

What About Baptism?

August 20, 2023

Matthew 3v1-12

1 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 2 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' 3 This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight."

4 Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, 6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit worthy of repentance. 9 Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 'I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing-fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

What is baptism? And how do we explore baptism while staying humble, knowing we're exploring ancient questions? into the fact that you're both an "I" and a "we"?

What if truth is paradoxical, and complicated?

"It is no good asking for a simple religion. After all, real things are not simple. They look simple, but they are not. The table I am sitting at looks simple: but ask a scientist to tell you what it is really made of - all about the atoms and how the light waves rebound from them and hit my eye and what they do to the optic nerve and what it does to my brain - and, of course, you find that what we call 'seeing a table' lands you in mysteries and complications which you can hardly get to the end of....

Very often, however, this silly procedure is adopted by people who are not silly, but who, consciously or unconsciously, want to destroy Christianity. Such people put up a version of Christianity suitable for a child of six and make that the object of their attack. When you try to explain the Christian doctrine as it is really held by an instructed adult, they then complain that you are making their heads turn round and that it is all too complicated and that if there really were a God they are sure He would have made religion simple, because simplicity is so beautiful, etc....Besides being complicated, reality, in my experience, is usually odd." (C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*)

1. Is baptism about an individual stepping into faith, or is baptism about an individual stepping into faith community?

2. Is baptism an object lesson or is baptism a sacrament?

3. Is baptism for infants or is baptism for people old enough to choose to follow Jesus?

5. Is baptism about a turning away from evil or is baptism about a turning to the Kingdom of God?

4. What happens if we see baptism, and all of the Christian life, through the lens of the Old Testament exodus?

If you would like to meet with someone from the staff to talk more about baptism, please visit our website where you can book a meeting with any one of our staff. We'd be honored to talk more. Thanks!.

For a more thorough notes pages from this week's message, please see the "Why Baptism?" document on the heat registers.

Podcast Resource: Ask NT Wright Anything: #107 Baptism: What happens? Should we baptize infants?

Songs: Embers, Come Alive, Agnus Dei/King of Kings, Come to Us O Lord, Because He Lives

Looking to Connect?: One of the staff would love to meet for a walk, on the phone, or for a beverage. To schedule a time please visit our website and click on the "Meet with Staff" button on the home page.