

Christians at Texas State Bible Study # 4

Baptism

Scripture Reading:

Mark 16:16 He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned.

Acts 8:36 And as they were going along the road, they came upon some water, and the eunuch said, Look, water. What prevents me from being baptized?

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor. 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.

1 Pet 3:20-21 ...While the ark was being prepared; *entering* into which, a few, that is, eight souls, were brought safely through by water. Which *water...also* now saves you, *that is*, baptism, not a putting away of the filth of the flesh but the appeal of a good conscience unto God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Importance of Baptism

The first thing God did in the beginning of the New Testament dispensation was to send John the Baptist to preach the baptism of repentance (Acts 10:37; Luke 3:3). This indicates the importance of baptism in God's New Testament plan and arrangement. We may say that baptism opens the New Testament dispensation. Just as the truth of baptism was God's initiation of the New Testament dispensation, so the practice of baptism marks the beginning of our enjoyment of the New Testament blessings.

In the New Testament, the verb form of the word baptism in Greek is baptizo, meaning to immerse or dip in water, to cover with water, or to put into water.

Many verses in the New Testament speak of the necessity and importance of baptism. In Mark 16:16 the Lord Jesus said to the disciples, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned." Here the verse does not say, "He who does not believe and is not baptized." This indicates that condemnation is related only to not believing; it is not related to not being baptized. Believing, by itself, is sufficient in order to receive salvation from condemnation; yet for the completion of one's inward salvation, believing needs baptism as an outward affirmation. To believe is to receive Christ not only for forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:42) but also for regeneration (1 Pet. 1:21, 23), so that those who believe may become the children of God (John 1:12-13) and the

members of Christ (Eph. 5:30) in an organic union with the Triune God (Matt. 28:19). To be baptized is to affirm this by being buried to terminate the old creation through the death of Christ and by being raised to be the new creation of God through Christ's resurrection.

To believe and to be so baptized are two parts of one complete step for receiving the full salvation of God. To be baptized without believing is merely an empty ritual; to believe without being baptized is to be saved only inwardly without an outward affirmation of the inward salvation.

Baptism has two aspects: the visible aspect is the baptism in water; the invisible aspect, the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 10:47; 9:17-18; John 3:5). Water is the symbol of baptism, and the Holy Spirit is the reality of baptism. The visible aspect is the expression, the testimony, of the invisible aspect, whereas the invisible aspect is the reality of the visible aspect. Without the invisible aspect by the Spirit, the visible aspect by the water is vain; and without the visible aspect by water, the invisible aspect by the Spirit is abstract and impractical, without an expression. Both are needed.

In the case of Philip preaching the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39) water baptism was particularly emphasized, but no mention was made of Spirit baptism. This should give us strong instruction that we must pay attention to water baptism, which signifies the believers' identification with Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12), as well as to Spirit baptism [1 Cor. 12:13]. Spirit baptism produces the reality of the believers' union with Christ in life essentially and in power economically, whereas water baptism is the believers' affirmation of the Spirit's reality. All believers in Christ should properly have both, just as the children of Israel were baptized in the cloud (signifying the Spirit) and in the sea (signifying water) 1 Cor. 10:2.

In the sight of God there is only one baptism with two aspects--the aspect of water and the aspect of Spirit. Whenever we baptize others, we baptize them in water and in the Spirit at the same time.

The Significance of Baptism

To be baptized is to be baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). To baptize people into the name of the Triune God is to bring them into spiritual and mystical union with Him. The name is the sum total of the Divine Being, equivalent to His person. To baptize someone into the name of the Triune God is to immerse him into all that the Triune God is. Furthermore, baptism practiced in a proper, genuine, and living way puts the believers into Christ, a living person (Gal. 3:27); into the death of Christ, an effective death (Rom. 6:3); and into the Body of Christ, a living organism (1 Cor. 12:13), that the believers may enter into an organic union not only with Christ but also with His Body. Positively, we have been baptized into the Triune God and into Christ; negatively, we have been baptized into the death of Christ. This negative aspect of baptism clears away such negative things as sin, the flesh, the self, and the old creation. The ultimate issue of baptism is that we are put into the Body. We praise the Lord that we have been baptized into the organic entity of the Body of Christ for His expression.

Baptism-Typified by the Water through Which Noah and His Family Passed

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter told us that Noah's household of eight passing through the flood in the ark was a type of baptism (1 Pet. 3:20-21). The waters of

the flood separated those who were in the ark from the world in which they once were, that they might be delivered from that corrupted age. This signifies that the water of baptism separates those of us who are in Christ from the world in which we formerly lived, that we may be delivered from this crooked and perverted generation. Therefore, just as Noah and his family were saved through the flood and delivered from that corrupted generation, so we also are saved through the water of baptism and delivered from this crooked generation. On the one hand, they entered the ark by faith and were saved through the ark, thus escaping God's judgment by the flood. On the other hand, they passed through the flood in the ark and were saved through the flood; that is, they were saved out of the former world and were brought into a renewed world.

The Reality of Baptism Being Christ in Resurrection as the Life-giving Spirit

Baptism itself does not and cannot put away the filth of our flesh [1 Pet. 3:21]--the dirt of our fallen nature and the defilement of fleshly lust. The erroneous teaching concerning baptismal salvation, a teaching based on this verse and Mark 16:16 and Acts 22:16, is corrected here. Baptism is only a figure; its reality is Christ in resurrection as the life-giving Spirit, who applies to us all that Christ passed through in His crucifixion and resurrection, making these things real in our daily life.

Baptism Being an Appeal to God

Baptism is the appeal to God of the baptized ones for a good conscience unto God (1 Pet. 3:21). When we were baptized, we were baptized into Christ to be identified with His death, burial, and resurrection [Rom. 6:3-4]; hence, through baptism we were able to obtain a good conscience. All our sins, offenses, transgressions, and trespasses have been forgiven, and all the problems that estranged our life and our being have been buried in the water. Because of this clearance, we can have a good and pure conscience.

Hymns, #936

In death's waters I am buried,
For with Christ my Savior, I have died;
Now the world cannot pursue me,
For its power here is nullified.
I with Christ have risen too,
Out of death with Him I walk and live;
Now the Spirit life supplies
And His strength exhaustless unto me doth give.