

Baptizo — Not Baptism. A fifteen-minute lesson.

[pause:0.8] Section One. The Wrong Word.

[pause:0.5] For two thousand years, one untranslated word has hidden the most radical act of allegiance in the Christian life.

We call it baptism. But that is not a translation. It is a transliteration. A Greek word dressed in English letters, emptied of its meaning, and turned into a religious password.

[pause:0.5] The word in the New Testament is baptizo. And in the Greek world, everyone knew what it meant. To immerse. To plunge. To dip. To sink beneath. To overwhelm completely.

[pause:0.5] When a cloth was dipped into a vat of dye, the Greeks said it was baptized. The fabric was submerged, saturated, and transformed. When a ship was sunk in battle, the Greeks said it was baptized. When a man drowned beneath the waves, they said he was baptized. The word meant total immersion. Total identification. A complete passing through.

[pause:0.5] So why did the translators not translate it?

[pause:0.8] Section Two. The Obscuring.

[pause:0.5] By the time the English Bible was translated, the church had already changed the practice. Immersion was out. Sprinkling was in. And not just for adults. For infants who had never believed, never repented, and never sworn allegiance to anyone.

[pause:0.5] If the translators had rendered baptizo as immerse, plunge, or dip, they would have exposed the contradiction. You cannot immerse an infant by sprinkling a few drops on its forehead. You cannot plunge someone into water by wetting their hair. So the translators did not translate. They transliterated. They left the Greek word in English clothing, and in doing so, they buried the meaning beneath layers of religious habit.

[pause:0.5] The cost of recovering the meaning was blood.

[pause:0.5] In the sixteenth century, the Anabaptists in Zurich began reading the New Testament in Greek. They discovered that every convert in the book of Acts was immersed. They discovered that baptism was not a birthright inherited from Christian parents nor a magical ritual, but a personal surrender to a new King. So they began immersing adults who had already been sprinkled as infants.

[pause:0.5] The Zurich authorities called it rebellion. They called the infant sprinkling the first baptism. The adult immersion the second baptism. And the punishment they devised was the third baptism.

[pause:0.5] Felix Manz was the first. In January fifteen twenty-seven, they bound his hands to his knees, placed a stick between his arms and legs, and rowed him into the Limmat River. They threw him from the boat. He sank beneath the waters, and when he struggled to surface, they held him under with a staff until the waters baptized him a third time. Into death.

[pause:0.5] Others followed. Men and women who understood that the word meant immerse, and that the church had replaced immersion with a ceremony that required no faith, no repentance, and no submission. They paid for that understanding with their lives. Drowned by the very waters they insisted on entering freely.

[pause:0.8] Section Three. In the Name Of.

[pause:0.5] But the word is only half the problem. The phrase is the other half.

[pause:0.5] Every immersion in the New Testament was done in the name of Jesus Christ. And in the first century, to be baptized into someone's name was not a religious formula. It was a declaration of ownership.

[pause:0.5] When a Roman slave was purchased, he was sometimes baptized into the name of his new master. The water marked the transfer of ownership. The old life was submerged. A new life emerged under a new lord. When a proselyte converted to Judaism, he was baptized into the name of Israel's God. The water marked his exit from the old kingdom and his entry into the new one.

[pause:0.5] To be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ meant exactly this. You were transferring your allegiance from Caesar, from self, from the kingdom of darkness, to the kingdom of God's beloved Son. The water was the boundary. The immersion was the crossing. You went down belonging to the old master. You came up belonging to the new one.

[pause:0.5] This is why the sinner's prayer cannot replace it. The sinner's prayer is words spoken in private. Baptism is a body submerged in public. The sinner's prayer requires no witnesses. Baptism requires the community to see that you have changed lords. The sinner's prayer can be whispered in a bedroom and forgotten by morning. Baptism is an event that cannot be undone. You cannot un-drown. You cannot un-emerge. The old life is buried. The new life has begun.

[pause:0.8] Section Four. The Evidence.

[pause:0.5] Consider the evidence.

[pause:0.5] On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached the gospel. The crowd was cut to the heart and asked, What must we do? Peter did not say, Close your eyes and repeat this prayer. He

said, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[pause:0.5] Three thousand were added that day. And every one of them was immersed. Every one of them called on the name of the Lord in the waters of baptism.

[pause:0.5] When Paul met Jesus on the Damascus road, he was told, Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name. Paul was not sprinkled. He was plunged. And in that plunging, he called on the name of the Lord. The water was the moment of appeal. The immersion was the moment of surrender.

[pause:0.5] When Paul found the Ephesian disciples, he asked, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? They said, We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. He asked, Into what then were you baptized? They said, Into John's baptism. Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them.

[pause:0.5] The connection is unmistakable. The correct immersion, in the name of Jesus, was the gateway to the Spirit. The wrong baptism, even John's, was incomplete without the name and the reality of the new King.

[pause:0.5] Romans chapter six. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.

[pause:0.5] This is not metaphor. This is anatomy. The person going down into the water is united with Christ in the likeness of his death. The body is submerged as a corpse is buried. The person coming up is united with Christ in the likeness of his resurrection. The old life is cut off. The new life begins.

[pause:0.5] Titus chapter three. He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. The washing of regeneration. The water of rebirth. Baptism is the womb of the new creation. You enter the water as one kind of person. You emerge as another.

[pause:0.8] Section Five. The Antetype.

[pause:0.5] Peter makes the connection explicit. First Peter chapter three. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[pause:0.5] The this is Noah's flood. Eight souls were saved through water. The antetype. The picture before the reality. In the ark, Noah and his family were cut off from the world of flesh. The waters rose and destroyed the old world. But the ark carried them through. The waters that killed the world saved the obedient.

[pause:0.5] Here is the parallel. The ark is Christ. The waters are baptism. The old world is the life of the flesh. When you are immersed, you are not merely getting wet. You are entering the waters that cut you off from the old world. The waters destroy your old life. The ark, Christ, carries you through to the new. You are saved not by the water itself, but by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, into whose death and life you have been plunged.

[pause:0.8] Section Six. The Contrast.

[pause:0.5] Here is the difference in one sentence. The first-century baptizo was the public immersion of a repentant believer into the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, transferring allegiance from the old kingdom to the new. The modern baptism is too often a ceremonial sprinkling performed on infants who cannot believe, cannot repent, and cannot swear allegiance, turning the gateway of the kingdom into a birthright of the nursery.

[pause:0.8] Section Seven. The Challenge.

[pause:0.5] What would change if we stopped treating baptism as a religious rite and started treating it as the moment of allegiance?

[pause:0.5] Three shifts.

[pause:0.5] One. Language shapes reality. When we use the word baptism as a church ceremony, we privatize a public transfer of citizenship. When we recover baptizo, we see a person being plunged into a new jurisdiction, under a new Lord, with a new identity.

[pause:0.5] Two. The baptizo is not an optional add-on to faith. It is the moment faith goes public. Paul said we are buried with him in baptism. That is not a metaphor for private belief. That is a bodily event that unites us with Christ's death and resurrection. You cannot be united with Christ in his death without being immersed into it.

[pause:0.5] Three. We are not born into the kingdom by religious inheritance. We are born again by water and Spirit. The sinner's prayer cannot replace the tomb. Only the waters of baptism can bury the old life and raise the new. And the gates of Hades will not prevail against his Eck-lay-see-uh. But they might prevail against a church that forgot that the gateway was meant to be a public plunge into death and rebirth, not a private prayer.

[pause:1.0] Optional Discussion Questions.

[pause:0.5] How is the process of being immersed in water like death, burial and resurrection? A new birth? Like Noah going through the waters of the flood?

[pause:1.0] What would it look like for believers in your city to treat baptism as the public transfer of allegiance that it was in the first century?

[pause:1.0] How does seeing baptism as immersion into Christ's death and resurrection change how you understand your own identity and calling?

[pause:0.5] End of lesson.