



“He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay,” Matthew 28.6.

Resurrection Symbolized

Covenant: . . . on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father and the son, and the Holy Ghost . . .

Aim: To emphasize the importance of baptism as a scriptural method of testifying to the saving power of the risen Lord

Text: Romans 6:1-11

INTRODUCTION — “Baptism” denotes the action of submerging into and raising out of the water. It has been used from earliest Christian times as the rite of initiation into the membership of a Christian church. Immersion is certainly the original method of Christian baptism.

Death and resurrection is the picture baptism is supposed to present. Its picture is threefold. (1) It speaks of the candidate’s faith in the Lord Jesus who died for our sins and was raised for our justification. It declares this to be a historical fact which he accepts. (2) It speaks of the candidate’s experience of having personally died to sin and arisen to new life in Jesus Christ. It declares this to be a present fact which he experiences. (3) It speaks of the candidate’s assurance of the second coming of the Lord Jesus when the believer’s body will be raised from the grave in a final victory over sin.

These truths can be set out clearly only in a type of baptism which buries the candidate in water and raises him up from the water. Immersion is practiced by our churches because it follows the New Testament example and sets forth the lessons to be seen in the baptismal ritual. We believe that unless a person has been baptized by immersion, to declare his conversion experience, by the authority of a true Baptist church, he lacks scriptural baptism.

Today is a traditional time set apart to commemorate the Lord's resurrection. It is fitting, therefore, that on this Sunday we should study the ordinance of the church which pictures His burial and resurrection. The portion of the Church Covenant to be considered today reads, “. . . on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost . . .”

EXPOSITION

I. PAST: RESURRECTION OF JESUS

This is the heart of the New Testament: Jesus has risen from the dead! This was the burden of the Apostles' preaching: Jesus has risen from the dead! This fact is mentioned at least eighteen times in the book of Acts. It is the basis of Paul's doctrine of Christ. It is recorded in Matthew 28:1-28; Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-49; and John 20:1-2 :25; I Corinthians 15. It is basic to the Christian's hope today.

1. Antecedents.—Jesus was placed on the cross about 9:00 A.M. After six hours He cried aloud the seventh saying, **“It is finished,”** and died. Between three and six in the afternoon, His body was taken from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea and hastened away to “his own new tomb” for burial. Since the Sabbath began at 6:00 P.M. on Friday, the burial must have been hastily concluded.

Watch was kept over the tomb by certain Romans soldiers. The Jewish leaders were concerned that someone might steal the body of Jesus and declare He had risen, Matthew 27:64. Elsewhere the disciples spent anxious hours. Their hearts were disturbed and their hopes destroyed. They had no idea what was to happen on the first day of the week.

2. Events.—Early on the Sunday morning following the crucifixion, certain of the women disciples came to the tomb to further anoint the body of Jesus as their burial custom was. An angel of the Lord came and rolled back the stone to reveal that the tomb was already empty, Matthew 28:1-8. For the first time they understood what He had often said: that He would be delivered into the hands of the religious leaders, be crucified, and rise from death the third day.

The soldiers who were keeping watch at the tomb fainted away at the appearance of the angel. Afterwards reviving, they hastened to tell the priests what had happened. Being bribed with a large sum of money they reported that the body of Jesus was stolen as they slept. This report is still circulated among unbelieving Jews!

3. Reaction.—The soldiers probably knew Jesus had risen from the dead. Though they are not said to have looked into the tomb, they knew the angel of the Lord had come. They were convinced that more was involved here than the death of a mere religious fanatic. Like the centurion at the cross, they may well have known that this one was the Son of God.

But even the disciples could hardly believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. They hardly believed the report of the women who had spoken with the angel. Peter and John went to see the empty tomb but returned therefrom with many questions, John 20:4-10.

When Jesus appeared to Mary in the garden she did not recognize Him for she did not expect Him to rise from the dead. Even the Apostles who were the closest to Jesus during His ministry, did not understand that He would rise from the dead, Mark 9:21-32. When He appeared to the ten Apostles on the day of His resurrection they did not dare believe that He had risen. Even the sight of his pierced hands and feet did not fully convince them as “they believed not for joy,” Luke 24:36-48. Even as late as the meeting with the disciples on the mountain in Galilee where the Great Commission was given some were still doubting concerning His resurrection, Matthew 28:16-17. Yet, even if we believe not God abides faithful, II Timothy 2:13. Jesus had risen from among the dead!

The reaction to the resurrection of Jesus was varied. Some reported the disciples had stolen away His body. Some doubted because they had never seen such before. Some doubted because they dared not believe that what they so desperately wanted was actually true. Yet, soon all the disciples received the fact with joy. Death had no more power over Jesus. The resurrection became the theme of their preaching.

4. Proof.—The resurrection of Jesus Christ is attended with undeniable proof. Many persons saw Him and talked with Him after His resurrection. He appeared five different times on the day of His resurrection: (1) To Mary Magdalene in the garden, John 20:11-18; (2) to other women at the sepulchre, Matthew 28:5-10; (3) to Simon Peter near Jerusalem, Luke 24:34; (4) to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Luke 24:13-21; and (5) to the ten Apostles—Thomas absent—that evening, Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-23.

During the next forty days, Jesus appeared at least six other times: (1) to the Apostles when Thomas was present, John 20:24-29; (2) to seven disciples fishing on the sea of Galilee, John 21:1-24; (3) to the brethren on a mountain in Galilee, Matthew 28:16-20; (4) To more than five hundred brethren, I Corinthians 15:6; (5) to the Apostle James, I Corinthians 15:7; (6) to the eleven Apostles on the Mount of Olives when He ascended, Acts

1:6-11. Then Paul adds, “And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time,” I Corinthians 15:8.

Besides these personal appearances of Jesus there are other evidences that He is alive from the dead. These include: (1) the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world whom Jesus promised to send from the Father, John 16:16-26; 16:7-15; (2) the fact that prayer addressed to the Father in Jesus' name is answered, John 14:13-14; (3) the existence of the Christian religion through the centuries being based upon the fact of His resurrection; and (4) the experience of every Christian who can testify, “He lives within my heart!”

II. PRESENT: RESURRECTION EXPERIENCED

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not merely a historical fact upon which we base our faith that He lives. It is a present reality to the believer and the key to a full spiritual life. It is here that Romans 6:1-11 makes a significant contribution.

In baptism the believer makes the confession that he has, by faith, died to sin and risen to a new life. He further declares that this death and resurrection is not apart from Jesus but that it came in union with Christ. It is not due to something he did but is associated with Jesus' own death and resurrection. Baptism declares, therefore, that when Jesus died for sin the believer died to sin in Him. It further declares that when Jesus arose from death the believer arose also to live the life of Christ in union with Christ. Hence in baptism the believer declares his relation by faith to the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

1. Dead to sin.—In the act of baptism the candidate declares, “I went to the cross with Jesus and died under sin's guilt with Him. When He arose from the dead He brought me forth with Him. Now I have claimed by faith what Jesus did for me. So in the act of baptism I am demonstrating my relationship with Jesus.” This relationship is not merely external nor pretended but internal and real and dynamic.

Union with Christ in His death has far reaching consequences. Read Romans 6:1-4. Believers died when Christ died. As dead men cannot sin, so union with Christ in His death involves severance from sin and no more continuance therein. Observe two aspects of the death of Christ. First, He died **for** sin and therein made the atonement which none other could make. Second, those who died in Christ died **to** sin, which means that sin ceases to

have a place in the life. Christ died **for** sin that all those who die **to** sin might find it robbed of its penal power over them. So justification and sanctification are both based upon the sacrifice of Jesus.

2. Alive to righteousness.—Read Romans 6:4-10. Paul states positively that since we share in Christ's death we also share in His resurrection, verse 5. Hence, a “newness of life” (verse 4) is expected of those who live in Him. The old man of the unregenerate self has been crucified with Christ. Thus the body is rendered powerless to work sin and prevented from serving it further, verse 6. The result is that righteousness becomes the believer's manner of life.

Paul says the body of sin is “destroyed,” that is, rendered powerless, reduced to a state of inaction and impotence, as to effect upon the soul of man. Just as death cancels all obligations and breaks all ties, so death in Christ and union with Him in resurrection delivers the believer from sin. He is released from both the penalty of sin and in union with Christ from the power of sin. This is exactly what Paul is saying! This is why he believes those who are redeemed can live worthy lives. “It is not I, but Christ who lives within me!” See Galatians 2:20 on this subject. In Paul's mind baptism declares all that and more.

Baptism becomes, therefore, more than just an initiatory rite to the church. It has no saving powers, of course, but it does give a vivid testimony to what has happened within the heart. It speaks also of the new quality of life to which the candidate pledges himself.

3. Resurrection life.—Think of the victory associated with the Lord's death and resurrection. He died, that is true, but He died once only. It is not necessary that He die again. Death has no more claim for Him nor dominion over Him. This has meaning for the believer.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord,” Romans 6:11. In view of the death and resurrection of Christ (in which the believer shares) the Christian is to “keep on reckoning” himself to have therein died to all that is sinful and to be alive to all that is God-honoring and righteous. Observe that Paul does not say that sin is dead to the believer but that the believer is dead to sin. This is not something that should be sought after but is a present reality.

Observe the term “reckon.” It is the same Greek word which is elsewhere translated “impute” (See Romans 4:3-8 where the same word is translated “counted,” “reckoned,” “imputed.”) It means to ascribe to one which belongs to another. To the repenting sinner God imputes His own righteousness. Exactly so, Paul admonishes, “Impute to yourself without

ceasing the merits and results of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. Impute to yourself likewise the resurrection which He lives in you. Never cease to reckon it to be so.”

Here is the idea of constant Christian victory. “When Christ died, we died; when He rose, we rose . . . When sin makes its appeal we must refuse to recognize it by reckoning that we died to it in Christ, and at once it will go, its power broken. In the same way, when we long to be holy, we simply reckon that we are alive to God in Christ, and the power of God's grace will flood our souls. Then we shall see that the Christian life is not a constant battle but a constant victory.”—W, H. Griffith Thomas. All this is pictured in baptism!

III. FUTURE: RESURRECTION AWAITED

Baptism not only admits a fact (the burial and resurrection of Jesus) and declares a fact (of salvation and new life in Jesus), it also proclaims a prophecy of the coming of the Lord Jesus and the resurrection of the dead. While it is said that those who are saved are “resurrected” to new life in Christ there is more than this involved in the hope of the resurrection. When Jesus came forth from the grave He was the “firstfruits” of many more who would also be resurrected from the grave, I Corinthians 15:20.

1. Time.—The righteous dead will be raised when Jesus comes again. The Lord will come in the air with a shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God. The dead in Christ will rise at the same instant that the living believers are changed and they will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, I Thessalonians 4:13-17. This is what Paul meant in saying, **“Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming,”** I Corinthians 15:23.

The unsaved dead will remain in the grave at this occasion. The unsaved who are living on earth will go on living. Their resurrection and judgment will not occur for a period of one thousand years after this, Revelation 20:4-5.

2. Manner.—The resurrected saints will receive a new body, I Corinthians 15:35-54. It is not made clear in the scripture how the resurrection body will look, I John 3:2. It is enough, however, to know that it will be like the body of the Lord Jesus. **“And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly,”** I Corinthians 15:49.

In I Corinthians 15:42-44 there is the only description of the resurrection body given in the Bible. The body will be incorruptible,

glorious, powerful, and spiritual. It will be a fitted-for-heaven body. Just as a person wears one type of clothing in his work and another type of clothing in formal occasions, so our body will be different. Our fitted-for-earth bodies will be exchanged for one which is fitted-for-heaven and the presence of God.

3. Purpose.—The resurrection of our physical bodies is a part of God's redemptive plan. In I Corinthians 6:19-20 the fact is clearly stated that even the physical body belongs to the Lord in view of the sacrifice of Jesus. Salvation has to be applied to more than the soul. It does not reach its ultimate end when the soul is saved nor when the spirit goes to God.

Salvation is completed only when the physical body is resurrected, made glorious like the Lord, re-inhabited by the redeemed soul, and transported into the presence of God. The resurrection is, therefore, a part of God's redemptive plan.

So important is the resurrection that Paul writes, **“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,”** Romans 8:22-23. The purpose of the resurrection is “the redemption of our body” — the completion of God's redemptive work in behalf of man. No wonder the resurrection of the saints is mentioned so often in the Scriptures. It is a part of the “blessed hope” of the return of the Lord Jesus and the realization of complete redemption. Baptism pictures our expectation of the resurrection.

CONCLUSION—Baptism is an important church ordinance because of what it means to say. (1) It speaks of the atoning death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. (2) It testifies that the candidate for baptism has died to sin and arisen to new life in Jesus. (3) It predicts the coming of the Lord Jesus when the saints will be raised up in glory to experience complete redemption and the glory of God's presence.

The Holy Spirit leads the obedient believer to be baptized. To refuse scriptural baptism under the authority of a New Testament church is an act of disobedience. Our Church Covenant states that we believe the Holy Spirit (1) led us to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour and (2) directed us to the ordinance of baptism. Has the Spirit so directed you in these two important steps? Will you follow His leading in that direction today?

Only through salvation and baptism can one become a member of one of the Lord's churches. Next week's study will deal with the blessings of participation as a member of the church.

QUESTIONS

1. What is baptism?
2. What method of baptism was used in the New Testament times?
3. What does baptism say about Jesus' death?
4. What does baptism say about the candidate's experience?
5. What does baptism say about the Second Coming of Jesus?
6. Why should every believer be scripturally baptized?
7. Where does the authority to administer baptism lie?
8. How does baptism speak of resurrection?
9. Why is baptism the initial church ordinance?
10. Why should church membership be important to a Christian?