

Refrigerator Notes January 07, 2018

“What is Baptism?”

Mark 1:4-11

1. Baptism is one of two sacraments practiced by Presbyterians; Communion is the other
2. The act of baptism is deceptively simple—but in a handful of water, there is a deep well of mystery and meaning.
3. I began the sermon by telling the congregation what Baptism was not i.e. a way to get to heaven, the only way to be united with Christ, essential for salvation, a method of cleaning up a person’s soul, or magical ceremonial tradition – NOT!
4. First, Baptism is an ordinance given, ordained or pronounced by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ explicitly in Matthew 28:19-20 “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”
5. Second, Baptism “expresses union with Christ in His death and resurrection” – Romans 6:3-4 “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”
6. In my opinion, it would be a mistake to say that water-baptism is the only means of our being united to Christ.
7. In Romans, faith is the means by which we are united to Christ and justified. But we show this faith—we say this faith and signify this faith and symbolize this faith—with the act of baptism
8. Faith unites us to Christ; then Baptism symbolic of our union with Christ.
9. In Baptism by faith, we are united with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.
10. Baptism dramatically portrays what happened spiritually when you received Christ: Your old self of unbelief and rebellion and idolatry died, and a new you of faith and submission and treasuring Christ comes into being (that is what is to happen when we profess our faith).
11. Third, we believe this expression of union with Christ in death and resurrection happens “by being immersed in water.”
12. The clearest evidence for this are the words of Romans 6:3-4, which describe the act of baptism as burial and rising from the dead - This is understood to mean that you are buried under water and then come out of from the water to signify rising from the grave.
13. Fourth, Baptism during immersing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That’s what Jesus said in Matthew 28:19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
14. We are called to make disciples first and then baptize them, if they have not been Baptized
15. The example I used was Cornelius’s household – Acts 10 & 11 – who were saved first by the Holy Spirit and later baptized.
16. It’s probably right, therefore, to say that baptism has replaced circumcision as the mark of being part of the people of God. In the Old Testament, men were circumcised to signify membership in the old-covenant people of God, and in the New Testament men, women and children are baptized to signify membership in the new-covenant people of God.
17. Which has led many Christians to assume that since circumcision was given to the male children of the people of the old covenant, therefore baptism should be given to the male and female children of the people of the new covenant (That’s the gist of the argument).

18. Infant baptism expresses that it is God who chooses us for faith, discipleship, and salvation; without God, we have no power to claim these things for ourselves: However, we affirm that people come to faith at different stages in life, and recognize the baptism of older believers as an equally valid expression of the sacrament as we do the infants.
19. While pouring or sprinkling water upon the head is most common, Presbyterians also allow for baptism by immersion, but only one Christian baptism is needed or required.
20. Paul expresses his thoughts about baptism and faith in Galatians 3:26-27: "In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (to imbue)." We become sons of God through faith and no other way.
21. Baptism is important: It was uncompromisingly commanded by the Lord Jesus; It was universally administered to Christians entering the early church; and It was uniquely connected to conversion as an unrepeatable expression of saving faith as Christians.