

Theme: Water baptism does not remove original sin, or produce regeneration or justification, but it is the sign that these things have been already done by God and received by faith alone.

## I. Intro – Elder from UPC

- A. I believe - am I saved - don't know
- B. Water baptized - saved - don't know
- C. Continue progression - never know
- D. Mark of a cult - changing Gospel
- E. What does baptism NOT do?

## II. Understanding Baptism's Limits

- A. Many credit baptism with things it does not do
  - 1. Automatically work - no - faith required
  - 2. Remove original sin
  - 3. Regeneration
  - 4. Justification
  - 5. Many cults do this - but even Augustine did!
- B. Baptism and regeneration - John 3:3-7
  - 1. The need for regeneration (v3)
    - a. Born again - Nicodemus question in v4
    - b. Born from above - normal meaning, Spirit
    - c. Reborn from above - captures both ideas

- d. Repeated in v7 - must be reborn from above!

## 2. Born of water and Spirit - baptism???

- a. Water baptism - no Christian baptism yet; grammar
- b. Natural birth and spiritual rebirth - v6; not likely
- c. Both refer to regeneration/cleansing by Spirit
  - 1. Grammar - 1 thing in view
  - 2. Parallel with v3, 7
  - 3. Nicodemus should have known from OT (v7, 10)
  - 4. Isaiah 44:3-5; Ezek 36:25-27; Spirit poured out
  - 5. Baptism an outward visible sign of this inward invisible reality

- 3. Same is true of 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 2:38; 22:16

## C. Baptism and justification (Rom 4:9-12)

- 1. Abraham justified by faith alone; us too
- 2. Circumcision sign of prior justification by faith
- 3. Note link between baptism & circumcision

## III. One Gospel - Always By Faith Alone

- A. If baptism is required - it was always required!
  - 1. Thief on cross - but before Jesus died some say
  - 2. It was always by faith alone - point of Rom 4!
  - 3. They had same Gospel
    - a. Gal 3:8; Heb 4:2 - they had Gospel

b. It has always been about faith in God/Christ

c. If we have to be baptized - Abraham lost

B. Covenant w/ God always by faith alone - sign follows

1. Rom 4:9-11 - faith justifies, then sign shows
2. OT - Abraham - faith alone, then circumcised
3. NT - faith alone, then baptized as sign

#### **IV. Applying the Word**

A. Do we see that we are justified by faith alone?

1. Humans always look for way to earn favor
2. We look to make anything a work - even baptism
3. Baptism is VERY important - but does not justify
4. It has ALWAYS been faith alone - no other way
5. Resist creeping self-righteousness
6. Have you looked to Christ in faith?
7. Do you come with empty hands?

B. Have believers here been baptized?

1. It is the sign given by God to show we believe
2. Does not justify, but it is commanded
3. To not be baptized is disobedience
4. If not, get baptized!

C. Thanks be to God for the Gospel!

#### **The Limits of Water Baptism**

John 3:3-7; Romans 4:9-12

Romans 4:16-25

March 28, 2010

Prayer or song

Numbers 6:24-26

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. " 4 "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" 5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' John 3:3-7

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6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.  
7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'  
8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."  
9 "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.  
10 "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? John 3:3-10

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.  
4They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. 5 One will say, 'I belong to the LORD'; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, 'The LORD's,' and will take the name Israel.  
Isaiah 44:3-5

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.  
Ezek 36:25-27

The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."  
Galatians 3:8

For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Hebrews 4:2