

What Comes First, the Chicken or the Egg? - Matthew 3

Today we start a new sermon series in the book of Matthew. We will be looking at “The Hard Sayings of Jesus” found in this gospel!

There are things in the Bible that are... hard to understand, things we don't want to accept, and teachings that we wish we had more information on!

Have you ever wondered why there are so many church denominations? It's partially due to geography, partially due to key leaders, but mostly due to disagreements on what the Bible teaches!

Baptism is just one of the many doctrinal disagreements that the Church has had over the years!

- Should baptism be for adults only, or should infants be included too?
- Should baptism follow the model of John the Baptist, or Jesus' disciples?
- Should baptism be full immersion, or is dipping, or sprinkling, ok too?

Today we have two infant baptisms, one teenage baptism, and later on this month we will have an adult baptism! Are they all equally valid, or is there one better, more Biblical, way?

- Brooklyn & Owen have no idea about the things of faith, because they are too young! Some churches wouldn't baptize them because of that!
- Sophia has taken a “Getting Started” class, but is not yet a communicant member of our church! Some churches wouldn't baptize her either!
- Sandy will get baptized later this month as a follow-up to becoming a member, but some churches require baptism prior to membership!

Today I dipped my finger in the water & made the sign of the cross, later this summer we will do a full immersion! Does it matter? Is there a right way?

How are we to understand “Baptism”, & practice it Biblically, in so far as the Bible is clear w/it's teaching on it? It does matter, it is important (H.C. # 66)!

Matthew's gospel is filled with what Jesus, the Son of God, taught. The book starts off with the genealogy, birth, and early years of Jesus' life, but in chapter 3 it jumps to the person and ministry of “John the Baptist”!

Baptism played a major part in “preparing the way of the Lord!” – vs. 3

John's way of baptizing is what is known as a “baptism of repentance.” John preached the need for repentance b/c “the Kingdom of heaven is at hand”!

Then at the end of Ch. 3, Jesus resurfaces, now as a 30 year old adult, and the first thing He does in the public eye is to go and get baptized by John.

Baptism was very important to Jesus, but why? If it only served as a “baptism of repentance” then Jesus would have had no need for it.

Jesus saw baptism as something more, He saw it as an act of initiation! John 1:29-34 - This is why we treat baptism as the entry point to the Church!

Jesus also saw His baptism as a way of identification! He was identifying Himself as the One who came to save, & as one like those He would save!

If Jesus saw baptism in such a way, then why shouldn't we? Just as the Father was putting His stamp of approval on Jesus at His baptism – “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased”, so too God is well pleased to put His stamp of approval upon us, His covenant children as well!

But isn't this, in both cases, “putting the cart before the horse?” Jesus said, before He even started His earthly ministry, that he was to be baptized “to fulfill all righteousness”, but fulfilling all righteousness would not happen until He completed His earthy ministry and rose again from the dead!

When we baptize children, it's not a baptism of repentance, but a baptism of initiation and identification. It is an entry point into the life of the church, & it's claiming the promise of God that we are His covenant children by faith!

If Jesus was baptized for the purpose of fulfilling what He had not yet accomplished, then why can't infants & teenagers be baptized prior to their full experience of conversion?

Christian baptism is a sign and a seal given to God's people, that can precede the actual full realization of what it signifies!

Yes, repentance and faith are essential in receiving the promise of the gospel! But what's the “chicken” & what's the “egg”?

What comes first... repentance, faith, or baptism? Does it really matter, when it's all the unfolding of our sovereign God's redemptive plan for His people?

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