

Series Title: FOR ALL PEOPLE: A Journey through the Book of Acts, Part 6.

Sermon Title: Week 5: The New Testament Roots of Baptism. Scripture: Acts 10:44-48

Date: 03-14-21

✠ **Cornelius, his household, and the rest of the story**

- **Today ending the story of Cornelius, Acts 10. What has happened?**
- **Peter and his Jewish companions came to Cornelius's home, found a household of gentiles/romans... Peter preached the essential and astonishing message of the Gospel, and starting in verse 44, Luke tells us what happened next.**

Acts 10:44-48 *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.*

⁴⁵ *The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles.* ⁴⁶ *For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.*

Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ *"Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."* ⁴⁸ *So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.*

- **These brand new believers were BAPTIZED in the name of Jesus Christ. WHAT IS THAT ABOUT? What IS baptism? What does it mean? Purpose? Why do we practice it, if we do?**
- **MOST IMPORTANTLY, how do we answer these questions when our SOURCE is SCRIPTURE... SOLA SCRIPTURE, the NEW TESTAMENT. And so today, having already seen multiple examples of baptism in Acts, we are taking a deep dive into the NEW TESTAMENT ROOTS OF the amazing meaning and gift of BAPTISM.**
- **BUT FIRST, Sunday March 14th, PE, TO...**
- **SO, how do we frame this? SO much could talk about! Lets start here...**

✠ **When we consider the understanding and practice of baptism across Christianity, there is much DISAGREEMENT**

- **PURPOSE today isn't to disprove teachings of baptism that are diff from what we teach here at Trinity. ALSO, there are wonderful pastors, churches, and traditions that differ in their teaching of Baptism, and while I may disagree, I hold them in respect.**
- **But, differing teaching exists! Some key areas of disagreement:**
 - **On what occasion is a person baptized? Birth? Joining a church? Personal faith?**
 - **Who makes the choice to be baptized? A parent, family, pastor, individual?**
 - **Why be baptized? What does baptism accomplish? Most importantly, is physical act of baptism SALVIFIC. Is it required for salvation, and does it accomplish salvation. If not, why do we practice it?**
- **If you look at history of Christianity, reality of untold doctrinal disagreements between traditions and denominations, but two of most prominent disagreements are over meaning of COMMUNION, and baptism.**
- **If we take a very high level look at history of baptism, you could argue that for early church- In acts, and first century, baptism was a physical act that followed a person's confession of their faith in Christ. We start to see specific references to infant baptism in the mid second century, and it had become the exclusive teaching and practice of the church by sometime in the third century.**

- **FAST FORWARD to the protestant reformation in the 1500's. Through Luther and other reformation leaders, we begin to see the formulation of salvation by faith in Christ alone- something we take for granted, but was deemed heretical by the authorities of the time. BUT the main streams of the reformation did not challenge practice of infant baptism.**
- **This challenge first emerged, in a significant form, through a movement of people who came to be known as the 'ANABAPTISTS'... or 'rebaptizers' a term given them by their opponents, who was almost everyone. The Anabaptists taught that baptism could only be received by a person who had themselves made the decision to follow Christ, therefore infant baptism was without merit, and they began to 'rebaptize' themselves and their followers. The teaching of the Anabaptists was viewed as an existential threat to both the catholic church and the other early forms of Protestantism, and they were heavily persecuted, including many martyred by drowning.**
- **Nonetheless, the Biblical concept of what would come to be generally known as 'believers baptism' took hold, leading to the Baptist movements England and Western Europe, to which we owe much of our own heritage.**
- **NOW- that is all incredibly simplified, but it leads to important concept.**

† Across the spectrum of Christianity, much of the understanding regarding baptism flows from church **TRADITION.**

- **Tradition grown up across the centuries of historical development of the church. While SOME OF this tradition may be rooted in scripture, some is not.**
- **TRINITY, our heritage is the Baptist tradition, and**

A hallmark of our doctrinal heritage is that when considering anything such as the meaning of baptism, we always first ask the question: What is the testimony of **SCRIPTURE?**

- **While tradition can be important, it must ALWAYS yield to the authority and teaching of scripture itself- as we seek to interpret scripture wisely, appropriately, and with intellectual honesty.**
- **SO, if our desire is to FIRST LOOK TO SCRIPTURE, what does the NT teach us about baptism?**

† The first reference to baptism in the New Testament is the ministry of John the Baptist. This was a baptism of **REPENTANCE.**

Mark 1:4-8 *And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River... ⁷ And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

- **Key- John's baptism is not baptism as we now understand it. God used John the B to prepare the people of Israel for the coming of the messiah- for them to recognize their need for deliverance from their sin. John's baptism was a symbol of repentance- turning away from sin against God, and turning back to trust and obedience to God.**
- **Repentance is part of the Christian message- but baptism as we see taught after the resurrection of Christ is about much, much more.**

✠ The next reference to baptism is Jesus' command from the GREAT COMMISSION.

Matthew 28:18-20 *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.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,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Jesus' command to be baptized is inseparable from three core realities of faith in Christ

- We are called to be DISCIPLES
- We are called to OBEDIENCE to Christ
- As believers, our identification with the TRINITY- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

– **So, what did the Baptism Jesus commanded LOOK LIKE? What did it mean?**

✠ Next, we see baptism as taught and practiced in the book of Acts.

- Baptism is a work of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:4-5 *On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." **We'll come back to this!***

- Peter's invitation on the day of PENTECOST

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."*

- **Interesting- This invitation of Peter, and Jesus' great commission- are the only two places in the NT where baptism is presented in form of a command.**
- **SOME TRADITIONS reference this verse to argue that Baptism is necessary for salvation. But as we discussed last year, this takes this verse out of context- overwhelming teaching of NT, including Acts, is that forgiveness and salvation results from what GOD DOES when we respond to him in FAITH. IN BELIEF. IN FACT, this is the only place in Acts where Baptism is directly connected to repentance.**
- **ALSO INTERESTING, verse 39 is referenced by traditions that practice INFANT baptism- the reasoning being that Peters words "promise is for you and your children" infers salvation was immediately available to very young children, down to infancy.**
- **Many would respectfully disagree, seeing this as reading into the text, with more plain interpretation being that the promise of the gospel is not just for the hearers, but all generations to follow.**
- In Acts, we see TEN instances of persons baptized after believing.
 - **ALL ten of these are described as happening in response to people hearing and believing the Gospel, with little to no delay between their belief and their baptism.**
 - **In FOUR of these we are told that a person's entire household believe and was baptized. An example is the story of the Philippian jailer**

Acts 16:32-33 *Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were*

baptized. ³⁴ The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

- This also is pointed to by traditions that practice infant baptism. Here the reasoning is that since the entire household was baptized, and this likely would have included servants, slaves, and their families, that this would likely have included young children and infants, meaning they were baptized as well.
- Again however, many would disagree, asserting a better and contextual interpretation would recognize the collective nature of this culture, where the leader of the home held great respect and influence over all of his or her household- and thus, when the jailer believed, because of his place of great influence- all those in his household who also heard the message were moved by the Holy Spirit to believe as well.
- Verse 34 reinforces this, when Luke tells us that he and his whole household had come to BELIEVE IN GOD... something a very young child or infant would not be able to do.
- To be clear, there is no direct mention of baptism of very young children or infants in entire NT.
- WHAT IS clear from Acts is that believer's baptism was a teaching and practice of the early church.

✠ So, how were people baptized? There are only two descriptions in NT of how Baptism was carried out, and both were by IMMERSION.

- JtheB (Jesus' baptism), Ethiopian Eunuch. Also, the literal meaning of the Greek word 'baptizo', from which we get 'baptism', is immerse, to submerge- be made one with. Based on this evidence, the Baptist/evangelical tradition is to practice baptism by immersion- only way we see baptism described in scripture.
- Moreover, based on the full testimony of the NT, the physical means of baptism is important because of SPIRITUAL REALITY IT REPRESENTS. This leads to what we see AFTER ACTS, as Baptism is referenced multiple times by Paul, and once by Peter- SO...

✠ Through the rest of the New Testament, we see the overwhelming emphasis that baptism is an INNER REALITY, and physical baptism is an outer symbol and confession of that reality- what God did in us when we first BELIEVED.

Romans 6:1-5 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

- Important! Paul here is not talking about physical baptism- but the spiritual reality baptism represents... that when we first believed, we were UNITED WITH CHRIST in his death, burial, and resurrection. NT echoes with this truth!
 - Colossians 3- For YOU DIED, your life is now hidden- joined together- with Christ
 - 2 Corinthians 5:17- In Christ you are a NEW CREATION, the old has gone, the new has come

- **Galatians 2:20- you were crucified with Christ, you no longer live, but Christ lives in you.**
- **The emphasis of Romans 6- and baptism- is on RESURRECTION. It proclaims the truth that Christ took the old person we used to be, the person who was guilty of sin, addicted to self, and separated from God- he took that person to the cross with him, and that person DIED... SO NOW, as a NEW CREATION, we may live a NEW LIFE, set free from the chains of sin and the enemy, and our NEW LIFE is the life and presence of Christ himself.**
- **THIS IS THE REASON IMMERSION BAPTISM IS SO IMPORTANT! Because it illustrates the miraculous reality of what our spiritual baptism means.**
 - **I baptize you in name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit...**
 - **Buried with Christ in Baptism... RAISED TO WALK IN A NEW LIFE.**

Galatians 3:26-28 *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

- **Here we see another picture of baptism as our UNION WITH CHRIST.... Paraphrase... for all of you who were immersed, joined together with Christ... this changes all of who you are, both your internal identity, and the external expression of HOW YOU LIVE.**

Colossians 2:9-13 *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ.*

- **NO TIME to really unpack this... what was circumcision for the Jews? It was an outward, physical sign of God's covenant with His people. But over the centuries it became only an external marker, losing its true meaning that the circumcised person belonged to God, and was a child of God. MULTIPLE TIMES Paul exclaims- whether or not you are physically circumcised is meaningless! What counts is your HEART, your faithfulness to God.**
- **HERE IN COLOSSIANS, Paul uses the example of circumcision to describe how IN CHRIST the old person we used to be has been removed, and through our spiritual baptism- that happened when we believed- we have been raised with Christ, we have been MADE ALIVE, and our NEW LIFE is the life of Christ dwelling within us. AMEN.**

✠ **Baptism is a symbol of what God fully accomplished in us at the point of our salvation, and as such it is NOT a requirement of salvation, nor does the physical act of baptism impart salvation.**

Acts 10:44-48 *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ⁴⁸ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.*

- **KEY OBSERVATION HERE. When did these new gentile believers receive the Holy Spirit? Before or after they were baptized? BEFORE. Baptism was a confirming confession of what had already happened because of their BELIEF.**

- **We also see this truth in an honestly cryptic passage from 1st Peter... Peter has just described the experience of Noah, the ark... how God delivered Noah and his family through the water into a new life. Then he says...**

1 Peter 3:21 ...and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...

- **It is NOT the physical act of washing- water baptism- that saves us, rather it is our heart before God- our surrender of faith in Christ. And the source of our salvation is the RESURRECTION of Christ, in which we share, which is what Baptism proclaims.**

✠ **Baptism isn't just a confession of our personal faith in Christ- it demonstrates the essential reality of our unity with the Body of Christ, the COMMUNITY of believers, the church.**

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

- **Simply put, when we were joined together with Christ in union with him, we were also joined together into union with EACH OTHER. Based on the New Testament, you CANNOT separate your faith in Christ from your participation in the BODY OF CHRIST. At its very core, and from its inception, the Christian movement is a faith received and experienced in COMMUNITY- and Baptism is a powerful testimony to that reality.**
- **THIS IS WHY** whenever at all possible, we celebrate baptism together as church family.

SO!!!! Why do we teach, and practice, believer's baptism by immersion?

- **Because Christ himself commanded it.**
- **Because the first generation of believers practiced it**
- **Because the incredible, astonishing, miraculous truth it describes**
- **Because it is powerful reminder and celebration that we are a community of faith**
- **ONE MORE THING. YES, baptism, principally and fully, is a SPIRITUAL REALITY. BUT...**

✠ **As human beings created in the image of God, we celebrate baptism because we are not just spiritual... we are also PHYSICAL.**

- **God has given us these bodies as means of how we relate to the world around us, relate to each other, and a very big part of how we relate to God. When scripture tells us IN CHRIST we have been brought to FULLNESS, that includes our physical self.**
- **Communion is a PHYSICAL act that draws our attention to our spiritual hope because of what Christ did through his physical body. It is a tangible, earthy, way to celebrate a spiritual reality- one that is also rooted in community.**
- **LIKEWISE, Believers Baptism by immersion into water is a physical, tangible, earthy way to confess, that RIGHT NOW, RIGHT HERE, in life as it really is, as part of a community of faith, THROUGH OUR FAITH in Christ, we are NEW CREATIONS. THE OLD HAS GONE... DIED, BURIED WITH CHRIST... and by God's infinite Grace we have been brought into UNION WITH CHRIST, and raised from spiritual death to LIVE AND WALK in a NEW LIFE.**

- ***FRIENDS, THAT IS NOT just a tradition. It is the proclamation of scripture, and it is GOOD NEWS. If you have never been baptized as a believer, I encourage you to consider this testimony of scripture, and how the Spirit may use it in your life.***