

Baptism

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 April 2023

Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0:00] If I haven't said good morning to you yet, good morning. Please take your copy of God's Word and join me in Matthew chapter 16.!

As our church is growing and as our elders have suggested to the church a change in the way we gather, the details of which I will labor to inform you of via Slack if you weren't at last week's members' meeting, we think it's important for us to think biblically about the ordinances of the church.

The word ordinance comes from the Latin *ordinare*, which means to put in order. God gave to the church two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, also often called communion.

But what are these two ordinances putting in order? Aren't they merely some religious experience that we add on to our faith?

No, in fact, they put something in order. So let me ask you to join me in Matthew chapter 16 beginning in verse 13 and we'll consider what that is.

[1:40] Here we read Matthew 16 verse 13 and following. Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people say the Son of Man is?

And they said, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. He said to them, but who do you say that I am? Simon Peter replied.

The evidence that this is of the Lord is that he got something right. He says, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered him, blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

And I tell you, you are Peter. And on this rock, and it's not the point of today, but let me tell you that the rock he's referring to is himself and the truth concerning himself.

On this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

[2:50] Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Right? So, following this great declaration, right, you are the Christ, this truth about who Jesus is and all that he would accomplish for us people.

He says he's going to build his church. The gates of hell will not prevail against it. It is a sure thing. The church will be built. And then he says, I will give you. I believe he's referring to the church.

The keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. And this text, there's so much to unpack from it, but it begs the question, what are the keys of the kingdom of heaven that do this binding and loosing work?

What is he talking about? And what is the binding and the loosing? Well, we are not left without an answer. We just have to read on.

So, turn over to Matthew chapter 18. Beginning in verse 15, here we find our classic church discipline text.

[4:07] There's a process by which Jesus tells us to see somebody repent or out of the life of the church. And it's a four-step process. So, follow along with me.

And you'll see why it matters. Verse 15 and following. If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. Step one. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

If he repents, praise God. Verse 16. But if he does not listen, step two. Take one or two others along with you that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. Here we hope for repentance, right? A listening to. But verse 17 gives us a third step. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Right? So, the church is a collected witness.

[5:13] A local church. Ones that could actually sit and hear this charge being brought. And the church itself says, this is sinful. This thing that you are doing.

And he is still unwilling to repent. He is to be as a Gentile and a tax collector. An outsider to God's people from Jesus' time.

Then he says, here's the key. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. And whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.

Right? Not just a tripe we tack on to a prayer. He's talking about the careful, weighty process of discipline. Right? Discipling people into obedience with Christ.

[6:18] And if they are unwilling, they show themselves to not be Christians and should be put out of the church. So what are the keys of the kingdom of heaven that do this binding and loosing work?

It is the authority of the church expressed in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Now, this is a point which I will develop further next week when we talk about, you guessed it, the Lord's Supper.

I'm going to spend a little bit more time on that, of them being ordinances of the church. But we're going to think about that some today as we think about the ordinance of baptism.

So what is this binding and loosing? It is marking off who is part of the church and who isn't part of the church. Now, beloved, this is a weighty matter.

It is to be handled under the authority of our great God who gave us a book to govern us. And it is to be handled with great care for the good of people and the purity of the church to the glory of Christ.

[7:29] This is not a light thing. Unfortunately, it has been handled lightly in the American church. The last decades have wreaked havoc around these ordinances.

Things like spontaneous baptism. I stand wholeheartedly against where somebody raises their hand and gets dunked. May it never be.

This matters greatly. Rightly administering ordinances is a primary work of the church. It's how we declare as we baptize somebody that their profession of faith is credible.

Yes, we believe this individual is in fact a Christian. This declaration they're making is true. By the Lord's Supper, it's how we keep people in the church.

We believe their profession is still true. Rightly administering ordinances is a primary work of the church.

[8:31] And as congregationalists, we, all of us, better be sure that we get this right. Today we're going to consider, as I said, the ordinance of baptism.

And we will do so from various texts. And I'm going to encourage you to join me in those texts. So I won't ask you to turn. Just get your fingers ready. Do some flipping. I want you to see it.

But before we do, first I would like to read to you from the 1689 London Baptist Confession. The 1689 Confession, also known as the Second London Baptist Confession, is possibly the finest of all the Baptist confessions.

It has been widely adhered to by all of the founders of the Southern Baptist Convention, either personally expressed agreement with it, or they pastored churches that did so.

The 1689 is the very founding of the denomination that we are part of. Tragically, I doubt the same could be said of the SBC today.

[9:35] But it can be said of our church and of your pastors. An excerpt from a modern English printing of the 1689 London Baptist Confession goes

as follows.

Quote, A confession is a tried and true teaching tool. It lays out the faith in a clear, systematic way and shows the connections among doctrines. It also serves as a standard by which teaching in the church can be measured.

An overseer must be able to give instruction in sound doctrine, Titus 1.9. And a deacon must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, 1 Timothy 3.9.

Hearing an officer merely quote the Bible does not tell us whether he understands the overall teaching of Scripture on a subject. A confession gives us a tool for evaluating his understanding and teaching in summary form.

A confession is a restatement of the word for a particular purpose. In this case, to summarize the overall teaching of that word on various topics. To the degree that it expresses the doctrines of Scripture accurately, it is an expression of the word just as accurate preaching is said to be an expression of the word.

[10:47] That's 2 Timothy 4.2. So confessions serve us well. We have a recitation each Sunday morning, which is usually a catechism or a Heidelberg confession this morning we were working on together.

So this is Article 29 on baptism from the 1689 London Baptist Confession. It has four sections, which will be the four points for our sermon this morning.

I don't expect you to get all these down, but you can try if you would like. So number one, this is Article or Section 1 of Article 29 on baptism. Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament ordained by Jesus Christ.

To those baptized is a sign of their fellowship with him in his death and resurrection, of their being grafted into, united with him, of remission of sins, and of submitting themselves to God through Jesus Christ to live and walk in newness of life.

This is what this sign, this ordinance, pictures for us. It's a symbol of a spiritual reality that has happened. If the individual declares it in being baptized, and we declare it of them in baptizing them.

[12:10] A couple of texts. Ready? Romans chapter 6, verse 3 through 5. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. Is Paul arguing that baptism itself is salvific? Of course not. He's not saying we are literally made dead and literally made alive in the ordinance of baptism.

What he is saying is that we have spiritually been dead and are now made alive, and baptism pictures this for us. It puts on display the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Another text, Colossians 2 and verse 12. There Paul writes, Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead.

[13:21] Right? How is it that we are buried and raised? It's through faith. It's a spiritual thing that has happened in the life of a Christian. Galatians 3, 27.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Right? We are now clothed in his righteousness. Right? As a spiritual reality for us.

Mark records for us in Mark chapter 1 and verse 4 that John the Baptist, or if you prefer the baptizer, appeared baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Once again, the baptism itself did not forgive sins, but it was a sign of a repentant, a penitent heart. In fact, baptism became so synonymous with repentance that it is used interchangeably in the scripture with this term.

In Acts chapter 22 and verse 16, here Paul is speaking in Jerusalem and he says, And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins.

[14:35] Call on his name. And in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 4 and following, here Paul is calling for unity in the church at Ephesus. And

here he says, There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism. I'll suggest to you, he's expressing that there's faith and repentance. It's a single thing. One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. So baptism pictures this spiritual reality, this thing that has taken place. I hope that that's not a challenge to your thinking. But I hope that you're seeing that it's a significant thing that an individual does and the church does together.

Laying a confidence on a person that they are, in fact, in the faith. Second section.

So point two. Those who personally profess repentance toward God and faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ are the only proper subjects of this ordinance.

[15:48] If you've missed it, so far here, we are Baptists. This church is a Baptist church. Apart from our denominational affiliation, which we hold very open-handedly, in our closed fist, we are Baptists.

We are Baptists by conviction. We believe it's what the scripture teaches. Specifically, we are Credo Baptists. We believe in Credo Baptism.

Credo prefix is from the Latin, which simply means I believe. Or Believer's Baptism. And it could be said of a Credo Baptist that they are Believer's Baptism-only Baptists.

This is the only place in which we believe baptism belongs. The baptism of a person, the proper subject of this ordinance, those who have expressed faith and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ. A credible profession of faith. The opposite of this, maybe that's too strong of a word, maybe not the opposite, but the thing that we are pressing against as a practice in the church is what's called Paedo Baptism, or Paedo, some will say.

[17:00] I just like the way Paedo sounds better, and I've heard it pronounced that way, so I'm going to say it that way. The prefix here is derived from the Greek pais, which just means child. So you have here child baptism or infant baptism.

Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, many denominations that came out of the Reformation just as we did, are Paedo Baptists.

We are not. Now, it is not my intention to denigrate any practitioner of Paedo Baptism. Some of the aforementioned denominations do so merely for tradition's sake.

That I would condemn. But many do so out of an earnest desire to please the Lord by being faithful to his word. So I just want you to hear very carefully. I think many people participate in the practice of Paedo Baptism with sincerity and desire to please the Lord and be faithful to his word.

I don't doubt this, but I and we are Paedo Baptists for a reason. It's not primary doctrine, but it's certainly secondary. We as a church need to agree on this.

[18:11] We are Paedo Baptists for a reason. And so we must discuss why we are not Paedo Baptists. Because to be clear, all Paedo Baptists believe in believer's baptism.

That is to say that they believe that if a person was not baptized as an infant, comes to faith in Christ as an adult, then they should be baptized.

We could have some debate about the mode, but they would say that somebody who was never baptized, who comes to faith, should then be baptized. Which is believer's baptism. Which is why I stated that we are Paedo Baptists only.

The distinguishing factor is whether or not a child should be baptized. Just allow me to share with you why I think not. You know when I ask permission, I'm just trying to get your mind to think. Clearly I'm the one talking right now. But I don't think any of you would go, no. But open your mind for a minute and just listen. Okay. Reason number one. Paedo Baptism confuses the sufficiency of scripture.

[19:17] Confuses the sufficiency of scripture. One of the cries of the Reformation was sola scriptura. Right? The Bible alone. Not tradition.

The scripture. What does the scripture teach? Right? This comes classically from a text like 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16 and 17. Right? Paul there says, all scripture breathed out by God. He is its very source. He is its author. And it's profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Certainly the formation of and the continuation of a church is a good work. And so the Bible is sufficient for the task.

We don't need extra biblical literature. Can be helpful. Right? Can help us think. Can guide us to the scripture. But we don't need it. The Bible itself is sufficient.

[20:12] Right? All a group of Christians needs to start a church. It's God's word and his spirit. They can come together and they can study it. Right? They can read this text and have it lead them in the truth for how they are to order themselves as a church.

The regulative principle of worship was defined by John Calvin as follows. God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by his word.

God's word and it was understood. And it was understood that it needed to be sanctioned by command or example. And that it needed to be deduced by good and necessary consequence. Right? If it wasn't clear, it needed to be deduced by good and necessary consequence. An example of this would be the doctrine of the Trinity. Good and necessary consequence. We see it taught all over the place in the scripture.

And we must be able to bring to this plain reason or logic. If you need a seminary degree, if you need 90 plus hours of master's level education to understand how it is we're meant to baptize people, we might need to take a step back, stop and think.

[21:27] What does the scripture say? What has it clearly commanded us to do? Right? And I know I might be rubbing some feathers the wrong way, but I think paedobaptism confuses the sufficiency of scripture.

I'm not sure you'd hand this text to somebody who had no knowledge of church history and they would arrive at the conclusion that we should baptize infants. Secondly, paedobaptism confuses the nature of the church.

We believe in a believer's church. Ephesians chapter 5, verse 25. There it says, Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

How do we know that somebody is of the church, right? They make a credible profession of faith and we agree with them that they are in fact a Christian through the ordinance of baptism.

Right? We picture the gospel together and we say, yes, with the kind of frail confidence we can have. As far as we can tell, we believe that you are in Christ.

[22:35] This has been dramatically confused with the baptism of children. We are part of a denomination that pumps child evangelism and baptism.

And hear me. I love children. Right? We've got some kids around here. And I love every one of them. We preach the gospel to our children all the time. We invite them to follow Jesus all the time. I got an email one time from our denomination promoting Vacation Bible School saying that children after they turn eight are 80% less likely to respond to a gospel invitation.

And the promotion was, so get in there and get it done. You know what else kids stop believing in at the age of eight? Santa Claus. Something's flipping in their brains, right?

Becoming less gullible, perhaps? I don't know. But let us be careful about who we put under the water lest we give false assurance.

[23:40] The statistics right now are as high as 80% of professing children when they go off to college renounce their faith. 80%.

Oh, we should think carefully about how we administer the ordinances. We need to be so, so careful. Interestingly, historically, the Baptist position was to have children wait until they were 18 to be baptized.

Our church has no official policy, and I'm not telling you that that's where we're headed as a church. What I am saying is I think that historic Baptists were much, much more careful than we have been to our shame.

Every New Testament reference concerning the universal church or the local church is always speaking of those in the faith, whether past, present, or future.

Baptism marks out. It's the welcoming ordinance who we believe is, in fact, a Christian. And this is a serious and weighty matter.

[24:49] So, I think, and paedobaptism confuses the nature of the church. As paedobaptists use language like, it's the sign of covenant promise. We're not saying that the child is saved, but it's a sign of covenant

promise, which, to my mind, says, well, then you're guaranteeing, because when my God makes a promise, he keeps it.

What do we do with that language? I find it confusing, and I have read far and wide, and I have talked to many paedo-baptists, and I always leave confused. I always leave confused about exactly what they believe to be true about the nature of the church.

And so, I would suggest we just avoid it altogether. Thirdly, paedo-baptism confuses the meaning of believer's baptism.

And we have expressed already that the proper person to receive baptism is those who have professed faith in Christ. And there's a bunch of texts that we see this occurring in.

The argument is often that none of these people could have parents who believed in Christ, and therefore, this nullifies the argument altogether. But I think that the scripture is inspired, that the structure is important, and so we should be careful at this point.

[26:03] Mark 16, 16. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. Believes and is baptized. Acts 22, verse 41.

So those who received his word, received his word, believed, were baptized. And there were out of that day about 3,000 souls. Acts 8, 12.

But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized. Both men and women. Again, belief that precedes the baptism. Acts 18, 8. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord together with his entire household. Believed, he believed, with his household. And many of the Corinthians heard Paul and they were baptized.

They believed and were baptized. Now, again, we see this pattern over and over and over again in the New Testament text. So what then are we saying is true of children who are being baptized, that they will have a future belief?

[27:02] It's confusing. I'm just not sure. I also want you to note an argument from silence, which I will caution you to not make many arguments from silence.

I'm going to caution you not to do the thing that I'm about to do. But I think in this case, it's really telling. So turn with me to Acts chapter 15. If you haven't already been flipping, which I haven't heard a lot of flipping, but if you haven't and you would like to, I would invite you to join me in Acts 15.

Thank you. Thank you. Beginning in verse 1.

It's often known as the Jerusalem Council. But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. So being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles and brought great joy to all the brothers.

[28:29] When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, it is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.

The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. So there's a question that's repeated twice. Paul and Barnabas have been in debate with these men already about whether or not you must be circumcised in order to be saved.

That's what the question is at hand. Not only is it happening in the place they were, it also happens in Jerusalem as well. And a council is convened, right? There's a question and there is a council.

And if you read further, this council determines that it is not necessary for a Gentile to be circumcised in order to be saved. But they do determine to instruct the Gentile believers, right?

There is a response. They just don't say, nope, that's not true. But they do write a letter and they send a letter. And there they instruct them. This is verse 20 of Acts 15.

[29:42] To abstain from the things polluted by idols and from sexual immorality and from what has been strangled and from blood. Right? We're not going to get into all of those things this morning because the point I'm trying to make to you, we are not arguing that a person needs to be baptized to be saved.

But why? At this crucial juncture in the life of the New Testament church, the church is now expanding out to Gentile peoples.

Circumcision now, work of the law, no longer necessary, not a thing that should be done. This important question has been raised about the nature of circumcision. A council has been called, a letter written and dispersed.

Do they mention nothing of baptism's correlation with circumcision? They say nothing about it. Right? I think, had they brought it up, Luke would have very carefully jotted down everything they had to say about the connection between the two and the way in which this letter would have been crafted carefully to explain why it mattered so much.

All of the trees that have been felled writing books about why paedobaptism is biblical would have had to be written at this time so that the church would understand the change of this sign of the covenant.

[31:01] Could it be instead that it was so simple and that people were believing in being baptized as a sign of repentance by the church and so they had no need to draw a connection between the two?

I think so. I think so. So, paedobaptism confuses the meaning of believer's baptism. Okay.

We're back to our statement of faith. Thirdly, and these go really fast. The third section, Article 29, 1689 Confession, the outward element to be used in this ordinance is water in which the individual is to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

You see many examples in the Bible concerning water. This is where baptism is happening. Acts chapter 8 and verse 38. And he commanded the chariot to stop and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

Go down into the water. And, of course, the rest of that is deriving the language from Matthew chapter 28, the Great Commission, where we're commanded as disciples to go, as churches, baptizing people, converted people, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Trinitarian baptism.

[32:23] Okay. So the outward element to be used in this ordinance is water. Fourth section, immersion or dipping of the person in water is necessary for this ordinance to be administered properly.

Now, the Greek word that's used to baptize, baptizo, means, you're going to like it both in biblical language and in extra-biblical literature, to dunk, to dunk repeatedly, or to drown.

I have yet to see somebody drown from water being sprinkled upon them. Now, I want you to know, too, I guess, I'm less concerned about mode.

I do think it's important, but I'm less concerned about it than I am about timing, the timeline of it. But all the same, it's proper. If it's a picture we're given, it's supposed to help us see something, then I believe the way we do it matters.

So Matthew chapter 3, verse 16, records for us that when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water. He went down into the water and he comes up from the water.

[33:34] Like, our Lord displays for us the mode of baptism in the only reasonable way. A person looks dead, having been buried, and then raises again to life.

And it's in that text that we see the heavens open and the Spirit of God descending like a dove and resting on him and saying, well done, my good and faithful servant. Oh, you're my beloved son, and you I am well pleased.

Acts chapter 8, verse 36. This is the precursor to the verse that I read with the eunuch. As they're going along the road, Philip has been evangelizing. They're going along the road.

They came to some water, and the eunuch said, see, here is water. He is traveling back to Ethiopia from Jerusalem. He would have had water with him in his chariot.

He would not have been without water on a journey across the desert. But he says, see, here is water. What prevents me from being baptized? And in this case, right, Philip would say, nothing,

you're the only convert going back to Ethiopia.

[34:38] We better baptize you so that you can go back and baptize others. If the eunuch was here in Dahlonaga, and we were down by the river, I'd say, well, we need to go meet with the church.

That's what's preventing you. But in this case, he's this odd man headed back as the only convert to a place where we understand from history a church was established there in Ethiopia in the first century.

John chapter 3, verse 23. Again, John, the baptizer, also was baptizing at Anon near Salim because water was plentiful there and people were coming and they were being baptized.

So, we baptize by immersion. Not just as some religious act, some right, some thing that we go to, but because it's an authority that's been given to the church.

It's an opportunity for an individual to proclaim that they place faith in Christ. It's an opportunity for the church to say, yes, we believe this is true. Baptism should accompany membership in the church.

[35:45] We want those within and those outside the church to see a clear picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We believe that the scripture teaches this and it does so reasonably.

And this is why we do what we do and it's why we do what we do in the way we do what we do. to the praise of Christ. Let's pray.