

Sermon Series: Basics of the Church
Sermon title: Baptism
Scripture Reading: Romans 6:1-11
Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church
February 10, 2019
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Next week we will begin a new series called **The Big Picture** where we will take a look at the major themes of the Bible; somewhat of a Bible overview in several weeks.

Before we do that next week, I have one free Sunday where I'd like to take the opportunity to tackle the topic of Baptism.

What is Baptism?

Why do we do it?

What does it mean?

How should we do it?

You might think that is an easy question but maybe nothing has caused so much division amongst the Christian church as the topic of Baptism.

Let's pray together and ask God's help.

Our church is called Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church. Clearwater Bay kind of our area. International is who we are. We are a multiethnic congregation and in Hong Kong, "International" usually means our services are in English. But what about the B word...Baptist? Why is that there? Why are we Baptists?

Let me give you a simplified little history. Baptist groups came out of the Protestant Reformation in the 1500 & 1600's because they didn't baptize babies like almost everyone else. So, they were called 'Anabaptists', because they were baptized again, convinced that they were to be baptized as believers and not as infants. They were persecuted by Protestants and Catholics alike due to their getting baptized as adults, re-baptized, even though they had been baptized as babies. Many Baptist groups formed out of these in Europe and America and they spread far and wide. That's a short and inadequate history for sure.

What was it that distinguished Baptist churches from others at that time? **Believer's Baptism or Credobaptism.**

Baptists believe that the Bible teaches that baptism should happen upon a profession of faith not before. Most people think immersion is what makes us Baptists, but that wasn't the main thing from the beginning. Some early baptists actually poured. Later, immersion became the normal way of baptizing among baptists, so most people associated us with immersion.

Our church was planted by Kowloon International Baptist Church. KIBC's pastor was an American man named Dick Lusk who was a missionary with the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention of which I am an ordained minister. So, our

church was started by Baptists, we belong to the Hong Kong *Baptist* Convention and your pastor is a Baptist.

But if I am guessing, many of you didn't grow up Baptist and you likely attend this church because it's close or you know people here. If our church didn't have the Baptist word in there, it likely wouldn't make much difference to many.

What I want to do today is to bring some clarity to a few things.

First, I want to show us the *meaning* of Baptism itself.

Second, I want to show why we use the *mode* of Baptism that we do, which is immersion.

Third, I want to bring some balance to a baptism issue in our own church and *move* toward a solution.

Turn in your Bible to **Romans 6**. I'll read **verses 1-5**.

6 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 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.

5 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.

The whole reason that Paul is writing Romans 6 is to encourage believers not to live in sin but walk in newness of life. So, to do that he reminds them of what has happened to them.

Something has happened to them!

Notice the language that is used. Lots of talk about death and life.

Why does he do this? He wants them to see just how much they've been changed. There is a '*radical realm transfer*' (D.A. Carson, *Romans*) that has taken place. There's no greater way to explain it than to compare death and life. Your old life is gone and you now live a new life by the power of Christ's death and resurrection.

He also mentions a few times the word 'union'; he says that they are *united* with Christ in his death and *united* with Christ in his resurrection. This is about identity. Union means being joined to something or someone.

So, it is as if Paul is saying, 'Roman church you can't live in sin but must walk in newness of life because you have died with Christ and been raised with Christ. You've been united and joined to Christ and there's power there to live differently, right now. Remember your baptism!'

He could've just said that we've died with Christ and we now live with Christ and are united with Christ, but he used Baptism to say this. Why? Because this is the meaning of Baptism.

I. THE MEANING OF BAPTISM.

An initiation rite by which a person shows that they have been united with Christ in his death and resurrection.

Every instance of *true* baptism in the Bible is a person or people who receive the Holy Spirit, repent of their sins and unite themselves by faith to the resurrected Christ. (See Acts 2:38-41, Acts 8:37, Acts 9:18, Acts 10:47, Acts 16:15, Acts 16:33, Acts 18:8.) Baptism is something you do after you believe, not before. This is why we are Baptists. We believe the Bible teaches ‘believer’s baptism’.

Baptism is the first step of obedience to say, “Christ is my king.” Baptism is the initiation rite that says publicly, “I’ve been born again and I belong to Christ and his church.”

Are you united to Christ?

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

Have you been born again of the Spirit of God?

Then you should be baptized. Jesus commanded all believers to be baptized in Matthew 28.

What’s **the meaning of Baptism**- an initiation rite by which a person shows that they *have been* (not *will be*) united with Christ, died to sin and been given new life in Christ.

II. THE MODE OF BAPTISM. The *regular* and normal way of baptism in all of scripture is to be put under the water. The Greek word *Baptizo* means to dip or dunk.

John 3:23, John the Baptist was baptizing at Aenon near Salim because water was plentiful there.

Acts 8:36, Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch came to some water and the eunuch said, “See here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And they went down into the water.

In Romans 6 we see that immersion best signifies and pictures the believers identification with Christ in his death and resurrection. Going down into the water to symbolize death and coming up out of the water to symbolize resurrected life in Christ.

Immersion is the regular way in scripture. Although it’s not the only way, at CBIBC we practice immersion.

Baptism for CBIBC (is and always will be) an initiation rite by which a person is immersed in water to show that they have been united with Christ, died to sin and been given resurrection life in Christ.

But we have a little problem.

We are an international church with people from many nations and many church backgrounds. Many of you were not raised Baptist. Many will continue to come to our church because it is beside HKUST and they won’t know Christ or if they do, they may have been baptized by another mode than immersion.

We know there are some of you who attend here who have been united with Christ, the Holy Spirit indwells them and you have deep affection for Jesus Christ, yet have not been baptized by immersion and so cannot **BELONG** fully to this Baptist church and use your gifts here.

And oh how I want you to BELONG. We need your gifts and we want you to go deep with us in living for Christ.

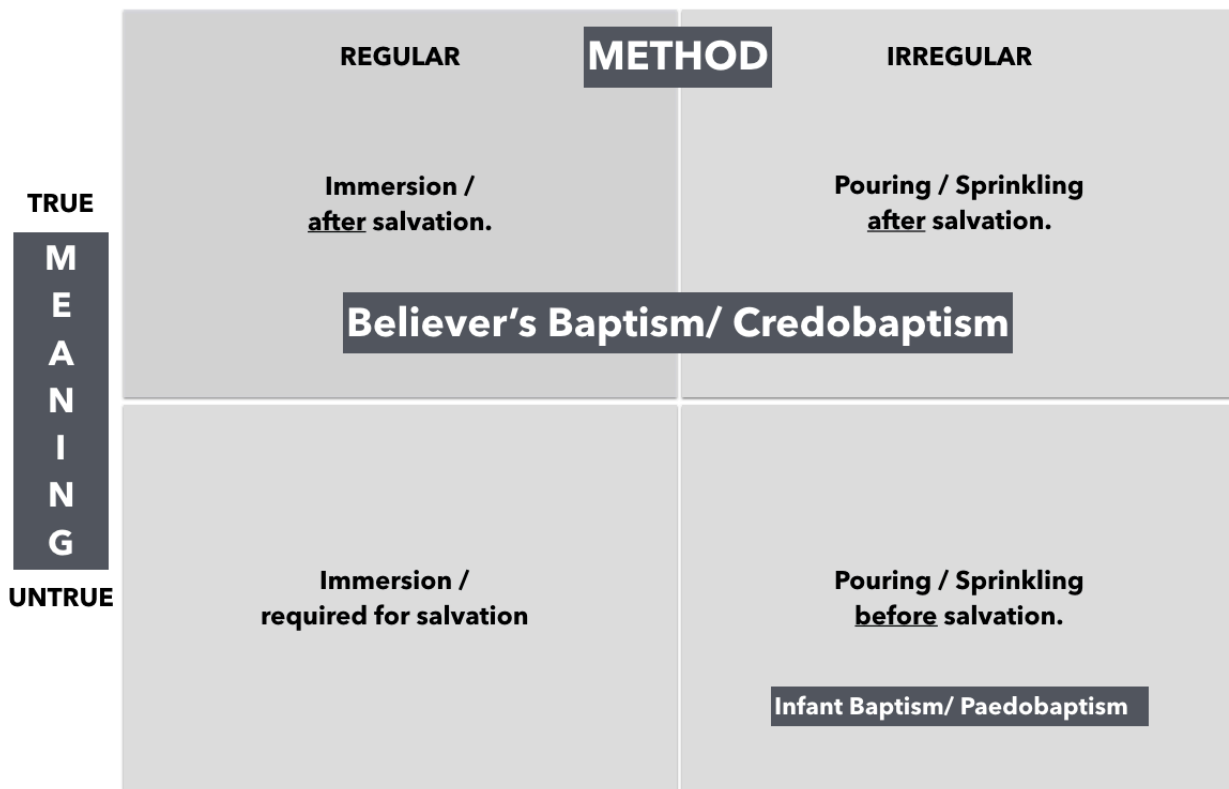
III. THE MOVE TOWARD A SOLUTION.

We could do one of a few things like some churches do: (But we don't need to do what other churches do but let God's word instruct us.)

1. We could draw a hard line in the sand and say it's immersion or nothing. If a person wants to join our church and BELONG here, they must get re-baptized. If you don't want to, go somewhere else. We can't do that though because it would be wrong for us to reject those whom Christ has received and died for. And it would be wrong for us to make baptized believers get re-baptized.

2. We could just say it doesn't matter and just say any and every baptism is ok but we can't do that either. We love the Bible and we want to honor God and his word as much as we possibly can. We need to do the hard work to search for the truth and conform to it.

So, here's my attempt at trying to make sense of Baptism's meaning and mode and how CBIBC can obey the Lord faithfully and yet not be legalistic. Our church needs to pray and discuss how to remedy this in all spiritual wisdom and doctrinal fidelity.



What makes us Baptists? Is it the mode and the amount of water or is it Believer's Baptism?

It's believer's baptism.

We will always practice immersion at CBIBC, but we should consider allowing those who have been baptized by *less water* (another mode) as believers... to transfer into our membership...without making them Associate Members or etc.

Would you pray about this?

We have fewer and fewer people who can serve in our church due to this issue.

Join me in praying. Join me in searching the scriptures and church history and let's make a biblically informed decision about such matters for the good of our church and the love of the saints; so that brothers and sisters can BELONG here and build up this body for the glory of God.

Some of you today have been united with Christ. You believe in Christ but you have not been baptized. You should. Christ commanded you to. Let's me and you sit down and talk about that.

Some of you might be confused. You were baptized as a baby and you know you're a Christian now but you aren't sure whether you should get re-baptized or what. Let's me and you sit down and have coffee and work that out.

Some of you aren't sure if you even believed when you were baptized and don't know what that means for you.

Some of you were sprinkled or poured and you have questions. Let's work it out.

Some of you have not united your life to Christ. You don't belong to him. I'd love to talk to you about that.

“Turn away from your sin and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you’ll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For this promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” Acts 2:38-39