a natural mother. He did miracles, proving He retained His divinity. He did not cease to be God, but He assumed the limitations of our humanity, without sin! He willingly died – which was God's punishment for our sins. That was the ultimate display of love! God raised Him from the dead – saying, *'I accept your payment for the ugly sin of humanity.'* 40 days later He returned to heaven in bodily form – He was back home.

Mission accomplished!

Now any human being who is convinced they have fallen short of keeping God's 10 laws, can call on Jesus to grant them full pardon.

He will if they fully trust in Him:

- It is not Jesus plus your horoscope.
- It is not Jesus plus any other god or idol.
- It is not Jesus plus my good deeds.
- It is only Jesus – the Jesus of the Scripture – not a Jesus of my description or imagination! It is the one and only Son of God, Jesus!

Those who believe in Him are to be baptized into His name, meaning, *'I need His death'*; and they are lowered into water; *'I need His resurrection'*, and they are raised out of the water. It is a proclamation. *'I need Him to do what I could not do on my own'*. It is a picture of faith. It is a declaration that I am a believer. He has chosen me and I have chosen Him. So, it is called *'believer's baptism.'* In Acts 19:1-7 we read an account of Paul arriving in Ephesus and finding a group of men who had been baptized by John or one of his disciples. They had received the 'Baptism of **repentance**' Paul asked them to Believe in the Lord Jesus and he baptized them in **His Name**.

How does this differ from John's baptism – the baptism of repentance?

Volumes have been written and hundreds of opinions expressed. I am not going into that. I am going to explain it *'Jesus style,'* through an object lesson.

Here is a hand-operated brace and bit that our forefathers used to make a hole in a board. It required a lot of strength and endurance. Even the strongest of men would grow tired, especially if the wood was hard. Let this represent natural man trying to keep the commandments. Everyone would grow weary and fail to keep going.

Enter John the Baptist. *"REPENT! Turn from your sinful ways. Be kind, generous, honest, unselfish and loving! Be baptized as a sign that you have a whole new attitude towards your fellow man."*

Let this new battery-powered drill represent this new man. Yet it is only half the solution. It has a weak battery – a small battery. It runs out of power. Because we still have a heart that we inherited from Adam – a heart that is not in tune with God – we are weak to honor God and resist the devil. What we need is another power, a Savior to present us to God – faultless!

Enter Jesus Christ.

Let this other drill represent a life trusting totally in Him. It has the power to do great things. Compared with the other battery drill it can do so much more because the battery is so much more powerful. And it has a light—so we can work in the dark, more efficiently, more precisely! This drill can be set to drill holes, or drive in screws. In soft wood it will be more gentle; in hard wood it will have more force. It can go fast or very slow. It can give power for a long time; but eventually it will need to be recharged. This drill

is more like a person who believes in Jesus. When we come to faith in Him, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit –the Spirit of God, we get wisdom from Him, and knowledge and courage. He equips us to work for His glory doing things we never thought we could do. But alas, eventually we need re-charged. A battery – we plug it to a charger for a while.

In life, how do our souls get charged?

- By plugging into God’s Word.
- By talking to other believers.
- By participating in worship.
- By asking God for wisdom and strength.

It does not come automatically. It is an act of our will. If we do not come to Him continually to be recharged, like a dead battery renders a drill useless, so we will become useless– we will eventually be no good for God and the joy of serving Him will be gone. A drill with a dead battery is still a drill with potential—but useless. A believer still is a child of God even if he/she fails to be recharged, but a useless child of God!

While Christian baptism has an element of repentance – *‘Father, I have failed – again’* – we are baptized into the name of God the Father, and God the Son – our Savior. But there is one more name.

We live in a dark world. An evil world. Satan is all over us – all the time. God knows we need a light. And so, He provides us with the power of the Holy Spirit to give us light like this drill. Now we can effectively work in the dark. So, in Christian baptism we are baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy spirit that equips us with wisdom, knowledge, courage and compassion; He gives us guidance and strength to function for God’s glory *in a dark world*.

Who is this Baptism for? It is for Believers! People of every language, skin color and background who believe that:

- God the Father created the universe through God the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- God the Father sent God the Son to the earth to redeem those bound with sin and then He sent God the Holy Spirit to empower the redeemed to live triumphantly for Him.

What with the water? We use water when we baptize.

Is there power in the water?

NO!

- Water naturally cleans.
- Water quenches thirst.
- Water gives vegetation growth.
- Water supports life.

We use water in baptism as a symbol of cleanliness and as a symbol that Jesus is the living water. A person baptized becomes clothed with Christ, meaning they adopt the character of Christ so that they are a reflection of Him to a needy generation. Gal.3: 26, 27.

Christian baptism, known as *'believers baptism'* is precious. It is a declaration that I believe in Jesus, who has become my Lord and Savior! It is a picture that through Faith I have died to self and am raised to new life in Him. It is a statement that He died for Me and God raised Him up – a sign that His sacrifice was sufficient to cover my sin. Baptism tells a story that *'I am His and He is mine!'* (George Robison paints the picture so well in his hymn by this title, #590, Hymns for the Family of God.)

What about children?

Why will I baptize children?

Come next week for the rest of the story!