Dear Reader,

I am new to producing reading sermons. So, if you have any suggestions as to how I might improve my format or what I include – please email me at cdanielwilson@gmail.com. **I will warn you, that I do not use short sentences**. I will endeavor to work on this over time, but I don’t naturally write that way. However, you can easily break most of my longer sentences into 2 or 3 smaller ones where I have “…” or “–“ or commas. If you do the work on making it into smaller sentences – feel free to email it to me, and I am happy to share your work with others. I do have some of these available which people have sent me. I will eventually make them available as part of the normal manuscripts.

I have left my sermon manuscript formatted the way I normally write and read my sermons. They are colourful and written in conversational English. If you are a grammar nazi – then you will be frustrated with my punctuation and phrasing. However, once you read it out loud, you will normally be able to tell what I meant to say. SERIOUSLY, READ IT OUTLOUD. You will also see that I use a good bit of bold, italics, underlining and different colours to signal what are the most important things to say, and also to make it easier for my eye to pick up my place in the middle of paragraphs. I would recommend that you keep as many of those things as possible to help you keep your place. However, you will probably want to increase the spacing between lines. I highly encourage you to commit as much of the introduction or children’s illustrations to memory as you can, so that these can be delivered to the congregation with maximum eye contact.

**Where possible, I highly recommend that you listen to the sermon as I preached it at either the Nelson website or the website of North Shore.** I recommend that because that will also help hear the places where I added or skipped over material in the manuscript, and the places where I clarified my meaning. I have edited bits and pieces which I thought most important, but I have not sought to include all the additional material that comes to me while in the pulpit. I would practically have to use a transcription service for that. However, I hope and pray that this sermon will be a blessing to you and to your congregation. To God be the Glory!

Blessings in our Lord, Pastor Daniel Wilson

**My Suggestions for the Order of Service**

Song before the Service: #203

Brothers and Sisters: ***Our help is in the name of the Lord … Doesn’t forsake wks of His hands***

Grace be yours in abundance, with Mercy and Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ***Amen***

Let us respond to God’s call to worship him **#105B** **“Unto the Lord Lift Thankful Voices”**

***We will profess our faith using Heidelberg Catechism #1*** *Please be seated*

 ***Heidelberg Catechism LD 25–27 #66,67,70,73,74***

 **Song of continued worship and Praise #447 “A Debtor to Mercy Alone”**

We come now to our time of congregation prayer … ***Prayer***

**Please turn in your Bibles to our reading from Hebrews 9**

**Let’s now cont. To worship as we bring to the Lord his Tithes and our Freewill offerings: As the deacons come…**

*Let’s cont. to worship as we sing* **Our Song of Prep: Psalm #384 “O God Great Father”** *a baptism song…*

 ***Sermon Text: Hebrews 9 + other readings Sermon Title:*** *“The Mode with Meaning”*

***Let us now sing a* song of Response #385 “Our Children Lord in Faith and prayer”**

 ***May God the Father*** *bless you & keep you,* ***May God the Son*** *turn His face toward you & be gracious to you,* ***May the Holy Spirit*** *lift up his countenance upon you & give you peace!* ***Amen***

 ***Doxology: #117***

# Evening Sermon: “The Mode with Meaning” Heidelberg #31 – Sacraments #5

Text: Hebrews 9 Reading: throughout sermon

**Introduction:** Parents, have you ever been sitting reading, or even talking on the phone, when you were interrupted by the loud shouts of your children from another room? Most parents experience that at some time or another… So, You get up and go investigate. But far too often when you arrive in the room, you have as many reports of what happened as you have children in the room (3 children and 3 different stories of what happened). It can be very difficult to discern who is telling the truth. I wish there was an infallible guide book that would tell you in each situation which child is right, which one is lying and which one is simply mistaken!

 But there is no such book, and tonight, I am not going to in any way address how to get to the bottom of those situations – I haven’t figured that out yet. **However, such occasions remind me of the struggle to determine Biblical practice from the history of the church.** What I mean is this: when you go to church history, you find all sorts of different writings supporting different understandings of Christian doctrine. This is especially true regarding the meaning/purpose of baptism. ***From all that I have read in the last 15 years I could argue from church history for & against immersion/sprinkling as the proper mode of baptism***: **FOR EXAMPLE:** some evidence shows that immersion began because of the heresy of baptismal regeneration – the more water used, the more of the Holy Spirit you got… and yet various Reformed scholars in the past, believed that immersion was the general practice of the early church. **So, church history gives us conflicting stories, just like our children, and we weren’t there to see for ourselves!**

 However, unlike our children’s occasional conflicting accounts… Any conflicting reports from church history can be solved by the Inspired, Perfect Word of God! **It is our infallible guide to the truth!** Our studies of church history can only ever point us back to the Scriptures, or they are of no use to us. We don’t have to figure out who is right, who is lying or who is mistaken in church history – WE only have to figure out what the Bible teaches!

So this evening, we will look at several NT passages regarding baptism. One of the important things to keep in mind though – is that the Bible is the rule of faith. ***Our goal will be to determine the meaning and usage of the words for Baptism* FROM THE BIBLE*.***

We will proceed under two headings:

1. **A Definition of Biblical Baptism (***where we will spend most of our time***)**
2. **A Defense of Biblical Baptism (***which will be a brief response to common objections***)**

*Let’s begin by defining the word at the heart of the controversy:*

# A Definition of Biblical Baptism (REPEAT)

* 1. **Basics of Interpreting a word’s meaning.**

The first and most important thing for us to do when looking at a definition of a debated word is to ask the question: **How do you define a word?** When we want a definition we normally look to dictionaries or perhaps a lexicon. *But where did those books get the definition?* They get the meaning of a word from its usage in literature or daily speech. In NT Greek for example, we learn the meaning of words in four ways: 1) We look at the usage/meaning from the predecessor to NT Greek (classical Greek); 2) We examine the usage and context of words within the Bible itself; 3) we look for the ways in which that word has been translated into other languages in the past… & 4) We look at how the word was used in post-biblical literature, especially the writings of the early church. ***Not all 4 are equally helpful.***

For example: the first method of looking at the origins of the word in classical Greek has its limitations because words change over time (even in English, 100 years ago saying something “was cool” referred only to temperature, not fashion or popularity!).

The Third and Fourth methods can also fail us, because sometimes translators get words wrong, and the writings of the early church are not inherent, and all men make mistakes at various times.

The Only infallible way to define a word is from Scripture alone, and we can use the other methods to confirm our conclusions. We only rely heavily on the other methods when a word is used rarely: once or twice, but a word like “Baptism” is used in half a dozen different forms over 100 times! So, we can determine the meaning of that word **from the Bible *with great confidence.***

* 1. **How does the Bible define Baptism?**

We will not take an exhaustive look at every use, but at 3 passages in particular

**John 3:22-26:** Baptism was related to the OT rites of purification:

Here John speaks of baptism, then he speaks about an argument over the matter of ceremonial washing, and then John talks of baptism again. The obvious meaning being that the Baptism of John and the Baptism of Jesus’ Disciples were both identified as a ceremonial washing. That is what we read about in Numbers 19 last time, waters of cleansing sprinkled on unclean people to make them clean (which is how Ezekiel prophesied of John the Baptiser in Ezekiel 36).

 Now our Baptist brothers use evidence from church history to say that the Jews used to immerse people as a purification right – as a ceremonial washing. BUT, this is important – THERE IS NO SUCH IMMERSION Commanded in Scripture. So how do we know which washing John is talking about? The ceremonial ones discussed in Leviticus and Numbers where people were sprinkled… or the extra biblical evidence regarding immersion?

 The word used for ceremonial cleansing in John 3, is the same word John used in chapter 2! There Jesus turned the water into wine, and He did so from 6 stone jars that were used for **ceremonial washing** (***same word***). Whatever kind of washing that would be done at a wedding would be the same kind of washings disputed between that Jew and John’s disciples… John doesn’t use the term referring to converts to Judaism, He uses the same word as what Jews did at a wedding! No one was bathing/immersing at a wedding, but guests would have poured water over their hands or sprinkled themselves to be ceremonially clean.

***We see more about that in* Mark 7:1-4** The Pharisees were concerned that Jesus’ disciples had not washed their hands according to the tradition of the elders, and that tradition is described.

When we think of washing hands, we might think – immersion, you can bathe your hands, but we know from the writings of the Jews that they washed hands with flowing water from a pitcher poured out over their hands. **So what was this ritual washing?** The Jews would wash themselves when they got home from the market – in the Received Text ( the greek NT that the church used during the reformation) it says they sprinkled themselves. The verse goes on to say **that they observe many other traditions such as the washing (Baptizing) of cups, pitchers and kettles… and in your footnotes or margins of your Bible you might see a note which includes “and dining couches”**.

Now our Baptist brothers love to point out that baptizing cups, pitchers and kettles must be immersion. However, you don’t immerse a dining couch – especially not every time you return from the market. And we also have to ask, how likely would it be for the Jews to have immersed every cup, pitcher and kettle every time they got home from the market? Not very… especially considering they had no refrigeration, so the trip to the market was several times a week! **And why those items anyway?** AS you may remember from Numbers 19, any container which did not have a lid on it, would become unclean if an unclean person entered the house… so if the Jews thought they were unclean from being at the market, and entered the house and then purified himself, it makes sense that he would also sprinkle all the containers in the house that don’t have lids! The Tradition of the elders was always based on the OT ceremonial laws, but then taken to the extreme so as to safeguard against breaking the actual commandment… This kind of ceremonial cleansing – sprinkling and pouring water over oneself was the type of ceremonial washing done at a wedding, and that is the type of Baptism that John and Jesus’ disciples were performing – sprinkling clean water for cleansing from sin!

***The Third and final passage we will look at is* Hebrews 9:10** This text specifically calls the ceremonial washings of Leviticus (the OT sprinklings) Baptisms.

***Speaking of the inadequacy of the OT ceremonies, we read* In Vs. 9*:*** *Symbol for the present time = the OT ceremonies were pointing to the New Covenant era…*

**Vs. 10 *READ*** **The Key phrase being “***regulations for the body***”… The OT baptisms were only external, but they pointed us to the internal baptism of Christ, and He baptised with the Holy Spirit in the heart! *NOW:*** *The word for Baptisms is the same used in Mark 7, and Colossians 2 (Col.2 is the passage buried with Him in Baptism) So the meaning of this word in Hebrews 9, has EVERYTHING to do with Christian Baptism.*

***And the Writer to the Hebrews explains which Baptisms he is talking about later on in this same chapter… Because he goes on to explain HOW Jesus’ sacrifice and Jesus’ Baptism was better than the OT types/shadows.***

***Let’s continue reading vs.11-14: READ* These OT Sprinkling Ceremonies were the Baptisms referred to in Verse 10!! And the Writer to the Hebrews give more such baptisms in verses 19-22, the sprinkling of blood and water with hyssop on the scroll, ALL of the people (young and old), and all the tabernacle and all the ceremonial utensils… nearly everything. Those OT Baptisms were ALL Sprinkling/pouring, NOT One was immersion!**

**Now that means, that IN THESE 3 Passages WE LEARN that:** *Baptism is a ceremonial cleansing in line with the OT Sprinkling ceremonies. Except instead of using blood of goats/bulls, ashes of heifer, we use clean water representing the Blood of Christ that is applied to God’s elect through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.* **And unlike the Jewish ceremonial washings, this baptism only needs to be done once into the Name of the Father, Son & HS.**

**SO: What is a definition of Baptism? A related word, Bapto means dip or immerse, but the word in the NT for Christian baptism Baptizo, means to unite with a controlling influence, to change permanently in some way. *We see that in these passages through the continued connection of baptism with ceremonial cleansing, but not just external cleansing, but a true change of heart.***

*And that brings us to our final point:*

# A Defense of Biblical Baptism (REPEAT)

*I primarily want to respond briefly at this point to common objections*

* 1. **The First Objection: “But the dictionary says, To Dip, Immerse!”**

Firstly, as we mentioned before – dictionaries get definitions from usage, so modern dictionaries have the words immerse/dip in water as the primary meaning because there are so many Baptists in the modern church.

Secondly, Not all ancient dictionaries say dip or immerse as the primary meaning of the word. In fact, in the 19th century a Presbyterian minister, James W Dale, did the most exhaustive study ever performed on a single word. He studied the word Baptizo in Classical Greek, NT Greek, and Early Church writings, and conclusively found that Baptizo is not a MODE verb (sprinkle/immerse) but is a Condition Verb (clean/wet/dry an action taken with a certain end result). **He gives some examples in his book from various ages:** a fabric is baptized when it is dyed (not because it is immersed in the dye, but because when you pull it out it has changed condition/colour). Or vegetable is baptized into vinegar and when pulled out has been pickled. Or a man can be baptized with wine, and afterwards is drunk. The only persons who were baptized into water in classical greek were permanently changed by the water – meaning they drowned… ***The Word means change of condition, not actual mode.*** However the connection in the NT with the OT ceremonies show clearly that NT baptism is an outward ceremony showing the inward reality of a REAL change through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (and all ceremonial cleansings in scripture are done by sprinkling/por).

* 1. **The Second Objection: “But doesn’t the Bible teach we are buried in Baptism?!”**

No… It teaches that in our Baptism we are united with Christ in His DEATH, Burial, and Ressurrection. The Key in those passages is not what is symbolized in Baptism, but what is *actually accomplished* through Holy Spirit Baptism.

**Take Romans 6 for example: Paul says**

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. Paul is using the true definition of Baptism here, baptized as a condition verb – if you have been baptized into Christ Jesus then you have been permanently changed and will live a NEW LIFE! **If you say that Paul is actually talking about meaning and mode of water Baptism** – then you MUST believe in Baptismal regeneration. Because you would be saying **that immersion in water** makes you truly united to Christ in His death and resurrection ***and enables you to live a new life*** – ***but the power is not in the water!*** *Paul proves that view wrong by going on to discuss UNION with Christ in 6,vs.5! He was talking about the reality of Spirit Baptism, not the symbol of water.*

**But, What about Colossians 2?** The other passage which uses that phrase… IT is even more clearly NOT about water baptism! In verses 11-12 Paul says you were circumcised in the heart, Not done with hands… then talks about the NEW Covenant sign of Baptism (also discussing the reality done in the heart by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, NOT the outward water baptism done with hands!

**Both are speaking of the reality of Spirit Baptism and the resulting union with Christ – not mode…**

*And that is really what I want to leave you with – that wonderful reality of Baptism:*

***Water baptism is symbolic of Holy Spirit Baptism – AND Holy Spirit Baptism results in a REAL change in your heart. That change occurs before you exercise faith!*** Which is why Covenant Baptism is such a beautiful picture of God’s saving work – we mark our children as heirs to God’s covenant promise – BEFORE they can exercise faith, and by God’s grace, at some point they receive God’s internal Holy Spirit Baptism called Regeneration – leading to true salvation and faith!

Baptizing believers and their children by sprinkling or pouring water upon them, beautifully pictures God’s saving Work – consistent with thousands of years of symbolism from God’s Word and the History of His saving work with His people! ***We do not practice some weird or arcane version of baptism! We are actually in line with the Bible’s own teaching on the subject!***

***I hope that this encourages you with the deep spiritual significance of our practice -to God’s Glory. Amen.***