

12. Arise and Be Baptized

AND NOW why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Acts 22: 16.

Baptism is an ordinance of the new dispensation. It is not a shadow of something yet to come as were the ordinances of the Old Testament, but is, instead, a great memorial, testifying to the fact that Christ's sacrifice on Calvary has been made and that the participant in the ordinance believes this to be the assurance of his acceptance with God.

“Know you 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.” Rom. 6: 3-8.

Baptism represents two outstanding events: firstly, Christ's death, burial, and resurrection; secondly, a death to sin, a burial of the old nature, and a spiritual resurrection on the part of those accepting Christ. We are baptized into His death.

We are buried with Him by baptism.

We shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.

Conversion not only brings a “new-birth” experience to the sinner, but also a definite death to the old life of sin. He must not only turn to something new, but he must turn away from and repudiate something old. The old man of sin must be put to death. Not only does the individual become “a new creature,” but it is just as true that “old things are passed away.”

Of this experience the Apostle Paul speaks with great clarity: “And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Gal. 5: 24, 25.

The old man is crucified; henceforth the individual is not to serve sin. See Rom. 6: 6.

From the time of conversion the individual is to live a changed life. The things he once loved and cherished are now to be forsaken and forgotten. The flesh is crucified, with the affections and lusts. He no longer loves sin and the ways of wickedness. “All things are become new.”

Thus baptism has for the twice-born man a double significance. It not only becomes a means by which he may express his faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus for his sins, but it also testifies to an actual personal experience through which he himself passes in becoming a child of God.

What a beautiful and fitting Illustration of all this is found in the ordinance of baptism! How perfectly has God provided for the sinner's every need !

Just as Christ died for men's sins, was buried, and three days later was resurrected, so the repentant sinner dies a spiritual death to sin, buries' the old life in the waters of baptism, and arises again in the likeness of His resurrection. He has been baptized into Christ. With him all things have become new.

A Required Ordinance

Baptism is a required ordinance.

When Jesus gave the great gospel commission to His church, He bade them: “Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Matt. 28: 19. Mark's Gospel quotes Jesus as saying: “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” Mark 16: 16.

Surely such language as this would never have been used by Jesus in speaking of an ordinance that had little or no meaning, or that was not essential in the plan of redemption.

True, the performance of the ordinance of baptism alone will not save an individual from his sins, but it serves as a symbol of a spiritual -Cleansing.

When Saul of Tarsus was converted, God's servant Ananias admonished him to be baptized and wash away his sin. It had some significance in the work of conversion and regeneration. The actual cleansing from sin is, of course, accomplished by the blood of Christ. This is the fountain that has been opened for sin and uncleanness. The sinner has redemption through His blood. (Eph. 1: 7.) His sin-

stained robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7: 14.) But just as it was necessary for those under the old dispensation to have an ordinance through which they could express their faith in the atoning blood, so it is needful for those who live this side of the cross. They did it by shedding the blood of a lamb; modern Christians by passing through the waters of baptism.

To this agrees the further testimony of Peter, where he declares:

“The like figure whereunto even baptism does 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.

Baptized Into Christ

In Rom. 6: 3, as in other scriptures, it is stated that when the repentant sinner is baptized, he is “baptized into Jesus Christ.” Professor Sauter, an authority on New Testament Greek, informs us that certain old papyrus manuscripts show that wherever this expression occurs in the New Testament, the person baptized becomes the property of the divine person indicated. Thus baptism serves not only as a testimony that the individual has renounced his old life of sin, but also that from henceforth he is the personal property of his Redeemer. His allegiance has been changed. He is now a child of the King.

Prerequisites to Baptism

The prerequisites to the ordinance of baptism are faith, repentance, and a full acceptance of Jesus Christ as a personal Savior. Jesus said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” The believing must precede the ordinance. Without faith in God and in Christ as man's Savior, going through the mere motions of this ordinance would be of no avail. It would become a dead form. It would be only as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

Infant baptism, therefore, is not Scriptural. Before this ordinance is administered to a child, he should first be given time to grow up to the age of personal responsibility. He should be carefully taught, the Word of God and, if possible, so led to a full acceptance of the gospel. The child should be old enough to recognize fully the fact of sin, his need of a personal Savior, and that Christ Jesus alone can accomplish his redemption.

The child is not responsible for his sins until he comes to the age of accountability and understanding. Therefore, the ordinance of baptism would have no meaning in his life until this period was reached.

“He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” Heb. 11: 6. Only those who have reached the age at which faith becomes possible are eligible to take part in this important and meaningful ordinance.

The Bible Way

The only mode of baptism recognized in the New Testament is immersion. The Greek word “baptizo,” from which our English word “baptism” is derived, means to immerse, to overwhelm, or to plunge beneath.

Dr. Dean Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, of the Church of England, in his *Christian Institutions*, states that “for the first thirteen centuries [after Christ] the almost universal practice of baptism was that of which we read in the New Testament, and which is the very meaning of the word 'baptize'-that those who were baptized were plunged, submerged, immersed into the water.” Pages 256, 257.

This was the manner in which Jesus was baptized. At that time John the Baptist was baptizing converts in the Jordan River. Hundreds were flocking from Jerusalem, Judea, and all the region round about to be baptized by him.

“Then comes Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and come Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”, Matt. 3: 13-17.

There are a number of most vital and interesting facts brought out in this record of Jesus'

baptism.

Firstly, He was baptized in Jordan. He journeyed all the way from Galilee to Jordan to find a proper place for baptism. Secondly, when He had been baptized, He “went up straight way out of the water.” This clearly indicates that the method of administering this ordinance to Jesus was by immersion, since He had gone into the water to be baptized. Lastly, as God the Father in heaven looked upon the scene, He approved of what was done, and spoke directly from His throne to those who stood by, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Thus, Jesus, who is the example in all things, passed through the waters of baptism and was immersed, thereby illustrating His death, burial, and resurrection which were soon to be experienced for man's salvation.

The same form of baptism was also administered by Philip the evangelist when, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, he led the Ethiopian eunuch to an acceptance of Jesus. After being convinced of the eunuch's sincerity and faith, “he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.” Acts 8: 38, 39.

John the Baptist, with whose ministry the ordinance of baptism was instituted, recognized that in order to administer this sacred ordinance properly it was essential to have much water. Usually he baptized in the Jordan, though at times he shifted the scene of his activities to other localities; but in doing so he chose places suitable for baptismal services. Thus it is recorded of him: “And John also was baptizing Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.” John 3: 23.

Sprinkling or pouring for baptism was not introduced into the church for hundreds of years after the early Christian church passed off the stage of action. Therefore, these forms have no basis either in Scriptural teaching or in the example of Christ's followers. They are among the errors that crept into the church during the period known as the Dark Ages, that resulted from the great apostasy foretold by the Apostle Paul. See 2 Thess. 2: 3, 4, 7.

A Marriage Ceremony

Baptism may well be likened to the marriage ceremony. A young man and woman indicate their desire to be united in marriage. Why? Because they have come to love each other. Their hearts are already united. They have decided that they desire each other's companionship for life-till death do them part. They have agreed together that leaving all others they will cling to each other so long as they both shall live. The spiritual bond already exists.

But to make their marriage legal there must be a wedding ceremony. They must publicly pledge their troth to each other. They must through the marriage service announce to the world their decision to live together. It must be understood by society, and a record of their union must go into the archives of the county or state.

Just so it is with baptism. A sinner hears the voice of Jesus calling, “Give Me thy heart.” He soon finds himself being drawn to Christ by the cords of love. He learns to love Jesus because Jesus first loved him, and gave His life a ransom for him. Jesus offers him pardon, cleansing, a new heart, and the gift of immortality-all this without money and without price.

“Come now,” pleads the voice of Jesus, “and let us reason together, . . . though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” Isa. 1: 18. “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Rev. 3: 20.

The sinner can resist no longer. He surrenders his heart, soul, and body to his Redeemer. He decides to follow Jesus, even to death. Henceforth, nothing shall be able to separate them because Jesus has keeping power as well as saving power. The deed is done., He has become a Christian.

No, not entirely done. One thing yet is lacking. He must not, like Nicodemus, be a disciple secretly. There Must be a marriage ceremony. He must announce to the world his changed allegiance. He must make a public confession of Christ before men. (See Matt. 10: 32.) Then he will in very fact become the property of Christ, just as the husband and wife are the property of each other.

This public ceremony is baptism. Through this ordinance men are publicly wedded to Christ and enter into full fellowship with Him, as well as with His church upon earth.

“And I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness: and thou shall know the Lord.” Hosea 2: 19, 20.

Therefore. "as many ... as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Gal. 3: 27. They constitute His bride. To them He grants that they should be arrayed with fine linen, white and clean, which is the righteousness of the saints. They have become candidates for heaven, and if through His' grace they remain true and faithful to the baptismal vow, His promise to them is that they shall walk with Him in white in His kingdom.

"Thou has a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels." Rev. 3: 4, 5.

Buried beneath the yielding wave
The great Redeemer lies;
Faith views Him in the watery grave,
And thence beholds Him rise.

Thus do these willing souls today
Their ardent zeal express,
And in the Lord's appointed way
Fulfil all righteousness.

With joy we in His footsteps tread,
And would His cause maintain;
Like Him be numbered with the dead,
And with Him rise and reign.

His presence oft revives our hearts,
And drives our fears away;
When He commands, and strength imparts,
We cheerfully obey.
-BENJAMIN BEDDOME.

Bible Study Summary

When was the ordinance of baptism instituted?

It began with John the Baptist and Christ.

Of what is baptism a symbol?

It is a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus for our redemption. See Rom. 6: 3-8.

NOTE - Just as Christ died for the sins of the world, was buried in the tomb, and was resurrected again, so the sinner must die a spiritual death to sin; his old life must be symbolically buried in the waters of baptism, and then he must be raised from the watery grave to live a new life in Christ Jesus.

What does Paul say should be done to the old life of sin?

"Our old man is crucified with Him." Rom. 6: 6.

"That you put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Eph. 4: 22.

"Put of the old man with his deeds." Col. 3: 9.

After the old man of sin is crucified and put of, what else should be done with him?

"Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death. . . . That the body of sin might be destroyed." Rom. 6: 4, 6. See Col. 2: 12.

What is represented by the candidate's being raised from the watery grave at baptism?

A resurrection; a rebirth; the beginning of a new life.

"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Rom. 6:5.

After baptism Christians are to "walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4.)

Is baptism necessary?

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Acts 2: 38.

In refusing the baptism of John, what did the Pharisees and lawyers reject?

“And all the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.” Luke 7: 29, 30.

What should precede baptism?

Belief in Christ, repentance of sin, and conversion. See Mark 16:16; Matt. 3:1,2,7,8; and Acts 8: 36,37.

What is the only mode of baptism recognized in the Bible?

Immersion. The Greek root word “baptizo” means to dip, to plunge, to immerse.

What is the only form of baptism that properly represents Christ's burial and resurrection?

Burial beneath the water, entirely hidden from the world, the eyes closed and breath held, just as in a real burial, then raised again from the water, opening the eyes, catching the breath, and again associating with loved ones, just as in an actual resurrection.

Does baptism take place in the water?

“And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water.” Matt. 3: 16.

Do the candidate and the administrator both go into the water?

“And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both Into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.” Acts 8: 38, 39.

Why did John sometimes baptize in a place called Aenon?

“And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.” John 3: 23.

NOTE-The water in the Jordan at certain seasons of the year was low, and baptism by immersion would have been difficult. So at such times John went to Aenon.

What should every newly converted individual do?

“Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Acts 22: 16.

Baptized into our Savior's death, Our souls to sin must die;
With Christ our Lord we live anew, With Christ ascend on high.

There by His Father's side He sits, Enthroned divinely fair;
Yet owns Himself our Brother still, And our Forerunner there.

Rise from these earthly trifles, rise On wings of faith and love;
Above, our choicest treasure lies And be our hearts above.

Let not earth's pleasures draw us down; Lord, give us strength to rise.,
And through Thy strong, attractive power, At last to gain the prize.