

BAPTISM IN WATER

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"How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" - Romans 6:2-4.

Baptism in water has its place among the doctrines of the New Testament Jesus required it at the hands of the apostles. See Matthew 28:19; Mark 16-16. In the Acts of the Apostles, we find baptism in water recorded frequently In Peter's first Spirit-filled sermon, Israel were exhorted to - "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Chnst for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost - Acts 2:38.

Many volumes have been written to prove and disprove the mode or modes of baptism, and many hot debates have been held by carnal believers for the same purpose. But, the mode becomes easily evident to every honest heart, when once he understands the meaning and purpose of baptism. Hence, we need not discuss that theme.

That our Scripture text refers to water is unanswerably certain. It cannot refer to the baptism in the Spirit, because that was not a baptism into death nor a burial into death. It was a baptism into oneness of those who were already dead and buried and risen again. Furthermore, there was only "one baptism" in the Spirit - Eph. 4:5. That occurred at Pentecost, where all who believe were sovereignly baptized into one Body - I Cor. 12:12,13. You cannot find another Spirit-baptism in the New Testament. Neither does water-baptism symbolize nor refer to the baptism in the Spirit. This, too, will become plain as we proceed with our study.

JOHN'S BAPTISM

"John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus" - Acts 19:4.

Jesus requested John to baptize Him in water, though John felt that he was the one who should be baptized of Jesus because he knew that he had a sinful nature and Jesus had not. Now, if Jesus was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," why must He be baptized in water? - Hebrews 7:26. He needed not to repent. He had no sins to be forgiven. Yet He said, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" - Matthew 3:15. Adam the first, the head of the race, egregiously failed. Jesus, "the last Adam" and "the second Man, was destined to be victorious - I Cor. 15:45,47. But His victory was not to be for Himself alone. He should succeed where the first Adam failed. To do this He must identify Himself with the human race in its fallen condition; yes He must take the Headship of the race. The last Adam must die for the race and thus pay the penalty incurred by their sins. He must take the whole human family into death and burial with Him, and bring up a new

creation with Him like Himself. By thirty years of holy living, absolutely obeying the will of God, He had fully proved His worthiness and ability to fill this place.

Therefore, in symbol, by baptism into Jordan Jesus took His place as Head of a sinful race. By His baptism. He said, "I am the first transgressor; therefore, I must die to make forgiveness possible. I must pay the penalty for man's sin." "He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many"- Isaiah 53:12. Hence, when He came up from the watery grave, in approbation of Him God sent the Holy Spirit upon Him, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" - Matthew 3:17. His arising out of the water was the coming forth, in symbol, of the new creation. His anointing with the Spirit was the pattern and pledge of our anointing. His prophetic ministry, which immediately followed, was the inauguration of the reign of grace and was in the spirit and power of the new creation. He lived and labored in the Spirit. He taught and preached and healed under the direction and by the enabling of the Holy Spirit. John's baptism pointed forward only. To be content with it was to say that Jesus had not yet come. Since it referred only to "righteousness" in the Master's case, and was "unto repentance" in the case of believers, we do not read that they were baptized in any particular Name.

THE APOSTLES' BAPTISM

"Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead"-Col. 2:12. This verse together with our text verses make the nature and purpose of water baptism plain. Let us simply believe the written Word, without reasoning about it, and without cutting out some of it or adding anything to it. Then we shall understand and be blessed, and the heart of Jesus shall rejoice.

In Romans six, which delineates the foundation for our complete victory over all sin, our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ are symbolized by baptism. By the act of going down into the water, we say that Christ died for us and that we died with Him and that He was buried and we were buried with Him. We say, "Our old man was crucified with Christ, and buried with Him in Joseph's tomb." We say that "old things are passed away." We say by baptism, that we died with Christ to the world and to sin and to the law- to the world from which we are forever separated, to sin whose power is forever broken, and to the law from whose dominion we are forever free. Hallelujah! To believe this fills one with "Hallelujahs!" We say that "henceforth know we no man after the flesh," or the old creation- II Cor. 5:16. Then, by our coming forth from the watery grave, we declare that Christ is risen - that God "raised Him from the dead" and "hath raised us up together" with Him - Gal. 1:1; Eph. 2:6. We thereby proclaim that we are a new creation, a heavenly people, a spiritual race, a special treasure. We announce that we are alive in Christ forevermore, to "walk in newness of life" in the power of the Holy Spirit- Romans 6:4.

By our personal baptism in water we outwardly, publicly, and boldly declare to men and demons that God is true in all He says about the old creation and all He says to the new creation. Baptism on our side is a solemn sign and on God's side it is a sacred seal that we are no more of this world, but that we belong wholly and forever to "Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father" - Rev. 1:5,6. As the Lord took care of His dear Son - guiding and guarding Him, and finally taking Him to Himself - so does He vouchsafe to do with all His dear sons. Hence, Peter triumphantly declares, that we "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" - I Peter 1:5. Then, having been baptized in water, the Holy Spirit says that "ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" - Romans 6:17. Our death and burial and resurrection with Christ is the doctrine itself - the vital teaching; but the water baptism is the form of doctrine - the outward, visible form - of what we inwardly believe and receive.

Now we can see the distinction between the two baptisms. John's baptism looked forward. The apostles' baptism looked backward. To know only the first is to say that the Messiah has not yet come. This is why Brother Paul baptized those twelve at Ephesus again. Either they had not heard that the Christ had come, or they had not believed it. They declared that they had not so much as heard that the Holy Spirit was given. In those days the reception of Jesus as Savior, and baptism in water, and the reception of the Gift of the Holy Spirit were so closely related and in such rapid succession that the enjoyment of one implied the enjoyment of the other. When one believed on Jesus he was immediately baptized, and then he received the Holy Spirit.

IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM

Is baptism in water essential to salvation? Can one be saved if he is not baptized in water? Jesus Himself, not water, is the Savior. Salvation is by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" - Acts 16:31. "He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" - John 5:24. "The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the Word of FAITH, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" - Romans 10:8-10. "For by grace are ye saved through faith" - Ephesians 2:8.

Now, if baptism were essential unto salvation, then Jesus would not in Himself be a sufficient Savior; and faith would not be a sufficient condition, or connecting link, between the Savior and us. Baptism would be works. We would be adding our self-effort to be saved. But the Word declares, "Not of works, lest any man should boast"; that is, boast of his good works. Nay, my

Friend, baptism is only an outward sign or expression of our faith in the all-sufficient Savior. The Holy Spirit states that in Noah's ark, "eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us

(not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" - I Peter 3:21 Consider this a moment. In the early chapters of Acts the resurrection of Jesus is emphasized by being constantly mentioned. Paul writes that He "was raised again for our justification - Romans 4:25.

Peter here states that as those eight in the ark were figuratively raised from the dead by water - Christ really being their Savior as symbolized by the ark - so water baptism, the antitype (antitupon, Greek) of Noah's flood, figuratively raised us up from the dead through the resurrection of Jesus Christ - hence figuratively saves us. He says that baptism is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh," but is the outward sign of the inward salvation. It is the inquiry and answer of a good conscience, the expression of the faith of one already saved - faith in Jesus, as raised from the dead with Him.

The relative importance of baptism in water is further indicated by our beloved Apostle Paul, in I Cor. 1:17 - "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." He does not mean that he baptized no one; for he mentions at least three in that assembly whom he baptized. The earlier quotations, from Romans and Colossians, conclusively show that he taught baptism. But baptism is not the chief thing. The Gospel of God's grace, brought to us through the death and resurrection of God's dear Son, was the apostle's great theme. Baptism in water received due attention as a symbol only, but not as a means of salvation.

UNWISE EMPHASIS

The first chapter of first Corinthians deserves close study. Note that, "by the Name of our Lord Jesus Anointed," he pleads with them - that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment " He earnestly asks, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" - I Cor. 1:10, 13. Behold, the forewarnings of the dear Holy Spirit! Even then, undue stress put upon water baptism caused divisions; and that was an earnest of many sad days for Christendom. Now the Spirit seeks to have us see and maintain the oneness of Christ. The one Name means this very thing. Hence, those who were baptized in Jesus' Name "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine " not a certain form of words - Romans 6:17. Baptism is into "the Name of the Lord Jesus"; that is, into the nature - the divine-human nature - not into a form of words.

Observe this wondrous threefold Name - Lord Jesus Anointed - which corresponds beautifully with Jesus' own words. Father ... Son.. Holy Ghost," - Matthew 28:19. This phrase, or threefold title, is constantly employed by Paul. The first indicates His Deity, the second His humanity, and the third His endowment with power. Hence, it was the divine-human nature expressed by the titles given Him that should be honored. Men may easily emphasize certain phrases or words, but in spirit dishonor the Name. God looks on the heart. How few people in the past have understood the meaning of water baptism. How few

have noted the phraseology of the baptizer But the true heart beholds the face of the one Savior. Why is such prominence given to the Name of Jesus? Because He is "God ... manifest in the flesh" - I Timothy 3:16. "God was in Christ (Deity in humanity), reconciling the world unto Himself" - II Cor. 5:19. This was the only way in which God could redeem and save a fallen race. A Man fulfilled the law and met the penalty that sin had incurred. A Man rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven. A Man now sits at the right hand of God - the Man who said, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth" - Matthew 28:18. A Man is coming again from Heaven - Acts 1:11. "By that Man whom He hath ordained," God "will judge the world in righteousness" - Acts 17:31. A Man, the Anointed of the Lord, shall reign; for it is written, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion" - Psalm 2:2,6. Because of the sevenfold condescension of this Man, "God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name: That at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" - Philippians 2:9-11.

The chief reason for baptizing in Jesus' Name is that He is the Head of His Body, the Church. "For in Him" • this wonderful Man - "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the HEAD of all principality and power. And He is the HEAD of the Body, the Church: who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell" - Colossians 2:9,10; 1:18,19.

Therefore, to be baptized into the Name of Jesus means to be baptized into Christ Himself, into oneness with Him in His death and burial and resurrection - the old creation going down with Him and the new creation coming up with Him in symbol. This is not to be held as a cold theory, dogmatically set forth in certain phrases; but a precious, living, loving doctrine that honors the Holy Spirit and glorifies the triune God - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" - I Corinthians 6:17. The people that are joined to the Lord are one people - "one Lord," "one Body" - Ephesians 4:4,5.

KEEP YOUR COVENANT WITH JESUS

Keep your covenant with Jesus, 'Tis the least that you can do; For He died for your salvation, He's the faithful and the true.

He has been your Guide and Helper, He has been your faithful Friend. And you never can repay Him, Tho you serve Him to the end.

Keep your covenant with Jesus, To your pledge be ever true;

For He gave Himself your ransom. Yes, He died, He died for you.

