

Immersed into the Name

Introduction

The Text

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:16–20)

What’s up with These Words?

- A. While there is so much we could draw from this text, it was really the little prepositional phrase there at the end of v. 19 that captured my attention: “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” (v. 19).
- B. Perhaps you’ve been baptized before, or maybe you’ve seen someone else getting baptized. If you have, well, no doubt, you probably heard these words being repeated as the person went down and then came back up out of the water: “I baptize you ‘in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’”
 - 1. We hear these things. We say these things. But do we know why? Do we know what these words really mean?
 - a. Is it just a pretty little bow we slap onto our Christian ritual—make it sound pretty? Is it some sort of magical formula that makes the baptism valid?
- C. Can I just be real here for a moment. The first time I ever baptized someone was in a jacuzzi at the house I was renting in See Canyon near San Luis Obispo. I was the college pastor at my church and this girl wanted to be associated with Jesus in His life, death, and resurrection—she wanted to be baptized.
 - 1. I think I was so excited and things that, guess what? I forgot to say the magic words. I can’t remember what I said, or if I said anything at all, but I know this: I didn’t say, “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” When someone brought it to my attention later, I really was concerned. “O no, does that mean it wasn’t valid? Does that mean we have to do this whole thing again? I’m embarrassed. I’m confused.”
- D. I tell you this laughing now, but it does bring up the question again: What’s the deal with these words? Why do we say them? What do they mean?

1. O brothers and sisters, after considering these things, my sense is that they mean more than we can even fathom. But I want to quickly draw out four points for your consideration and encouragement this morning.

Two Textual Notes

- A. Before I do this, though, first let me set up the discussion by making a couple textual, interpretive notes. And this really will make sense of the tagline you see up there on the slide as well: "Baptism—Immersed into the name." To get that, you need to know a couple of things:
 1. First, the Greek word translated "baptize" in our text literally means to plunge or "immerse".
 2. Second, the Greek word translated "in" in our text literally means "into". Your Bibles probably make that note for you in the footnotes. There's a perfectly good word for "in" in Greek, but this word, eis, means "into".
 - a. So, filling it out: When a person is baptized we are immersing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- B. So let's tease this out. What does that mean?

(1) We've Been Hounded by Grace

- A. With the reference to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit here, I think we are meant to realize first that our salvation is the result of a joint effort among the persons of the Trinity. It has often been noted that, with regard to man's redemption: the Father architects it, the Son accomplishes it, and the Spirit applies it.
 1. The Father architects it: He's planned it, promised it, prophesied concerning it, filled the Old Testament with countless symbols and shadows pointing the way towards it.
 2. The Son accomplishes it: He brings to pass all that the Father planned. That's why He's always pointing back and saying I'm just fulfilling all that's been written of Me.
 3. The Spirit applies it: After His resurrection and ascension Jesus pours out His Spirit, essentially giving to us all that is His.
- B. All of this to say: For those being baptized this morning, Heaven has been working tirelessly with a view towards this moment. When you are baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit you are invited to see how busy God has been on your behalf, how much every person of the trinity has been up to in grace for you.
- C. That's why I chose the word "hounded" for this heading. "We've Been Hounded by Grace."
 1. I get the idea from an old poem called "The Hound of Heaven" written by Francis Thompson back in the late 1800s. I won't dare read any of it here, I looked it over and the English was so dated I could barely understand any of it myself. But, as I stumbled my way through it, one thing became clear: Francis was recounting how he had run and run and run from God,

but God in grace ran faster. Hence, the “Hound of heaven.” “He wasn’t going to let me get away.”

a. One old minister wrote of this poem: "The name is strange. It startles one at first. It is so bold, so new, so fearless. It does not attract, rather the reverse. But when one reads the poem this strangeness disappears. The meaning is understood. As the hound follows the hare, never ceasing in its running, ever drawing nearer in the chase, with unhurrying and unperturbed pace, so does God follow the fleeing soul by His Divine grace. And though in sin or in human love, away from God it seeks to hide itself, Divine grace follows after, unwearingly follows ever after, till the soul feels its pressure forcing it to turn to Him alone in that never ending pursuit."

D. So your baptism, while certainly, as we shall see, marks off a sort of new beginning, a fresh work of God in your life—a going down with Christ in death and coming up a new creation in Him—it also, in another sense, is the consummation, the climax, the grand finale of a work God’s been up to on your behalf from even before you were ever born: “³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world . . .” (Eph 1:3-4a).

1. This day of your baptism into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is not an afterthought in the mind of God it is a culmination of heaven’s pursuit of you!

(2) We’ve Been Surrounded by Love

A. This idea of being immersed into the name of the trinity, surely carries this idea of entering relationship with Them. No, we don’t become the fourth member of the trinity. But, yes, we are somehow, sinners though we be, folded into relationship with Them. And, therefore, I say, we are surrounded by the love of God. It’s coming at us from every side.

B. This idea of being surrounded by love, perhaps will make more sense to you when we consider what the relationship of the trinity is like even among Father, Son, and Spirit themselves.

1. For this, there is no better explanation I think than that put forward by C.S. Lewis: “All sorts of people are fond of repeating the Christian statement that ‘God is love’. But they seem not to notice that the words ‘God is love’ have no real meaning unless God contains at least two Persons. Love is something that one person has for another person. If God was a single person, then before the world was made, He was not love. . . . [W]hat Christians mean by the statement ‘God is love’ . . . [is] that the living, dynamic activity of love has been going on in God forever and has created everything else.

And that, by the way, is perhaps the most important difference between Christianity and all other religions: that in Christianity God is not a static thing—not even a person—but a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance” (Mere Christianity, pp. 174-175).

C. So consider the way the Father, Son, and Spirit think of one another. Consider the love that they have always had for one another. Think of the divine dance of God. And then think of being immersed, being brought into, being included in and surrounded by that.

- D. That's what it means to be baptized "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

(3) We've Been Given a New Name

- A. But we can keep going. This idea of being baptized "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" surely carries with it more than just this idea that you've been brought into relationship with the Trinity—like some sort of friend or dance partner.
1. No, the fuller picture is that of God putting His very name upon you. It captures the idea of adoption, the idea of identity, the idea being brought into the family of God. Baptism pictures this idea that God puts the family name on you: " ²⁶ [I]n Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:26–27).
 - a. Baptism pictures this idea that you are being brought into the family—into the Name.
- B. Now, listen to me. Everyone by nature spends all their labor all their energies trying to make a name for themselves. We want people to like us, we want people to think we're special, we want to feel like we have something to say, like we've arrived, like we're someone to follow. We want to make a name for ourselves.
1. And this sort of thing even finds its way into the church. We use our religion, our good deeds to try to make a name for ourselves, to stand out. Maybe we're even doing all that to get God to like us or be on our side or bless us.
 - a. And you want to know how you feel about all this at the end of the day, when you're lying awake in your bed, and you're finally willing to be honest with yourself? You feel exhausted. "I'm trying so hard to make a name" . . .
- C. And then here comes this idea of baptism into the name and we find that we are simply given this name because of Jesus. It's a gift, we are cast into it, it is stamped upon us. God puts His name upon us and we are invited away from our striving and into the rest of Jesus' accomplishments and finished work.

(4) We've Been Infused with New Life

- A. What I mean here is that you're going to start to look like the One into who's family you've been adopted. You've not just been given the family name, you've been given the family's genetic material.
1. It's always fun as your kids grow up and things to try to identify who it is that they look like, right? You're comparing old photos of yourself when you were young. You're looking at grandpas and grandmas. You're not sure exactly who he/she looks like but you know they're going to look like somebody. They have your genes.

- a. It's that same idea I'm referring to here.
- B. Being immersed into the name pictures this idea of being born again. You are going under with Jesus in His death and coming up with Him in His resurrection.
- 1. And now you have not only a new name, but a new power, and a new freedom, to live and love as He does, as you were created in the image of God to do at first. You're going to take on the characteristics of the Father and the Son and the Spirit. You're going to start to bear family resemblance.
- C. I think the words of Jeff Vanderstelt in his book *Saturate*, tie all of this up nicely: "Our new-creation identity is expressed in our baptism. To baptize is to saturate. Our baptism represents that we are now saturated within the Godhead. This saturation into God makes us different. God changes us. This is very important, because God wants us to know that we are new creations with new identities before he calls us to live new lives.
- This is why Jesus commands that we baptize disciples in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Our baptism is a physical display of our old life of sin and death being buried with Jesus Christ in his death. It is also a sign of our new life of faith, hope, and love, as we have been raised with Christ into new life. We have a new life, a new identity, and a new name. . . .
- Your new name represents both who God says you are and what he plans to do through you. You are saturated with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It starts with God and his work, which changes you so new work can come through you" (pp. 131-132).

Conclusion

- A. Finally, if I could leave us anywhere, let me leave us at the foot of the cross. We must not forget that we owe all of this to Jesus' work on the cross:
- 1. We have been hounded by grace, but it is only because He hung there abandoned and suffering under the curse of God's law: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'" (Gal 3:13).
 - 2. We are now surrounded by love—invited into the dance of God—but it is only because He was surrounded by enemies, cast out from the trinity as it were: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46).
 - a. The Trinity broke ties with Itself to let you and I in. Do you get that? The only reason we get invited into the dance of God, is because the Son was sent home without a date.
 - 3. We have now received a new name, the family name, but it is only because Jesus let His own name be trampled into the dirt on our account.
 - a. They mocked Him: "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Matt 27:29). The crown of thorns they fastened to His head made a joke of Jesus' true identity as King of Kings and Lord of

Lords. And He let us do it, so that He could attach to us the name of His Father and welcome us into His family. What love is this?!

4. We may have been infused with new life through the pouring out His Spirit, but let us not forget that it is only because He first poured out His blood in death for our sins on that cross.
- B. So, no, we don't think these words are some mere bow that we just kind of nicely string up and attach to our baptismal ceremonies. And, no, we don't think these words contain some sort of magical power.
1. Baptism doesn't save you. Christ does. But being baptized, or immersed, ["into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"](#) is such a multi-layered and technicolor picture of what has happened for all who have been brought back to God through faith in Jesus.
 - a. It's this sort of thing that you are about to witness here today. This is what's held out not just these six individuals who are being baptized, but to all of us.

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1. Please briefly tell us how you came to know the Lord and why you want to be baptized.
 2. Do you believe that the Father loves you, that the Son lived, died, and rose for you, and that the Holy Spirit now lives in you and has sealed you for the day of redemption?
 3. Do you desire to be a disciple of Jesus Christ—to take up your cross and follow him, as Lord, Savior, and the supreme Treasure of your life?
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