

20251130 Baptism: Identified with Jesus – Ps Bijoy

The story is told of a pastor who had just started serving a new congregation. For eight Sundays in a row, he preached on the importance of baptism. Finally, that next day, the chairman of the Elders approached him and said, “Pastor, we get the point about baptism. We think you need to choose another theme to preach on.” The pastor thanked the Elder and said, “I didn’t know everyone felt that way. Why don’t you just pick out a Bible text, and I’ll preach on that.” The Elder randomly opened his Bible, closed his eyes and put his finger in the middle of the page, saying, “OK, pastor, here’s your text. Matthew 3:10: ‘The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down...’”

The next Sunday, the pastor got up in the pulpit, read the assigned verse, and then said, “Amen. This is wonderful. The axe is at the root of the trees. Why would anyone do that? It’s obvious, isn’t it? It was so they could cut down the tree, which would make the creek back up, so the water would be deep enough to have a baptism!” Don’t worry. I don’t have a preoccupation with baptism. Now let’s read Mark 1:4-5; 9-11 (V4-5)

“And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 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”

(V 9-11) “At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

In John’s day, the people understood the three-step process a Gentile had to go through to become a full-fledged Jew - a proselyte. And John takes that familiar pattern and uses it to teach Israel about humility, commitment, and identification.

Step one was Sacrifice. A Gentile brought a heifer or two turtledoves to the priest and offered them as a burnt offering. It cost something, lifeblood was spilled. It was a clear statement that the old life was being surrendered and something new was beginning.

Step two was Circumcision. For Jewish boys it happened at eight days (they won’t remember the pain), but an adult Gentile converting had to go through it personally, painfully, thoughtfully. It was the permanent, irreversible mark that said, “I belong to God alone.” Nobody ‘impulse - bought’ Judaism. You didn’t add it on top of your old identity; you are becoming a new person. This step forced a man to count the cost.

Step three was Baptism. After healing, the convert removed every stitch of clothing and went down into the water. Every bit of flesh immersed. It was the ultimate act of humility. When he came up, he was

considered a Jew in every way. He had fully renounced his former life, former nationality, former allegiances. A Gentile, in a sense, died under the water and a completely new person came out, new name and a new identity.

John takes this proselyte baptism and adapts it into a baptism of repentance. But he's not baptizing Gentiles, he's baptizing Jews. His message is simple: "Turn back to God" as Israel had grown complacent, self-centred and living in rebellion against God, and God was using hardship to get their attention. Their baptism became a moment of humility, commitment, and identification - a public declaration that they were turning away from their old ways and returning to the God who loved them.

In Romans 6: 3-5, "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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. 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."

Here, Paul explains that baptism is all about identification. Baptism always comes after belief/faith, and it publicly shows that we now belong to Jesus. Paul says we are 'baptized into Christ,' 'baptized into His death,' and 'buried with Him in baptism.' Even though he's mainly talking about the spiritual baptism that happens the moment we trust Christ, water baptism is the picture of that reality.

Baptism shows three big truths:

We turn from our old life of sin to live a new life in Christ.

We publicly identify with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

We commit ourselves to join the family of God (Church) and live under Christ's leadership.

When you're baptized, you visually preach the gospel without saying a word. Standing in the water represents Jesus on the cross. Going under shows His burial. Rising out of the water pictures His resurrection, and your new life in Him. Baptism doesn't save you; salvation is by grace through faith. But baptism is your public testimony that the old you is gone and a new creation has been born.

It's like pledging allegiance -it declares your loyalty to Christ. It's like a wedding ring (it's a symbol of commitment). it doesn't make you saved, but it shows you belong to Him. Baptism is a symbolic action that expresses devotion, love, and commitment. It moves your faith from private to public and says to the world, "I belong to Jesus."

To those of you who are already a baptised Christians, I encourage you to remember the day you were baptized. Take a moment to reflect on that moment when you publicly declared your faith in Christ. Let it remind you who you belong to, your identity as a son or daughter of God, and the hope you have in Christ. Baptism is not just a past event, it is a lasting symbol of the life and relationship we have in Him.