

INTRODUCTION:

I think that all of us here this morning can appreciate the frustration of being lied to.

- Several years ago, I remember traveling across town to a sporting goods store in order to look for a new pair of shoes, and when I got to the shoe aisle, there was another man already there.
- We were looking at the same kind of shoes in about the same size, and so I thought I'd start a conversation and just see what happened.
- As soon as he knew he had someone to listen, he started going on and on about how much he hated that store.
- After a string of profanity, I understood that we were both feeling the same frustration... His profanity... not mine...
- We had both been lured in by the same advertisement, and yet the available sizes were extremely limited.
- They had a few size 8's and a few size 13's and not very many in between.
- Not only that, but both of us had been in that store before and had both had the same experience on a number of occasions.
- We had both been deceived by the same ads, and we had both fallen for it more than once.
- That is so frustrating! Maybe some of you here this morning have had the same experience.

Unfortunately, the same thing can also happen in a spiritual sense.

- It is possible for many people to be deceived when it comes to God's will, and so this morning, I'd like to invite you to turn with me to **Colossians 2**, and I'd like for us to notice a passage that addresses one of the most basic topics in the New Testament.
- It is a very simple subject, and yet it has been clouded by a lot of deception over the past 2,000 years.
- I am referring to the subject of baptism.

This morning's lesson is the first lesson in a 2 part series that will be continued this evening.

- I hope that each of you will be able to return tonight as we approach this very import subject again.

As we look around us, we see that there are some groups who teach that baptism is for infants.

- Others say that baptism is merely a sprinkling.
- Others say that baptism is not necessary at all.
- Others say that a person is saved and then is baptized merely as a symbol of that salvation.
- Others teach that baptism is merely a way to show association with a specific congregation, or a way to "**join a church.**"

And so, as we look at the religious world around us, we find that we are faced with religious deception, and for that reason, I would like for us to study baptism as it is presented by the Apostle Paul in **Colossians 2**.

- When we face deception in the sporting goods store, we may just get upset and leave, but when we face deception in the religious world, then we are faced with what is truly a dangerous situation.
- Please read with me **Colossians 2:8-15**.
- And as we read, let us be extremely sure we have not been deceived ourselves. **Colossians 2:8-15**.

8 *See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.*

9 *For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,*

- 10 *and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;*
 11 *and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;*
 12 *having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*
 13 *When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,*
 14 *having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*
 15 *When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.*

As we look back at **verse 8**, we find that Paul warned the church about the danger of being taken “*...captive through philosophy and empty deception.*”

- The term “*captive*” is actually a military term, and it refers to being kidnapped or taken as a prisoner.
- Over the past few years in Iraq, a number of foreigners (and even some from the US military) have been taken captive, or taken hostage.
- Paul is using that illustration to say that if we do not know the Scriptures, there is a real danger to this happening in a spiritual sense.
- We can be taken captive through philosophy and empty deception.

As we study the subject of baptism, then, I’d like for us to notice four basic lessons from the passage that we just read in **Colossians 2**—not immersion versus sprinkling, but specifically, four connections that point to the necessity of baptism.

- I. First of all, we find a lesson in the fact that **BAPTISM IS VERY CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT PRACTICE OF CIRCUMCISION**. It is not a *perfect* parallel, but there are definitely some very important similarities and connections.

I have heard some people say that this proves that babies should be baptized.

- I have heard others say that just as Abraham was saved before circumcision, so also we are saved before baptism.
- And yet we need to remember the danger of being taken captive through philosophy and empty deception.
- Let’s remember, for example, that circumcision was only practiced on the male babies 8 days after birth.
- Were the little girls not saved?
- We could take this illustration in some very strange directions, but we need to go back to what Paul actually said and look at Paul’s words very carefully.
- What point was he making?

It seems to me from **verses 9, 10, and 11**, that Paul’s emphasis was on Jesus Christ.

- In each verse, notice that Paul uses the phrase, “*in Him.*”
- In other words, Paul’s point was not that this was done on babies, his point was not that baptism is only an outward sign, but his point was that New Testament circumcision is an operation done “*without hands*”—it is spiritual in nature.
- When it happens, the “*body of the flesh*” is removed, our sins are surgically removed, and those sins are completely taken away.
- In other words, the man or woman of sin is done away with.

- The old life comes to an end. We change directions.
- We turn our lives around and go in a completely different direction.

The real question in this passage then is, **“When does this change take place?”**

- I’d like for us to go back very briefly to the book of **Galatians**.
- Paul wrote **Galatians** to a group of people who were being deceived into going back under the Old Law, and in the book of **Galatians**, the word **“circumcision”** is found no less than 15 times.
- The false teachers were forcing new converts to conform to the Old Law before becoming Christians.
- Paul very clearly said, though, that that was not necessary.
- In fact, he had some very interesting comments that apply to our study here in **Colossians**.
- Notice, for example, **Galatians 5:6**. Paul said, **“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.”**
- When does faith work through love? (pause)
- We’ll look at the answer to that in a few minutes.

But for now we should also look at **Galatians 6:14-15**.

- Paul said, **“But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.”**
- Here we need to ask ourselves: When did Paul die to the world, and when was Paul made a new creation?
- **Romans 6** tells us that that happened at the point of baptism.

And so we find, first of all, that there are some parallels between Old Testament circumcision and the New Testament practice of baptism.

- In the Old Testament, it was a physical operation, but in the New Testament, the procedure is spiritual—as God cuts away our sin at the point of baptism.

II. There is a second lesson we can learn as we see that **BAPTISM IS ALSO CONNECTED TO OUR FAITH IN GOD’S WORK**.

We notice in **verse 12** that Paul refers to being **“raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”**

- And yet many denominations insist that baptism is not a condition of salvation.
- They say: **“We are not saved by works, baptism is a work; therefore, baptism has nothing to do with our salvation.”**

That sounds so true at first, but the argument is not valid, and is ultimately even deceptive.

- We agree on the first point.
- According to **Ephesians 2:9** and **Titus 3:5**, we are not saved by works of human merit.
- In other words, there is nothing we can do on our own to earn, or purchase, or deserve our salvation.
- That does not mean, however, that all forms of **“works”** are excluded from the salvation process.
- By that I mean, there are different kinds of works referred to in the Scriptures.
- For example, we learn from scriptures that even BELIEF is considered a **“work.”**
- In **John 6:29**, Jesus said, **“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”**
- The expression, **“work of God,”** refers to a work that is approved or required by God.

And so we learn that when some people start teaching that we are saved by merely believing in Jesus as the Son of God, they are actually teaching that we are saved by works, because according to Jesus, belief is a work!

- Very inconsistent on their part!

When we submit to Christ in baptism, we are not saying that we are saved by our own merit, but instead, the exact opposite is true!

- When we submit to Christ in baptism, we are taking salvation out of our own hands and trusting in the power of God!
- According to **verse 12**, we are, *“raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”*
- In other words, our trust is not in ourselves, but our trust is in God who had the power to raise Christ from the dead.

And so, if we can have faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, then we can also have faith that we will be saved if we are buried with Him, raised with Him, and made alive in Him through baptism.

- Our faith is not in the water, but our faith is in God who raised Christ from the dead.

With that in mind, this understanding has some very serious implications.

- If the power of baptism is in our belief in the power of God and in what God is doing for us at that point, then what does that tell us about the baptism of infants?
- What does that tell us about someone who was baptized in a denominational church without the proper understanding of the purpose for baptism?
- What does that tell us about a person who thinks that he or she was saved, and was then baptized merely to **“join a church”**?
- What does that tell us about someone who thought they were **“saved”** and were then baptized **“as a sign that that salvation had already taken place”**?
- Obviously, that person needs to be baptized again—only this time, with the proper understanding, because when we are baptized, we must understand what God is doing in the process.
- Otherwise, baptism has been turned into an empty ritual.

First of all, then, there is a connection between baptism and circumcision, and secondly, we also learn that there is a connection between baptism and our faith in God’s work.

III. There is a third lesson we can learn here, and it comes as we see that **BAPTISM IS ALSO CONNECTED TO THE DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS FROM THE DEAD.**

I have asked a couple of the men to distribute a handout that we will go over in just a minute or so...

We notice in **verse 12** that Paul refers to being *“buried with Him in baptism.”*

- We all recognize that a burial necessitates a death.
- Further on in **verse 12**, we read about being *“raised up with Him,”* and we read about God *“who raised Him from the dead.”*
- And so in **verse 12** we have the gospel in a nutshell.
- In the opening verses of **1 Corinthians 15**, Paul defined the gospel, and in **verses 3-4**, he referred to the fact *“that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised up on the third day, according to the Scriptures.”*
- In baptism, then, we have a picture.

- We have a re-enactment of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In fact, it is through baptism that we come into contact with the Lord's blood.

- We believe that we are saved by the Lord's blood, and we believe that baptism is the point where we come into contact with that blood.

As we draw our attention to the handout this morning, I'd like for us to look at some Scriptures with some amazing parallels:

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Revelation 1:5</u></p> <p><i>"...Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and <u>released us from our sins by His blood.</u>"</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Blood washes our sins away.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Acts 22:16</u></p> <p><i>"Now why do you delay? Get up and <u>be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.</u>"</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Baptism washes sins away.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Ephesians 1:7</u></p> <p><i>"In Him we have <u>redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.</u>"</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Blood forgives our sins.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Acts 2:38</u></p> <p><i>"Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you <u>be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.</u>'"</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Baptism forgives our sins.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Hebrews 9:14</u></p> <p><i>"How much more will the <u>blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?</u>"</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Blood cleanses the conscience.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>1 Peter 3:21</u></p> <p><i>"Corresponding to that, <u>baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.</u>"</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Baptism cleanses the conscience.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Romans 6:3-7</u></p> <p><i>"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jesus' blood (His death) is specifically tied to baptism.</p>	

And so we see very clearly that there is a definite connection in the Scriptures between the blood of Jesus Christ and baptism, and that connection continues here in **Colossians 2**.

- IV. As we go back to **Colossians 2**, though, we see a fourth lesson, because even here in **Colossians 2**, **BAPTISM IS ALSO SPECIFICALLY CONNECTED TO THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.**

Let's go back and notice **verses 13-14**.

- Paul said, *“When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”*

As we dig back into the Greek language, there is a very colorful picture that starts to develop.

- When Paul wrote about the *“certificate of debt,”* he was apparently referring to a common practice in the First Century where people would sign what we would call today a **“credit agreement.”**
- If you have a credit card, then you know that when you first applied for that card, you signed an agreement where you agreed to the terms of the card and promised to repay whatever shows up on the statement.

Well, Paul is making that same application in a spiritual sense.

- In our spiritual lives, we have racked up an incredible amount of debt in the form of sin.
- There is a price on that debt that is absolutely impossible to pay.
- In our world today, it is so easy for someone to get into financial trouble.
- The credit card offers keep on coming, it is so easy to apply, you miss a payment and the interest shoots up to 25%, and so the debt grows and grows until it gets completely out of hand.
- In a spiritual sense, that is exactly what we have done with sin.
- And yet, even with our very first sin, we have sinned far beyond our ability to repay.

In **verses 13-14**, however, we see that that debt can be completely forgiven.

- In the case of the church in Colossae, that debt of sin had been racked up primarily under the Old Law—but their sins were completely erased at the point of baptism.
- As Paul said in **verse 13**, they died and were then made alive.
- Baptism, then, is necessary for our salvation, because at that point, the certificate of debt is removed, and our sins have been nailed to the cross.

CONCLUSION & INVITATION:

As we close the lesson this morning, and as we think about being lied to (or deceived) by someone, we can understand how frustrating that is.

- When it comes to a pair of shoes, some store might lose our business for a few months, but when it comes to salvation, the consequences are very serious.

Probably one of the most twisted (and yet serious) subjects in the religious world right now is the role of baptism in the plan of salvation.

- Unfortunately, the deception is widespread and it could be keeping literally millions of people from obeying the gospel as they should—all the while thinking they are okay.
- As I stand here, there are literally hundreds of preachers in southern Illinois right now—teaching something completely different on the subject of baptism.
- This morning, though, we have learned from Paul that baptism is necessary for salvation.

If you would like to be a Christian, we would invite you this morning to repent of your sins, confess the name of Jesus, and then be immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins.

- You can let us know about your decision as we stand and sing the next song. Let’s stand and sing...