Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Agendas – Week 28

What's in it for you? What's in it for the church? What's in it for God?

Day 189: What's in it for God?

I have a question for you – we know baptism is important, for we've been doing this for 2,000 years – but why does *God* want you to be baptised? What's God's motivation?

Why does God want you to be baptised?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 190: What's in it for God (continued)?

You've talked about many different things that happen in baptism – but why do you think God wants me to be baptised?

You may have come across this in your bible reading:

Jesus said:
"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

(and)
"Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. (John 3:5)

The disciple Paul wrote:
For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (1st Corinthians 12:13)

(and)
… having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins… (Colossians 2:12-13)

(and)
… for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:27)

The disciple Peter is recorded as saying:
"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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:38-41)

This reinforces that God (in Christ) commanded us to baptize new believers. It also describes some of the reasoning – forgiveness of sins, being clothed with Christ, embracing the death and resurrection of Christ, brought into one body, into the Kingdom of God … but let's step back a bit. What's the ultimate aim of God?

To live with His people?

Yes! Brilliant! Gold star! You nailed it. God wants to live, each and every day, with all the Images He Created – in a world without death, without despair.

And baptism enables that by …

Before I answer that question, please answer a second one for me:

Why do you want to be baptised?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 191: What's in it for you?

Only you can answer why you want to be baptized. However, please be aware that baptism isn't a "stay out of hell" card. Baptism isn't a "you're in the club" card. Baptism is physically and spiritually rejecting all that separates you from God. It is stating that you want the deepest cleansing you can imagine (for you or for a loved one, if you are representing someone else who is getting baptized), in effect killing off all that is in you which will drive you apart from God, and replacing that selfishness, that fear, that greed, with the endlessly loving Spirit of God. To wear Christ, as Paul put it. To humbly recognize that you are no better than anyone else, but through the grace of God you are accepted as one of His children – and that you shall strive to live the rest of your life in loving God, and loving your neighbour as yourself. That is how baptism enables your life with God.

Does it guarantee a life with God?

No – whether you embrace the Path of Life, the Way of Christ, is up to you. Baptism is saying, however, that you recognize the necessity of walking the Way of Christ and are willing to walk such a path, knowing that when you go wrong (as we all do), God will search you out in His love. In baptism, you get the joy of deciding for each and every aspect of your life, "Will this further the Way of Christ / Kingdom of God? Will this build up His Temple? Will this give God joy?" Those decisions often involve hard work and ongoing re-focusing.

So, what baptism promises me is hard work and ongoing re-focusing and self-correcting?

Yes.

I think I still want to do it.

Praise the Lord!

How does baptism lead to a life of hard work with ongoing re-focusing and self-correcting? Can you give examples from your life where a change in direction or a different decision would have been more life-affirming and life-giving, for you or someone else?

Share your answers with others whom you trust

Day 192: What's in it for the church?

So, what's in it for the church? Why has the church emphasized it for 2,000 years?

This is a tricky question. The simple answer as to why the church has emphasized baptism for 2,000 years is "because Jesus told us to." The complicated answer is that once you are baptised, you **are** the church.

What do you mean?

Do you remember when I defined the church as "The Temple of God?"

Yes… on Day 155, 156, and 183.

Once you are baptised, you are the Temple of God. You are a living entity which represents God, is in the Image of God, and which God can dwell within.

Just a sec – I think my mind is being blown again…

Now, you are not alone – there are many others who have been baptized as well, and who are, some more successfully than others, exploring what it means to be the Temple of God.

A whole bunch of temples?

All of these individuals are gathered into one Great Temple. Each baptised person is a Temple of God, and together all of them combine into one Great Temple to worshipand love God – and love their neighbours. Each baptized person is the Temple of God, and all of them together are the Temple of God.

This is hard to get my head around.

Think of it this way: if you look through a drop of water with the right light, you see a rainbow from the refraction of that light. If that drop is joined with millions of other water drops, you see a rainbow from the combined refraction of that light – not millions of rainbows. Likewise, each person is where God resides, and together they are where God resides: His Temple.

What is it like for you to be the Temple of God?

Share your answer with others whom you trust.

Day 193: Am I in or am I out?

So if I'm not baptized I'm rejected by God?

No! Please don't think that. God yearns for all people to be with Him, in health and joy – in shalom. Baptism is a moment of definition, defining the acceptance of yourself as a child of God, a Temple of God. Those who don't get baptised (through their own desire or ignorance) are not rejected by God, they just don't have that moment of definition. Also, people may reject God whether or not they have been baptized – a Temple may shut its doors if it desires.

What about all the times in scripture where God states He will bring His anger on people? What about all the times where it says people were killed either by God or in the name of God? Isn't that God rejecting people?

As we've covered before, scripture can be hard to understand and needs to be read both on the surface and under the surface (another way of thinking of it is 'reading it through my own eyes and reading it through the eyes of Christ'). I don't believe God rejects people. However, God does allow people to reject Him, and to separate themselves from Him. I believe this brings God great grief (and not incidentally, sooner or later, great grief to that person). Contrarily, when you come close to God, for example in baptism, I believe it brings God great joy.

Perhaps this helps: You are created in the Image of God. If you walk far enough away from God, you may get to a point where God looks at you and says "I don't know you – I don't see Myself in you." However, if you open yourself up to God and His living with you, you may get to a point where God looks at you and says, "I look at you and see myself fully – I know you even in the uniqueness I have created you as."

Do you accept that you are a child of God, a Temple of God? That you are created in God's Image?

Share your thoughts with others whom you trust.

Day 194: Ruminating

We've gone over a lot in the past 194 days.

Yes.

Today, please review them, and write down your thoughts. What have you struggled the most with? What has made the most sense to you? Why? Has your perception of yourself and of God changed at all? If so, how? What do you see as your path forward for the rest of your life?

Please go over all your thoughts and responses from the past 194 days. Would you write the same things today? Answer the above questions.

Share your thoughts with those you trust

Day 195: Rest

We come again to the seventh day, so today we rest. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you.