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“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 6:4.

Profession

Lesson Aim: To emphasize the importance of baptism as a scriptural method of testifying of our salvation.

L445. Date: March 1976. **Text:** Romans 6:3-6; Acts 8:35-38.

Topic: Baptism; Church Covenant.

Covenant: “. . . on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit . . .”

Today's study is concerned with the subject of Christian baptism. It is an important study. Many people discount the church and her ordinances, but God considers them of great importance.

Baptism is a significant ordinance which God has set among Christians. Baptism is important because it is ordained of God. It is commanded by the Lord Jesus. It is practiced by the obedient believer. It is the initiatory ordinance by which one declares himself to be a Christian. Today's study aims “to emphasize the importance of baptism as a Scriptural method of testifying of one's salvation.”

Christian baptism pictures death and resurrection. In being buried in and raised from water, the candidate testifies of death and resurrection from three view points. (1) He declares a historical fact: Jesus died for sins; He was buried; He arose the third day. (2) He testifies to a present fact: he has died to sin and risen to new life through faith in Jesus Christ. (3) He predicts a future fact: Jesus will return to raise from among the dead those who trust Him and take them to eternal glory with Himself. What an impressive picture is presented in the act of Christian baptism.

I. HISTORICAL FACT

It was about 9:00 a.m. when Jesus was nailed to the cross. His earthly ministry was reaching its climax. The purpose for which He had come into the world was being fulfilled as He died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring men to God (I Peter 3:18). Six hours later (3:00 p.m.) He cried, **“It is finished,”** and surrendered His spirit to God. The atoning deed was done. **“ . . . When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son . . . ”** Romans 5:10.

Loving hands took His body from the cross. There was a very limited time for burial to be performed. He died at 3 :00 o'clock. The Sabbath observance began at 6:00 o'clock that same evening. Within three hours Joseph and Nicodemus had to secure permission from Pilate to remove the body. His death had to be certified to Pilate's satisfaction. The body had to be bathed and wrapped in linen cloths in preparation for placement in the tomb. Time pressed hard upon the two disciples. They hastily performed the deed, so hurriedly that they were not content with the quality of their work. The body of Jesus was placed in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. That was the last ministry of love, they thought, that they would perform for Jesus.

Early in the morning, on the first day of the week, some of the women disciples went to the tomb to complete the task of embalming the body of Jesus. They were concerned about how to remove the large stone from the door of the tomb. Their fears were unfounded. They found the stone already rolled away; the tomb was open. What was the explanation? Angelic messengers of God explained, **“He is not here: for he is risen, as he said . . . ”** Matthew 28:6.

The redemptive work upon earth was done. **“ . . . When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life,”** Romans 5:10. The gospel message is forever the same: **“ . . . Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures . . . he was buried . . . he rose again the third day according to the scriptures,”** I Corinthians 15:3, 4. That is the historical fact concerning redemption.

II. SPIRITUAL REALITY

A Christian believer shares in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By saving faith he becomes identified with the person and work of the Saviour. The believer died when He died. The believer arose when He

arose. The spiritual life he now lives is the post-resurrection life of Jesus. That is the spiritual reality expressed in Romans 6:3-6.

Union with Christ in His death and resurrection has far reaching consequences. The believer died when Jesus died. As dead men cannot sin, so union with Christ in His death involves severance from sin. That is why Paul asked the question, **“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”** Romans 6:2. Afterwards he said, **“... 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,”** Romans 6:5, 6.

Consider the two-fold aspects of the death of Christ in regard to sin. First, He died “for” sin. He thereby made an atonement by which sinners can be justified and reconciled to God. Second, He died “to” sin in that sin had no part in His life; He lived without sin. A Christian believer should apply that to his life. Christ died “for” his sin that the believer might die “to” sin to live no longer therein. That means that both salvation and sanctification are bound up in the redemptive deed of Jesus.

Sharing in the death of Christ, the believer shares also in His resurrection (Romans 6:5). That is how the Christian is able to walk in a “newness of life,” verse 4. The “old man” of the unregenerate nature has been crucified with Christ. That sin nature is rendered powerless to work wrong in the life of the believer. Paul said that the body of sin is “destroyed” (rendered powerless, reduced to a state of inactivity and impotence) when a person trusts Jesus as Saviour. Think about it! As physical death cancels all obligations and breaks all ties, so union with Christ in His death and resurrection delivers the believer from sin. He is released from sin's penalty and from sin's power. He experiences forgiveness of sin's guilt and deliverance from sin's government. What a privilege it is for one to live the life of the risen Christ! **“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me,”** Galatians 2:20.

What a privilege it is for one to be saved! Can you imagine anything more wonderful than being delivered from sin? Remembering that all of life's problems, fears, failures, and crises are the direct consequences of sin, how believers should daily thank God that they are no longer the servants of sin.

What is true in fact must become true in experience. Positional truth (that a believer is dead to sin and living a new life in Christ) must become experiential truth (he no longer does sinful things). That is why Paul

admonished, “. . . **Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord,**” Romans 6:11. Saved people reject sin by an act of their will. In faith they claim victory in Jesus Christ. Voluntarily they yield themselves to God for purposes of righteousness. They voluntarily keep themselves from sin. Disciples should be all they have become.

III. EARTHLY SYMBOL

Baptism is the ritual by which the believer shows his death to sin and new life in Jesus Christ. To keep the testimony of baptism true and valid, Baptists insist that there must be the proper candidate, the proper mode, the proper purpose, and the proper authority for the administration of the ordinance.

God ordained baptism as a Christian ordinance. “**A man sent from God, whose name was John**” came performing the act of baptism. He spoke of God as “. . . **He who sent me to baptize with water . . .**” John 1:33. Jesus received baptism at the hands of that man sent from God (Matthew 3:13, 17). Each of the first disciples of Jesus received John's baptism. After beginning His personal ministry, “. . . **Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,**” John 4:1. Just before He ascended back to heaven, Jesus commanded the disciples, “**Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . .**” Matthew 28:19, 20. Baptism is important! It is by God's expressed command.

A. Baptism is by immersion. It pictures a death, a burial and a resurrection. Neither sprinkling nor pouring can present that picture. It is the burial of a believer in water, backwards, one time, in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Acts 8:35-38 pictures (1) a going down into the water, (2) a burial in and resurrection from water, (3) a coming up out of the water. Only immersion is New Testament baptism.

B. Baptism is a testimony. It is the means by which a convert declares his faith in the once-buried-but-now-risen Christ. It is a testimony that the candidate has died to sin and risen to new life in Him. It is a symbol which vividly demonstrates that one has by faith, entered the benefits of salvation in Christ.

C. Baptism is for believers. Only one who is trusting Jesus personally is a proper candidate for baptism. When the question is asked, “. . . **What doth hinder me to be baptized?**” the answer should always be, “**If thou**

believest with all thine heart, thou mayest . . .” Acts 8:36. 37. Infant baptism is absolutely forbidden. People are saved by faith, not by baptism.

D. Baptism must be properly authorized. Christian baptism “should be performed by a church (acting in the person of an authorized administrator). Baptism identifies one with the particular church which performs it. Baptism is a declaration of faith and an identification with a church. Baptism without church membership is not recognized in the New Testament.

Today's study must be concluded with two great appeals. (1) Be sure you are saved. All rituals and religious institutions are to no avail unless one is trusting Jesus as his personal Saviour. (2) Be an obedient believer in all that Jesus commands. The first command He issues to a new convert is to confess Him in the ordinance of baptism. The ordinance is important. One cannot be a fully obedient Christian, if he neglects Christian baptism. The same Holy Spirit who led one to faith in Christ will lead him to obedience to Christ as he confesses his faith in baptism.

Baptism is an important testimony. (1) It speaks of one's faith in Jesus Christ and salvation through His atoning death and victorious resurrection. (2) It speaks of one's personal experience of death to sin and resurrection to new life in Christ. (3) It speaks of assurance that Jesus will come again to raise believers from among the dead. Baptism is important. Do not neglect it in attitude or in action.

Questions

1. What is baptism?
2. Why do Baptists baptize by immersion?
3. Why is only a believer to be baptized?
4. How is salvation shown in baptism?
5. Why should each believer be baptized?
6. Why is baptism the initial church ordinance?
7. How is baptism related to church membership?
8. How does baptism demonstrate conversion?
9. How can baptism be made more impressive in your church?
10. What is your personal testimony of salvation and baptism?