

Defining Moments:
Being Baptized
Acts 2:37-41 and Romans 6:1-10

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Text Introduction: Our lives are sprinkled with defining moments—moments that shape the rest of our lives, moments that are so important that the rest of our lives hang in the balance of these moments. We are studying from Scripture some of these defining moments that dot our lives. You may not experience every single one of them, but you will experience most of them. So far, we have started with our physical births and our spiritual births. If we are going to talk about moments in life that define us, it seems reasonable and practical to start with our births—both physical and spiritual.

Today, I want to explore with you the defining moment of baptism.

Text: ³⁷ When they heard this, they came under deep conviction and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: “Brothers, what must we do?”

³⁸ “Repent,” Peter said to them, “and be baptized, each 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 For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” ⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, “Be saved from this corrupt generation!” ⁴¹ So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about 3,000 people were added to them.

Introduction— Now, some are going to argue that this is not a defining moment. I am going to maintain that it is defining because of the reason that we are baptized.

Baptism is one of the issues that clearly defines us as Baptists. You should not be surprised that baptism is an important part of the doctrine of a group named “Baptists.” Others teach infant baptism, sprinkling, and the necessity of baptism for salvation. We do not believe or teach any of those things. So, let us address this doctrine with a series of guiding questions.

For those of you who have been baptized, these questions will be affirming to your faith. For those who have not been baptized, or at least not baptized by immersion and after your conversion, I trust that you will be moved to decide to make that decision today.

I. The Question of Who Should be Baptized

The first question is “Who should be baptized?” For each of the questions, I want to give you a key word and some key Scriptures to simplify our lesson this morning.

Key Word—Identify. Baptism should be reserved for those who have identified with Christ.

Key Scriptures

Acts 2:37-41 helps us to understand who should be baptized. Some people, in error, read verse 38 to mean that an individual is not saved until he/she is baptized. However, the record of the whole counsel of God negates this understanding. Just a few verses later, Luke tells us this Acts.

Acts 3:19 helps us to clarify that repentance and faith result in salvation. This verse gives no mention of baptism in the process of salvation. The early church so closely associated repentance and baptism that to speak of one was to speak of the other. However, the emphasis in salvation is repentance and faith.

In giving directions, we leave out details depending on our audience. If I am giving directions to our church to someone who lives in our city I might say, "Turn on Lee Avenue going towards Downtown and you will see our church." To give those directions to a visitor from out of town would be useless. Depending on the situation, sometimes details are left out, but the assumption is that the listener would know how to understand.

Who should be baptized? Any person who has come to that place of understanding that eternal life is found in faith in Jesus Christ. In baptism, we identify with the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If we have believed that, we need to declare that.

A little girl asked her pastor, "Can I get advertised?" She meant baptized, but she had it right, because our baptism is our advertisement, our public declaration that we identify with Jesus.

II. The Question of When Should a Person be Baptized

Key Word—Immediately. Our baptism should be immediate in the sense of not putting off indefinitely.

Key Scriptures—Acts 2:37 and Acts 8:36-38

Our baptism should be immediate after our repentance and acceptance of Jesus, not because it is a requirement for eternal life, but because there is no other requirement to be baptized. Sometimes people will say, "I'm not ready." You are ready if you have given yourself to Jesus Christ.

Your baptism cannot be before your commitment to Christ, but it ought to come immediately following your commitment to Christ.

The prominent biblical scholar and author, T. R. Glover, while visiting India for the YMCA, met some Indian students who said they wanted to be Christians, provided they would not be compelled to make a profession of faith or join a church. They wanted to remain inside the Hindu or Muslim community and subscribe privately to Christian beliefs. That experience convinced Glover that Jesus had put baptism in just the right place, at the very beginning of a life of Christian discipleship.

What is keeping you from being baptized? In most cases, that very issue will keep you from obeying other commands of our LORD.

III. The Question of How Should a Person be Baptized

Key Word—Immersion. The word *baptizo* has the connotation to “dip.” It was a word that was used in reference to dying clothes.

Key Scriptures

Acts 8:38—“They both went down into the water.”

Mark 1:9-10—“It came to pass...that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water....” (They could have traveled some 60 miles to get to the Jordan.

John 3:23—“There was much water there.” (In reference to the place where John the Baptist baptized.)

IV. The Question of What is the Significance of Baptism

The importance is in the symbolism.

Key Word: Intentionality

Key Scripture:(Romans 6:1-10)

- A. Baptism should reflect that you have died to sin.
- B. Baptism should reflect that you have come to life.
- C. Baptism should reflect that you have made a “once-and-for-all” commitment to Christ.

I see an analogy between my baptism and my wedding ring. My wedding ring does not mean I am faithful nor does it ensure that I will be faithful, but it is a symbol of my commitment and faithfulness, so I wear it with pride. Likewise, our baptism does not mean that we are faithful in our commitment to the LORD nor does it ensure that we will be faithful, but it is a declaration of our intention.

I suspect that for some the issue is not that we have not been baptized, but that we have been baptized with no real commitment to Jesus.

I am going to call on you today to make a declaration of your faith that includes baptism. That is how this becomes a defining moment.